

2018 Love and Statue of Liberty

Who knew love could be the most challenging subject? Even as I conceived the series based in American History, I was stumped for quite a while to think of a person or thing that embodied Love. I finally settled on the Statue of Liberty. It was, after all, a gift and it has become a symbol of welcome to those coming to our country through the original point of entry, Ellis Island. Then the news filled with an **un-welcome** to those wanting to enter our country. Research led me to question the nature of the original gift from France to the United States. All of this makes for a somewhat challenging discussion of love so we should just dig in and begin.

When we discuss these 12 faculties or spiritual powers, we must remember that we are looking at both what the spiritual idea looks like in the *absolute* AND how that idea expresses through our humanity. Our humanity can be pretty dense and our expression can muddy the waters of a pure spiritual faculty. In *Discover the Power Within You*, Eric Butterworth observes this: “You are beloved of God—simply because you are the activity of God living itself out into expression *as you*. God loves you because God *is love* and this love is your true nature.” Well there! Love is our true nature so all done! Just be love in the world and nothing else we really need to know about this is there? It may actually be that simple and uncomplicated as an ideal, however the practice seems to be a bit illusive and messy. I don’t always seem to be able to *be love* in the world. As we look at what gets in the way of being love, we’ll begin with the gift of the statue of liberty.

How many of us are really good at giving gifts with no strings attached; no personal agenda; and no thought of getting anything in return? Yeah, me neither. As it turns out, neither was France. From the National Park service site on this monument we gather this information: “The Statue of Liberty was a gift from the French people commemorating the alliance of France and the United States during the American Revolution. Yet, it represented much more to those individuals who proposed the gift. In 1865, Edouard de Laboulaye (a French political thinker, U.S. Constitution expert, and abolitionist) proposed that a monument be built as a gift from France to the United States in order to commemorate the perseverance of freedom and democracy in the United States and to honor the work of the late president Abraham Lincoln. Laboulaye hoped that by calling attention to the recent achievements of the United States, the French people would be inspired to create their own democracy in the face of a repressive monarchy.

In 1865, France was divided between people who were still committed to the monarchy and people who supported the Enlightenment ideals (the belief that people had natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness). It was the hope of many French liberals that democracy would prevail and that freedom and justice for all would be attained. In order to turn his idea into a reality, Laboulaye talked to many prominent and influential men in France. Auguste Bartholdi - a French sculptor who had recently been commissioned to make a bust of Laboulaye - greatly supported Laboulaye's idea and was soon selected to be the sculptor of the proposed monument." The statue was named "Liberty Enlightening the World" to distinguish its intent from the brash and violent acts of the Roman goddess Liberty.

The plot for Laboulaye thickened shortly after his proposal as there was an uprising among the working class people seeking democracy and the government suppressed it with equal measures of violence. "Laboulaye did not support such extremism among laboring people; although he wanted to change the French government to a democratic government, he did not want to do it through violence. Despite his liberal views, Laboulaye was criticized by his colleagues because he spoke out against the violence and supported the governmental repression of the uprising. The creation of the Statue of Liberty, however, was a chance for Laboulaye to restore his reputation as a devoted liberal and democratic advocator, honor the success of liberty in the United States, and hope that the French would be inspired to fight for the same ideals." There were struggles to finance the gift, which included American funding the base and site, getting it to the US, and getting it constructed. Parts of it were on display at national events leading up to the dedication by President Grover Cleveland, which finally took place at Bedloe Island on October 28, 1886. New York City held the first "ticker tape parade" in its honor. Laboulaye died in 1883 but the sculptor Bartholdi continued working on the Statue and participated in its assembly in the United States.

The words we may associate with the statue are actually lines of a sonnet, "The New Colossus", written in 1883 by Emma Lazarus as a fund raiser to complete the foundation for the statue. The poem was mostly forgotten until after the poet's death in the 1900's and her friends advocated for a plaque commemorating the words. That plaque is where we find the words, "'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The words of the sonnet speak poignantly of the human condition weighed down in its humanity and longing for a sense of its divinity. Perhaps the “golden door” is not in geography but in consciousness; not a harbor but a shift in perspective that looks within.

