

The Writing on Our Hearts      Message for 11 September 2016

Greeting: The Ayat al Kursi, the verse of the throne, verse 255 of the second surah of the holy Quran:

*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Allah! There is no God save Allah, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Allah. Unto Allah belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is the one that intercedith with Allah, save by Allah's leave? Allah knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of Allah's knowledge save what Allah will. Allah's throne includeth the heavens and the earth and Allah is never weary of preserving them. Allah is the Sublime, the Tremendous. Allah, the Most High, speaks the truth.*

Our first hymn is in the Green Book, #203, "There Are Angels Hov'ring Round"

Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-11 "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forbears when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, though I was wedded to them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will one teach a neighbor, or another a sibling, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord."

2 Corinthians 3:1-6 “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. God has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Finally, I have a poem from May Sarton, the Unitarian poet that some used to joke is quoted every Sunday in some UU church, this from her Autumn Sonnets:

If I can let you go as trees let go  
Their leaves, so casually, one by one;  
If I can come to know what they do know,  
That fall is the release, the consummation,  
Then fear of time and the uncertain fruit  
Would not distemper the great lucid skies  
This strangest autumn, mellow and acute.  
If I can take the dark with open eyes  
And call it seasonal, not harsh or strange  
(For love itself may need a time of sleep),  
And, treelike, stand unmoved before the change,  
Lose what I lose to keep what I can keep,  
The strong root still alive under the snow,  
Love will endure - if I can let you go.

Our 2nd hymn is “Praise to the Living God” no. 30 in the green book.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—Let us know the eternal, let us read the writing on our hearts, let us inscribe one another with love, imprint and implant the sacred through the letting in and letting go. In the silence, in the center of our full and alone world, in the togetherness of that space where Angels hover, where God is near, in that sensation, let us deeply abide. We carry it within ourselves and among ourselves—we don't need the notes, nor the maps, when we have an inner guide. It is the root that holds even as the leaves, the pages, change. Oh Great Spirit, Allah, the God of Jacob, the Path, the living Love, our Life, we pray for all to be found in the fullness of time. Comfort with the gentle breeze, the cool water of blessed Spirit. Let us identify not only with one another, but with the One. Amen.

Our third hymn is green book No. 140, "In Solitude I come to God in Prayer"

Children may now head downstairs for time with each other.

Message: Dear Friends—The blessings of that last hymn, the blossoming, the holy dove, the healing light, the home, come through the silence and simplicity, the presence of God, the lit candle, the hymns and songs of praise. Our spirituality is an experience, the ongoing and extended living that brings wisdom. Learning is a valuable thing, and I have devoted a career to learning, but that is not the product. It might be a catalyst to experience, it might indicate a direction, or help to explain, but it's not what's deeply known. Our reading might lead us to an emotional experience, but the reading is not the experience. A heart that we can trust, an inner light is where we go from letter to Spirit.

The verses from Jeremiah and from Hebrews mention directly that in the new covenant, there is no need to teach about God or the sacred, but rather that one should, or rather, will know. Or as it is put in Corinthians, we don't need the letter of recommendation, the review, the vetted reference, rather we should simply be that, enact it, read it in our hearts, let our lives speak. The external tablets of stone, the authority of doctrine, the official word is not to be looked up, it is to be experienced, it is simply to be done.

And this is where we come to the image of the writing on the heart, the already known. If God is writing on our hearts, and that of God is in each one of us, then we write on each other's hearts. A blank unwritten heart has never felt. Empathy and love, concern and caring, hurt and longing, make the inner light of Christ discernable, legible as we become able to apply that Light to life. And as May Sarton observed in her Autumn Sonnet, it is the completed sentences, the fully realized encounters, where one gets the total and rounded story of love from beginning to end. The letting go is what establishes the final keeping. The entire season.

And what about when we are alone? The opening invocation of the Quran's Verse of the Throne is a special verse for Muslims, for it is the verse of comfort in trouble, a verse recited in times of extreme fear or distress. Allah, our God, Jehovah, knows what is before and behind us, in fact those experiences are the things that are written on our hearts, that provide and build the inner Guide. The fullness of our lives, the realness of our hearts, are what matter in the time of crisis, if we can stay in touch with that sacred place. If we can hear those angels hovering 'round, the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Alive, the Eternal, the Sublime, the Tremendous, the Most High. The

opening hymn talks about the New Jerusalem, home to Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and all the people of the Book, just as the verses we read in Jeremiah and Hebrews speak of the new covenant. These are new with every heart. In fact, as our experiences write on our hearts, they are new in every context, and yet eternally old.

There are many world religions and experiences of the sacred that go well beyond those recorded in the Book, in scriptures, in any writing. The spiritual traditions of earth-based religions in the indigenous people of this nation are in testimony today at Standing Rock. They do not speak in terms of scientific or even moral environmentalism, but they say that water is life and that these are sacred places, these are experiences and locations written in their hearts and acted on from deeply felt reality. Our own written tradition says in the book of Romans that there are clearly peoples who do not know the written versions of God's law, but who act according to it because it is written in their hearts. There are traditions that understand the sacred, experience that of God, not only in the earth, but in the cosmos and in our dreams. All of these manifestations and possible guides or indications are not God, are not even the Angels themselves, they simply allow their perception. Like the scriptures and texts, they are Spiritual paths, perhaps, but they are not the walking of it. That is us. Together.

For the accumulated experiences of a human life tend to a common experience, a universal sense, an eternal pattern. We are those autumnal trees that May Sarton describes, letting go of each leaf and storing in the root. Any one leaf is unique, but among all the trees of the forest there is the common oneness, the sacred template, the Platonic ideal of a life well lived.

It may be a pattern, but it is not written in stone, it is not fixed in ink, it is not even timeless in the geology and place of our changeable planet, and there are variations in culture and place and time that any one of us can never know in a literal, taught or studied sense. And yet, deep down, Old and New Testament, Surah and Lesbian universalist, Standing Rock and wondrous dream, what is written on the heart is mutually understood and needs no explication. A comfort and a wonder. What is literally true is temporary, linguistically bound by culture and place and subject to interpretation, but what is eternally true is open, inexpressible fully, but deeply known.

## Worship

The final hymn is in the red hymnal, “O God of Love, O King of Peace”

Closing: That of God within is both writing and written in ever growing and feeling mutual discernment of living hearts. May our many and diverse blessed hearts beat as one. See the Angels, feel the comfort, be the Peace that passes understanding. Live Light.

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts