

## Willing To Love

This is the third in our series of sermons examining some of the topics that come up most frequently in our prayer requests. So far we have looked at Willing to Heal and Willing to Forgive. After today, we have one more left: Willing to Prosper. The topics are in this order for a specific reason—we have to be willing to heal, forgive and love before we can be willing to prosper.

One idea we have established is that most prayer requests are for an outcome—yet to get that outcome requires us to DO something. That is the step in the process we would like to skip. We would like the resurrection without the crucifixion. We would like the cake without the mess of baking it. We pray TO a God we consider a giant Pez dispenser in the sky: we make a request and if all works right, it will pop out and come to us complete. Really, it doesn't work like that. Trust me, I've tried! God is Infinite Source and Substance yet it comes to us as energy and ideas to shape and manifest through our own efforts.

First today let's review our definition of "Willing", which comes to us from the free online dictionary: 1. Prepared; 2. Acting or ready to act gladly; eagerly compliant. To be willing to do whatever it is we desire, we must prepare. And we must be ready to act; eagerly compliant with whatever needs to be done. Does that describe us? Well, maybe sometimes. Often, not so much.

Many of our prayers are to BE LOVED or to have SOMEONE to love. The first prayer ignores the most obvious truth of our lives; we are created in love and loved without reservation by our Creator. No matter what we do or have done, we ARE loved. Yet our humanity wants skin around that love and often we pray for someone to love. This prayer ignores the fact that there are literally billions of someone's to love. We want someone specific. Maybe we have a person in mind or a list of characteristics. On the one hand, it can be helpful to know what you want; on the other hand, it can limit the amazing love God may bring into our lives because we ignore what is in front of us while waiting for the specific expectations we have created. One last thing may get in the way of having our prayer for love answered—we are not WILLING TO LOVE. The surest way to attract love is to be willing TO love. Often we play the "chicken or egg first" game and tell God, "I'd be willing to love if you gave me

someone who loved me!” My experience is that God does not barter. My good flows freely when I get my expectations out of the way and become willing.

So what is this concept called love anyway? We have become desensitized to the idea by using the words “Love” with any number of preferences. “I love ice cream” or “I love Hawaii” or “I love shopping”. Honestly, those are preferences. They have little to do with the spiritual concept of love. Unity co-founder, Charles Fillmore describes love this way in the Revealing Word, “Love is the power that joins and binds in divine harmony the universe and everything in it; the great harmonizing principle known to man. Love is an inner quality that sees good everywhere and in everybody. Divine love is impersonal; it loves for the sake of loving. It is not concerned with what or who it loves, nor with a return of love. Like the sun, its joy is in the shining forth of its nature.”

Jesus admonishes us, in what he refers to as the only true commandments, to love God, love one another and love ourselves. He is referring to this harmonizing power, the love for the sake of loving. Some refer to this as “Agape” love. It is different than the sense expression of love we associate with romantic love. So how do we become willing to love in this way?

To begin, we must acknowledge that our true nature is love. Fillmore says that love is the “pure essence of Being”, it is an expression of our divinity and our natural response to life. We are taught and conditioned to be other than love yet we can choose to retrain our thoughts and feelings to remember that we are Love. Two groups find it easier to love in this way: the innocent, untrained in the ways other than love and the spiritually mature, committed to expressing their true nature. The innocent may be young or may be developmentally unable to comprehend the training in something they are not. The spiritually mature can be any age and may come to their commitment through any spiritual path. The only marker is that they resist the training and consciously choose to love, in the face of all contrary outer conditions and evidence. This is the path of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr and the Dali Lama. The Black Eyed Peas song, One Tribe, says, “Let’s get amnesia; forget about all that evil that they feed ya.” And what is the evil, the training, the belief in separation among us and God and among each other?

That is our second step in becoming willing to love, we must let go of our judgments and accept that ALL of us are worthy of love. Most of us have a list of judgments about ourselves and others that make us unworthy of love. We

may begin with being unworthy of the love of humanity but usually it is tied to our worthiness of the love of God. We have already established that as a fundamental truth, we are loved by our Creator. So if God loves us, why should any of us withhold our love? Sometimes our judgments come from other people's opinions of us and the opinions we are trained with from our youth. Judgments can be imbedded in our religious training, in our education values and the system of education, in our culture conveyed by peers and by media. We are literally bombarded with a million reasons why we and others are not worthy of love. What is the Truth of all that? We are created in love, loved by our Creator and worthy of love. This is not to say we condone hurtful behavior. I always have to make that distinction. But to love one another and to love ourselves is to connect with the true essence of our being, the spiritual nature within that is more than our human behaviors. It is to love "like the sun, its joy is in the shining forth of its nature."

Which means the third step is to be willing to love without an objective. Often we love because we are supposed to. We love to get love in return. But Fillmore says true love "is not concerned with what or who it loves, nor with a return of love." Certainly today, we encourage expressions of love to our mothers and all those who nurture and support us in love. Yet can we do that and let go of our expectations of ourselves and of our mothers? Can we radiate love just as genuinely when there is no specific person to receive our love? That may seem like an odd concept but imagine that you are out in space, looking down on that beautiful blue marble that is our home with love. Love fills your heart and pours out onto every ocean and continent. There is no way to see the billions of people and creatures bathed in your love yet it is happening. You are being your true nature; you are simply being love.

Although this is not a story about mothers, I wanted to share a simple tale of love. It is "Otis and the Unexpected Gift". From birth to the age of seven, I lived periodically with my maternal grandparents. They lived on an acre of land outside Joplin, Missouri on old Route 66. Although as children we were forbidden from trying to cross the highway, we were free to explore our entire side of the highway. My grandparent's neighbor to the east was an older, frail man named Otis. I am not clear on all of his qualities of mind and health but I know that his sister cared for him until her death. At that point, my grandparents sort of unofficially cared for him. They made sure he had groceries, took him to the doctor and got his medicine and occasionally, I know my grandpa would take Otis to the junk yard to rummage around and get stuff. Otis was odd and his house was always closed up and stuffy but I liked crossing the lot between the houses and going over with my grandpa. I was young and I had no real training in fearing people or judging people. And

my business was to tag along anywhere my grandpa would let me—which was pretty much everywhere from the stockyards to the lumber yard to local store. Life on the farm was simple. My grandma was a teacher and she taught me to read and write before I went to kindergarten. In the summer, I worked in the garden with my grandma and sat in the swing and drank iced tea with her. My grandpa taught me to herd livestock, gather eggs from the chickens and discern among the tools so I could fetch them for him. I was protected some from the opinions of the world about my size but there were things my brother could do that I could not. He could reach things on the metal playset that were out of my reach so my grandpa made a rope swing for my short legs. But my brother could ride bikes and pedal toys that we could never find a model small enough for me. Perhaps it was not a big deal but it was the beginning of evidence that I was different. And it was a sore spot for my fierce independence.

Now I never considered myself close to Otis; he didn't seem like the kind of guy who had a lot of close relationships and I was just a small child. But Otis apparently noticed things that people may have thought were beyond him. And Otis tinkered in ways that betrayed an intelligence never given full expression. One day my grandpa came across the lot that lay between Otis' little shack and my grandparent's house with the most amazing gift I think I had ever seen. Without an explanation and certainly without an event like Christmas or my birthday, he set the gift down in front of me. There in bright red and yellow was a tiny tricycle, perfectly sized for my little legs. I have no idea how he shaped the metal and found the little wheels and pedals. I sat on the seat and let my feet touch the pedals for the first time. I was probably already too old for a tricycle but I'd never had such a toy. It was the gift of fitting; it was the gift of confidence and independence. It was the gift of unconditional love without an expectation of return. It was an expression of love from someone many would have judged incapable of loving or creating. It was Otis finding a way to be love in a world that didn't always understand him.

Today is a day to celebrate the love of our creation: the love of our Creator, the love of those who gave us human birth and those who have nurtured us along the path. It is also a day for us to consider if we are Willing **To** Love. Are we prepared to acknowledge that love is our true nature and that all the training otherwise is a system of false belief. Are we eagerly compliant with the call to let go of our judgments of ourselves and others as unworthy of love? Are we ready to love without an objective; to love as the joyful expression of who we are? Let today be a day celebrating all of us as the individual expressions of the one eternal Love, willing to be that love in the world.