

Greeting: In 1920, Robert Frost wrote in the poem "Snow":
"Things must expect to come in front of us
A many times—I don't say just how many—
That varies with the things—before we see them.
One of the lies would make it out that nothing
Ever presents itself before us twice.
Where would we be at last if that were so?
Our very life depends on everything's
Recurring till we answer from within.
The thousandth time may prove the charm."

Our first hymn is about that eternal cycle of hope that recurs as winter turns to spring, green book 250, "Julian of Norwich".

Like our opening invocation from Frost and our opening hymn, both of our readings touch upon when and how we recognize the Spirit, the power of inspired Truth and Hope in our lives, even in the commonly occurring everyday interactions, as well as things. Our first reading is from the poetry of Hafiz, a 14th century Persian mystic and poet whose collected verses can be found in most homes in Iran today. Legends are that he knew both the Quran and the poetry of Rumi by heart. He was a favorite of Thoreau and Emerson, as well as Goethe. Here is his poem *I Know The Way You Can Get*:

I know the way you can get
When you have not had a drink of Love:

Your face hardens,
Your sweet muscles cramp.
Children become concerned
About a strange look that appears in your eyes

Which even begins to worry your own mirror
And nose.

Squirrels and birds sense your sadness
And call an important conference in a tall tree.
They decide which secret code to chant
To help your mind and soul.

Even angels fear that brand of madness
That arrays itself against the world
And throws sharp stones and spears into
The innocent
And into one's self.

O I know the way you can get
If you have not been drinking Love:

You might rip apart
Every sentence your friends and teachers say,
Looking for hidden clauses.

You might weigh every word on a scale
Like a dead fish.

You might pull out a ruler to measure
From every angle in your darkness
The beautiful dimensions of a heart you once
Trusted.

I know the way you can get
If you have not had a drink from Love's
Hands.

That is why all the Great Ones speak of

The vital need
To keep remembering God,
So you will come to know and see Him
As being so Playful
And Wanting,
Just Wanting to help.

That is why Hafiz says:
Bring your cup near me.
For all I care about
Is quenching your thirst for freedom!

All a Sane man can ever care about
Is giving Love!

The second reading today is also a poem, from the 16th century metaphysical English poet, George Herbert. His godfather was John Donne, and though an aristocrat, he gave up a promising political career to become a rural parish priest in the generation just before George Fox. Here is his poem *The Windows*:

Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?
He is a brittle crazy glass;
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place,
To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou dost anneal in glass thy story,
Making thy life to shine within
The holy preachers, then the light and glory
More reverend grows, and more doth win;
Which else shows waterish, bleak, and thin.

Doctrine and life, colors and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and awe; but speech alone
Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
And in the ear, not conscience, ring.

Our second hymn is “Come My Way” no. 157 in the green book, another mystical poem by George Herbert set to music by Ralph Vaughn Williams.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—As we seek solace and rest in Grace, and share our blessings, let us in our worship, in our consciousness, in our Spirits feel the ultimate Love, the joy that in fact all shall be well, the freedom from the narrow cares of dissatisfaction and critique. Let us not let the irritations or small matters or the ruts and patterns we get into obscure the windows we can be to our inner light. We worship together to be guided in Love, to be nurtured in Life. Let us feel the true presence come our way. Let us also express that power and presence to those in need of Light. Teach us to answer that of God in others openly and with joy and to look for connection. As we are changed, we change the world. We wish to be instruments of peace, through love, let us sow faith, hope, and light. Amen

Our third hymn presents a contemporary version of the same desire for the inspired experience of the divine expressed in the mystical second hymn. Let us sing No. 196 in the green book, “Cause Me to Come to Thy River” a simpler mysticism.

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

Message: Dear Friends—The men’s spiritual nurture group of this meeting is reading Howard Brinton’s book “The Religious Philosophy of Quakerism” and in our discussion of that text this past week we spoke of the eternal as something that can be, that is, present now. All of it. Part of the idea of our worship together is to tap into that piece of eternity, that inner Light, that of God, of the eternal, of Love, since God is Love, whenever we can, and with everyone we encounter.

