

Greeting: The words of Walt Whitman who saw his poetry as the bible of a new American religion, and himself as the prophet. He was born a Quaker, although he did not follow the religion as an adult. Many scholars agree that his work is laced with Quaker concepts:

There is that in me — I do not know what it is — but I know it
is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty — calm and cool then my body becomes,
I sleep — I sleep long.

I do not know it — it is without name — it is a word unsaid,
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.
Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers
and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?

It is not chaos or death — it is form, union, plan — it is eternal
life — it is Happiness.

The past and present wilt — I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?

Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a
minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through
with his supper?

Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,

I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,

It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,

It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,

I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,

If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,

But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,

And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,

Missing me one place search another,

I stop somewhere waiting for you.

1855

Our first hymn is #154 from the Green book, "Be Thou Our Vision"

Our first reading is from: The memorable works of a son of thunder and consolation namely that true prophet and faithful servant of God and sufferer for the testimony of Jesus, Edward Burroughs, who dyed a prisoner for the word of God in the city of London, the fourteenth of the twelfth month, 1662 at the age of 28:

We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness,

temperance, peace and unity with God, and with one another, that these things may abound.

The second reading is from Luke 12, 22-34. “Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life^b? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

“Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Our second hymn is no. 180 in the Green book “There is Nothing I can Give You”.

Joys and Concerns---then music interlude

Dear Friends—Our joys and concerns, the sorrow and happiness that compose our lives and experience are also our prayers when we share them here, prayers of gratitude and concern, mutual

messages of sacred encounter as we each absorb and reflect them. Let us put forward the essential things of ourselves to one another and make the gifts of the spirit free for the taking. Help us to feel free to step forward and embrace joy, and love, peace and heaven. Let us keep encouraged. Let the Love of our heart be our vision. Let us not be consumed by worry about our lives, but be given over to light, the lightening of our burdens as well as the brightening of days for ourselves and those around us. Amen.

Our next hymn is “I Celebrate the Inward Light” number 149 in the green hymnal.

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

Message:

Dear Friends—The greeting I opened this morning with comes from the ending of Walt Whitman’s famous poem *Song of Myself*, a poem which opens with the lines:

“I CELEBRATE myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.”

So, what seems very self-absorbed immediately becomes profoundly egalitarian. There is a profound generosity, and, in fact, a way of declaring that any truth I know, we actually all know. If you’ve read the whole poem and its litany of deeply experiencing and loving the presence of infinite others, you know that it is not far from a recitation of answering that of God in everyone, of seeing Light in our commonality, of sharing our vision. It is from there, from that foundation, that I think Burroughs, facing his own death at a young age could see a common hope, a possible heaven in shared vision and encounter, in generosity of spirit. He said:

We are not for names, nor men, nor titles of Government, nor are we for this party nor against the other but we are for justice and mercy and truth and peace and true freedom, that these may be exalted in our nation, and that goodness, righteousness, meekness, temperance, peace and unity with God, and with one another, that these things may abound.

The hymn we sang tells us to feel free to take them, to not be restrained by circumstance or wait for the invitation of others, but as Whitman wrote, if you don't see it, our common deepest Spirit right here, keep looking, it is all around you, right under your feet.

Out in the universe, there are a lot of sparkling, shiny objects, millions and millions of them, and a large number do not produce their own light. They reflect light. Our moon is like that. Our earth is like that, a twinkling blue dot. And these things are bright and inspiring and identifiable. It is, to me, such an interesting phenomenon that space itself is so cold and dark, but when you put an object into it, that object sparkles and shines. And those objects don't make any other object dimmer, in fact they make the darkness brighter. So, when we take peace and joy, love and heaven, we don't use them up in any sense—in fact we enhance them and make them more. It's the great mystery of the inward light, as well. It's the basis on which Jesus can say to his disciples "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear."

And yet, Jesus gives this "don't worry" message in the middle of telling his disciples to get out there and take risks to change the world, just as Edward Burroughs did, and just as Whitman himself did in the American Civil War. They all took the challenge and tragedy of the world and responded with love. It was not a matter of waiting for when it was safe or for when there was enough saved up for security. In some ways, a calm and controlled world is one that might also limit or constrain love.

Collective action is one kind of expression of love in the face of injustice. Last week, Craig and I participated in the Peoples' Climate March in Washington DC. There were young people, in fact young people who are often rejected and despised because they were transgender youth, who made some large art pieces to defend this earth, our home. They were large, round, painted and decorated parachute silks that each needed twenty people to carry them. On that hot afternoon, only a few people stepped out into the street to help the way Craig and I did. A few announcements were made through a microphone inviting folks to step forward, but it was only when Craig walked around and invited people in a personal way, when he recognized them for who they were and asked if they'd like to help that they shrugged with that "Why not?" Just providing everything and laying it out does not always do it. Someone has to step forward and say, why don't you take it?

As the groups formed, they immediately discovered that in that day's breeze it was easy for twenty people to snap the light silk and inflate it, and soon children were running joyfully underneath them as they billowed. The transgender youth, people so often rejected, were delighted. They worked! Perfect for the aerial views of the event, and for those of us who had not made our own signs or banners, made us more part of everything, recognized us, included us, recognized and included all, as Whitman does in his great poem, as God does us, the birds, the flowers, Life.

We can all work in harmony, even in times and situations of trouble and great peril. Even that small cooperative spirit in certain moments is a taste of heaven. Fear and worry are such powerful forces, often the engines of the advertising and political worlds. Let them go. We will all still have to struggle and work and try, it will be hard, but those two we can work to let go. Take peace, and joy, and heaven and step away from worry and fear. Be steadfast for each other, and for the infinite Spirit among us all.

Our closing hymn is number 2 in the Green book, “All Creatures of Our God and King”

Closing: “I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.
I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.
You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.
Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.”

Thank-yous /Introductions/Remembrances/
Announcements/Afterthoughts

Postlude