

Greeting: In 1712, John Bockett, a Quaker, published a book to show that many philosophers who lived before Christ knew the essential doctrines of Quakers and expressed them. One of the quotes he chose is this one from the Roman stoic philosopher, Seneca: "God is near thee, and God is in thee; the Holy Spirit sits or resides within us, the Observer of our Good and Evil actions; as God is dealt with by us, God deals with us."

Our first hymn is about absorbing the Light, rooted in soil and lit by love, the Light that we find and that finds us and makes us bloom, from the green book 187, "A Garden of My Own".

Our first reading today is Psalms 133 and 134 that speak about how that garden flourishes and what fruits may be found there.

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows blessing, even life forevermore.

Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord. May the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion."

On this sense of the sacredness of solidarity, of spiritual oneness with each other that can feel like an anointing, of a coming together of the blessings of working in our own gardens or alone at night, and also being at a common task, the current theologian Catherine Keller writes in On the Mystery:

“What if God is not an omnipotent being, but is a *process*? What if God is not once and for all but we are changing and God is changing? What if God’s power is not “power over” but is the power of love—God as love (Eros) is luring living and non-living parts of the universe into relationship and God as love (unconditional love/agape) is the acceptance of what is actual? What happens if the often cramped ideas of Christian love are expanded to include all that makes up the universe being involved in multiple forms of love? What if God is drawing us into a dance of the universe in which we join God in making what has been impossible become possible? What if justice is found in tenacious love and compassion rather than in laws?”

Our second hymn is “Creator Spirit, Come to Us” no. 148 in the red book, an ancient Latin hymn text. Let’s sing the three verses and then end by singing the first verse again.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—Let our prayers, our conscious efforts to be in contact with the sacred, be one with the needs we know and allied with those that may or may not know us. We pray as an exchange that goes out to the universe beyond us. Let our gratitude be one with the beauty of blessing. Let our hopes be empowered in the expectations of blessing. Let our hurts and disappointments be soothed in the sense of blessing. In the processes of the divine, the thousand years that are but a day gone by, we live in the now of this urgent message. Our prayer filled hearts seek blessing for those who suffer or mourn, for those who live with violence or fear, for God to be the process of reconciliation and transformative love that we might know today and always. Be near us, o God, in the night and in an anointing unity of love, in our garden, in our spirit. Amen

Our third hymn is on the hand out—an upbeat expectation that the divine is transformative to us and to our worlds. “Christ is Changing Everything”.

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other, to nurture each other in lessons and play in community.

Message: Dear Friends—I don’t know if your Easter baskets are empty yet, but the resurrection part is constant, and sometimes it is just about waking up each day. We pull together the hope and blessings that we know and inspire each other or find inspiration in the lives we lead or in those that are led around us. Life in the large sense has been constant for millennia in many forms, but in the individual sense it comes and goes, just as Light in the large sense is even older and more constant than life—a source of what became life, but in individual moments it can be either bright or hard to find.

Last week, just before I came to meeting, I read about the two Muslim families that keep the keys and have handled the entry welcome to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre since 1192 and 1187 respectively. That is 830 years of faithfulness from two Muslim families in order to keep the accord of a fragile balance between Orthodox and Syriac and Ethiopian and Roman Catholic administration of the physical place of the death and resurrection of the historic Jesus. By the time Protestants came into being, they just picked a new location in Jerusalem. But I think the psalms speak openly of the blessedness of this unity and the sacredness of this trust, that these families continue to take very seriously in the midst of incredible strife and division. It is an anointing. Not only were they anointed at the time by the Patriarch and Saladin, but in these divisive times in Jerusalem they persist in the anointing, the ongoing

resurrection. They are there in the night, these blessed and faithful Muslims of Issa, of Jesus, of all the people of the book—the Jews, Christians, and Muslims who share the same eternal God, of all the people of the Spirit, of all of life, of all of the universe. These two psalms read again:

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows blessing, even life forevermore.

Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord. May the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion.”

And in this identification of blessing in action comes the deeper meaning of our second reading today. Catherine Keller is a theologian who identifies as a deep ecologist and feminist and has the title of professor of Constructive Theology and in her work writes of the relational nature of the divine—much like answering that of God in every one, but recognizing that to be able to answer, one must first know that of God for oneself and in oneself. It is an interactive and reciprocal process.

The earth has been pushing back at us our selfish and violent acquisitiveness, as what we have been extracting turns into what we have been adding in an equation of mutual destruction. The wars we have started in recent years and the power we have tried to assert have come back at us in the displaced and the terror, in ways that God is not mocked. But there is also the reciprocal nature of love and the sacred.

When we are reverent and observant and considerate—when we are truly and openly seeking and are ready for the blessings that come, not prescribing the blessings we will accept, then the sacred emerges and rings true. Maybe it truly is rhythm and balance, a mutual seeking and answering, that it is only a Light within that can provide and support and be manifest in a greater and more eternal Light. We must be part of it together.

“What if God is not an omnipotent being, but is a *process*? What if God is not once and for all but we are changing and God is changing? What if God’s power is not “power over” but is the power of love—God as love (Eros) is luring living and non-living parts of the universe into relationship and God as love (unconditional love/agape) is the acceptance of what is actual? What happens if the often cramped ideas of Christian love are expanded to include all that makes up the universe being involved in multiple forms of love? What if God is drawing us into a dance of the universe in which we join God in making what has been impossible become possible? What if justice is found in tenacious love and compassion rather than in laws?”

## Worship

Final hymn is number 215 in the Green book, “The Great Storm is Over” in which we sing to each other to be not afraid and to turn that corner of the process of God to Love and Light.

Closing: “God is near thee, and God is in thee; the Holy Spirit sits or resides within us, the Observer of our Good and Evil actions; as God is dealt with by us, God deals with us”

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts

Postlude