In this sense, eternity is not an endless line, year after year, on and on. It is the all-at-once, the all-God and all-of-time. It is what makes us know that all shall be well again, as Julian of Norwich testified in the time of plague. We see the eternal in the waves of the ocean or lake, in the flow of the waterfalls, in the flicker of fire, and it becomes sacred when we connect it to each other, when we ground that sensation, that sensibility seen in the beautiful natural world, in love. There can be a now to the ineffable, an all-encompassing sense that we settle into, that we try to hold for ourselves and for others. It is both effortless and profound, elusive and near, quiet and powerful, joyful and awestruck—and gentle--we can hold in the Light.

At times it is a sensation of recognition, and I chose the opening piece from Frost because of the way he identifies how the mundane can suddenly flower, even at that thousandth charmed time—that we can suddenly see it anew, just as we can see each other anew as well. We can go to the river and see and feel the flow, the calming passage, the cycle of water from the sea to the mountains, from earth to sky. The miracle—and weep the tears of the river.

Away from Love and Light, we get in the state that Hafiz describes, a separation from the sacred, from the pulse of the universe, in a state that is alienated, critical, irritable. When we

are grounded in Love, even our righteous demands for justice, our dissatisfaction with a complacent world, is fed, is led, and we act out of love and hope for each other, out of motivations for equity and purpose that compel us to protest, to stand up, to affirm the lives and life of ourselves and others. We see and feel the links, we draw from the deep well that keeps us strong for the long haul, we do not burn out, but shine brighter.

When I was in graduate school, I worked on the Jesse Jackson campaign among many other activist involvements, and a friend, a graduate student from Spain, said to me, half in envy, “It is the activists, the leftists with religious convictions, that don’t burn out”. It was sort of a question. My students asked me and the colleague I’m co-teaching with the same question in class last week. How do you not burn out, not get tired? We both answered in part—“It’s you” for us. When we are linked into that deep, eternal love, that mystical place, that mutual attraction that can “Come My Way” or “Cause Me to Come”, we cannot help but engage. We cannot, in that love, condemn the heathen, relegate to hell, call for a day of judgment, as Hafiz observes. We are compelled to act in Love to save the world and all in it. As John Woolman wrote and acted in the midst of the French and Indian War going to a place with no roads and no maps:

12th day, 6th month, and first of week. (1763) It being a rainy day we continued in our tent, and here I was led to think of the nature of the exercise which hath attended me. Love was the first motion, and then a concern arose to spend some time with the Indians, that I might feel and understand their life and the spirit they live in, if haply I might receive some instruction from them, or they be in any degree helped forward by my following the leadings of Truth among them. And as it pleased the Lord to make way for my going at a time when the troubles

of war were increasing, and by reason of much wet weather travelling was more difficult than usual at that season, I looked upon it as a more favorable opportunity to season my mind and bring me into a near sympathy with them.

I spent the last three days in Washington DC working on the business of FCNL, our modern Meeting for Sufferings. In that organization and the American Friends Service Committee, among others, we continue to express that love for the world that compelled the early Quakers to act directly out of the mystical experience of the eternal. They did not become hermits or aesthetes or contemplatives—love drove them into the world, not out of it. We can and must act, but not so much out of indignation or anger or fear, but from Love. That of God is here now, it is not waiting for our death, it is our Life.

Life is a struggle, and shared life a struggle to communicate, and so we look for the many metaphors that indicate beyond the literal, to the whole that words cannot describe, as George Herbert identifies. In some sense, we get out of the way of the words as we express ourselves—the words are the indications of the meaning, not the meaning itself, we become windows. When love is the first motion, our actions speak in the language of love—we are nurtured by that drink, that potion.

The mystical roots, the magic in the world, the school of the Spirit is actually quite grounded. It can be found in a practice and a discipline, in simple ordered days, in horizons and stars, in the plowed up fields around us. Release yourself. Don't be shy as you surrender yourself to Love. Drink deeply. Make meaning. It is art, it is science, it is now, it is among us.

Worship

Final hymn is number 237 in the Green book, "When in Our Music God is Glorified" in which we sing to each other about the ways in which music can be that spark to the eternal.

Closing:

"Our very life depends on everything's

Recurring till we answer from within.

The thousandth time may prove the charm."

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts