

Created By God, United to Love

At the genesis of creation our Creator had a vision for the cosmos. Our Creator breathed into existence a symbiotic unity of harmony birthed in a divine crucible of humility, justice and shalom. And our Creator realized that it was not good for there to be singularity; therefore, God created community. Those communal beings were given the responsibility to cultivate, nurture, and increase the blessings God bestowed upon the earth. They dwelt in complete purity without shame. They dwelt in simplicity without competition. They dwelt in a covenant of trust and cooperation. And it was good; and it was very good. It was more than enough until egotism destroyed the equilibrium of creation. That egotism -- the habit of valuing everything only in reference to one's personal interest, selfishness and self-centeredness. The view that morality ultimately rests on self-interest -- that egotism has caused humanity to fracture and accept a narrative antithetical to the very nature of our Creator - that there is any separation among us, that there is any hierarchical worth to our being, that one group of persons is superior to another.

From the time of the Nataruk massacre in the Pleistocene period to the bloodshed we see today, each period in our history has been marred and diminished by war, conflict, violence and destruction. I posit this conflict is borne not of an inherent attribute toward or propensity for war, but a turning away from mankind's deep communion with God toward a narcissistic self-actualized pernicious egotism. Humanity walked the garden with God and there was unity and abiding peace. It was not until self-interest rose above all else that the sacredness of the garden was shattered. Whether you receive the Creation narrative as fact or myth, it offers a deep primer on the result of narcissism, human avarice and self-aggrandizement.

Each book of the Bible, each chapter of the telling of God's unfolding story for creation evidences God's desire for blessing and abundance and sharing and community and peace. From the command of God through the prophet Moses to let my people go to the story of the Good Samaritan to the raising of the New Heaven and the New Earth, God has created, spoken,

demonstrated, sent his Son to live and die for, and resurrected equality and justice for all.

There is not a single mainstream religious tradition founded on the notion of racial superiority, domination, or hate. Those notions and practices are antithetical to every higher power called upon in the name of holiness. Make no mistake, there are extremists within every religious body who misinterpret, misrepresent, and misuse the sacred writ of their peoples to support their own divisive and selfish ends. And, there have also been wars waged by religious zealots intent on imposing their belief on others. But, if one studies those instances one will find that there was a malformed understanding of God's Word fueled by a sense of entitlement to the wealth, land and bounty of others. As in the garden there was a succumbing to selfish desire and gain. But be just as clear, those who have prayed and do pray earnestly and humbly in the name of God, Allah, Jehovah, Buddha, Gaia, Gitche Manitou or Christ, sought and seek peace, compassion and the highest physical, psychological, economic and spiritual fulfillment for all creation.

As those coming to make amends with God asked what sacrifice was suitable for honoring and worshipping the God of all creation, the prophet Micah spoke a timeless truth, an unadulterated truth, and unequivocal truth that speaks to the purest nature of God - God does not want our external offerings and hollow observances devoid of true meaning and suspect intent. God does not seek our gathering of things, consumer driven material goods, to superficially assuage our guilt and placate our sin. God says don't bring me fattened calves, I made the calf. Don't bring me a thousand Rams, I made the rams and the hills upon which they graze. Don't bring me doves in droves, I made the doves and air which enables their flight. Bring me your reconciled heart. Yes, I ate that too, but I gave you the free will to choose between right and wrong, good and evil, worshipping evil or worshipping me-bring me your humble heart and made up mind to serve me and love your neighbor. Beloved, God is not fooled and God will not be mocked by insincere lip service to repentance and change. Rather, God desires an offering of the heart; an outward expression of an internal transformation to *do justice*, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. God desires action, the doing and not just the

uttering. God desires our righteous conduct. God desires that we live our faith and activate our spirituality for the common good. God desires a humble heart that lives for others and not self. God desires a turning away from destructive thinking, ignoble intent and disingenuous holiness.

We as a society like to call upon the names of and extol the work of great leaders such as Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Oscar Romero. When we call their names we speak in soaring rhetoric about the justice they worked for, marched for, prayed for, sacrificed for, and died for, because they are dead and in death they no longer pose a threat. They were not heralded and honored in life when they called for equality, when they called for a dismantling of systemic oppression and exclusion, when they called this nation to account for her unfulfilled promises of liberty and justice for all birthed in the womb of new republic and aborted on the altar of supremacy and superiority. We cannot call upon those names and claim to revere them when they stood for justice and too many in this country now stand for injustice. Each of these individuals served a God they knew demanded humility and equality and justice. What does the Lord require of us? With our lips we proclaim obedience, but with our actions we demonstrate betrayal.

When anyone believes themselves to be superior to others, they betray God;

When anyone believes themselves born into a privileged class or peoples, they betray God;

When anyone believes the color of their skin means God favors them over skin of a different hue, they betray God;

When anyone bastardizes the Word of God for selfish gain and affinity affirmation, they betray God;

When anyone passively benefits from racist and discriminatory policies, practices, and programs, they betray God;

When anyone silently witnesses the mistreatment of others created in the image and likeness of God based on racist, sexist, xenophobic, and others categories of designed difference, they betray God;

When anyone espouses hateful rhetoric and violent rampage, they betray God.

There is no race except the human race. *There is no race except the human race.* We must always be humble enough and selfless enough and reverent enough to prostrate ourselves before God and ask, "God, is my heart pure? Where do I need to continue being transformed? Where do my beliefs, my actions, my allegiances fall short of your prescribed precepts? Where does my life not bring you glory? Where am I still consumed with self? And when we ask we need to be silent long enough to hear the answer. And do the work necessary to change.

As we introspectively analyze our hearts, souls and minds we become available to the still small voice of God calling us to our true selves, reuniting us with a non-dual understanding of being, calling us home to the human community of peace, acceptance, equality and love. We can begin to loose ourselves of the rhetoric of division and hatred, bigotry and bias, racism and supremacy. We then can embrace the ethos of Philippians where Paul proscribed the prescription for healing the disease of divisive sin. Paul called us to forget what is behind and strain toward that which lies ahead, to press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We can relinquish who we were, we can relinquish our lesser ideals, we can relinquish our destructive thoughts and practices, we can relinquish our selfish silence, we can relinquish our apathy, we can relinquish our bitterness and move higher.

Those who have worked toward supremacy can be like Ken Parker, a former Grand Dragon for the KKK who began to question why he hated black and brown people and slowly walked away from that lifestyle, now fully renouncing the KKK, its message of hate and supremacy, and working to transform others. Or like Arno Michealis, who runs an Underground Railroad for those seeking to leave alt-right hate groups. In his Saul-like season he helped found what went on to become one of the largest skin head organizations on earth. But, in his Paul-like transformation he now leads The Forgiveness Project, and helps others heal from supremacist control and domination. He stated, and I quote, "Forgiveness is a sublime example of

humanity that I explore at every opportunity, because it was the unconditional forgiveness I was given by people who I once claimed to hate that demonstrated for me the way from there to here.” Beloved, hate will not get us from there to here. Hate will not traverse the chasm of sin from there to here. Hate will not expand the Kingdom of God which lies within and around us when we follow the will of God.

Hate kills, hate destroys, hate violates, hate controls, hate dominates, hate silences, hate terrorizes, hate legislates inequality, hate hides behind religion and politics to promote oppression and inequality. Hate imprisons those who hate more than those they wish to oppress. Hate is not of God!

The only power stronger than hate is love. Hate cannot stand in the face of love. Hate cannot win in the face of love. Love gives life, love creates, love restores, love heals, love breaks chains, love encourages, love empowers, love welcomes, love is of God and love is God!

We are here because we believe in love. We are here because we believe in unity. We are here because we believe in the sacredness of all humanity. We are here because we are united to love. As people of faith, all faiths, we need to heed the teachings of Father Richard Rohr and meet one another at our deepest experience of God. As we meet in this holy circle, we must live our faith out loud, unashamedly claim the moral center of our traditions and practice justice, practice mercy, practice humility, practice peace, practice civility, practice inclusivity, practice the truth that all men and women are created equal, equal, equal, equal! We must practice unity! We who believe in freedom cannot rest. We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes!

Say it with me: United to Love! United to Love! United to Love! Hallelujah, amen!