If we are *being love* we aren’t worried about the duality of subject-object. We just radiate love the way the sun radiates light, without directing where it will land and the effect it will have. The duality of our human thinking asks “Who should I love? Where should I direct my love?” Jesus understands our tendency towards duality and responds, “Love God, Love your neighbor, Love yourself.” Even with this specific guidance, we have difficulty expressing our faculty of love. A funny thing about the statue of Liberty—the torch was designed to be brightly luminesce and it was initially designated a lighthouse. But they couldn’t get the torch to radiate light. Symbolic of our struggle to radiate love.

Divine love expresses through me **as compassion**. Why did I pick the word compassion? We talk about agape love, unconditional love, love without objects. Why pick compassion? For me, the word compassion bears the connotation or implied meaning of giving love when it is unearned and it is without an expectation of return. It is giving love when I have to *overcome* my natural tendency to judge who is and who is not worthy of receiving the gift of my love. Self-awareness lets me know the tendency is there. Divine wisdom prompts me to examine the consciousness I am speaking and acting from. Am I judging or loving? You cannot do both at the same time. One of the biggest obstacles to living as radiating love is the tendency to worry that our love will fall upon those who are unworthy, undeserving of our beneficence. Maybe you’ve heard the phrase, “Throw shade on someone”? We can shine our love light brightly, so long as we can shade the bums, the evil people, the unwashed heathens from receiving the light. We cannot describe what that experience is like without using words of condemnation. Look in your heart for who are **those people** in your life that you would like to shade from the brilliance of your love? The more of *those people* we have, the more we tend to tone down our love light so it doesn’t reach beyond our intimate circle.

We shine a little more brightly when we think we will get something in return—like Laboulaye. We give with a running tally in our heads of who owes us and how much we should be expecting in return. Giving love becomes a barter system, even with God. And it ceases to be love. It is just another way to get what we want. Or what we think we want.

When we can align with divine love we find everyone is worthy of love—even ourselves. We have compassion on ourselves and remember our true nature, even in the face of evidence that **we** have acted in alignment with the fear, anger and hostility of human ego. It is a brave act of self-awareness if we recognize our actions are out of alignment. Can we catch ourselves resisting being the love we naturally are because someone is different, speaks differently, or dresses differently? The goal is not to beat ourselves up with the awareness; rather we must simply bring ourselves back into alignment, making amends when needed. **We are beloved** because we are the activity of God living itself out into expression. Remember? In compassion for ourselves, we return to the truth of the Love that we are.

When we can remember our true nature and radiate love it begins to express through us as the **great power of attraction**. We tune ourselves to the vibration of love and not only is love what radiates outward, love brings *to us* that which is at that vibration also. The Universe responds to us at the vibrational level we establish within ourselves. When we establish the vibration of hatred, anger and pain we envision this more as a repulsive power because we close down to life-affirming words and experiences. Vibrating with anger or hatred is the same principle of finding the outer world aligning with your inner vibration but it feels more like repulsing than magnetizing. It is easy to get stuck in an angry vibration, forgetting we have the power to change. Someone takes the parking space I was heading for; the clerk argues about a coupon; the drive thru window gets my order wrong—and I haven't even gotten onto 22 Hwy yet! This week, as I lived the divine power of love I got to experience some check points that allowed me glimpses of self-awareness and gave me opportunities to reclaim my power to re-center and re-align. These spiritual powers don't operate in isolation and love is best tempered with wisdom and faith.

When I am in alignment, living divine love expressing through me **as unity**, I find it easier to agree with Fillmore's statement: *In Divine Mind, love is the power that joins and binds in divine harmony the universe and everything in it; the great harmonizing principle known to man.* My deepest desire is to know Oneness and operate from that place of harmony and unity with all. When I can celebrate our differences and yet see beyond them to our oneness, I am in community with the whole world. The divisions we see are the illusions created in our own minds. There is only one race, the human race. We all share this biological bubble we call earth and in our unity there is a delicate balance.

We are a flexible and ever-changing eco-system and we must let love guide us to be good stewards of our own oneness. Do we love the earth and the trees and the flowers?

The past three weeks I have encountered the challenge of a swarm of wasps: Cicada Killers according to the pest websites I researched. They are about as big as my index finger and they nest in the ground. They have been swarming over the grass and sidewalk outside my apartment patio. I have developed a meditation of neutrality as I walk through the buzzing and swooping insects. I also started wearing my raincoat to walk through them. The apartment finally got professional pest control out and last Thursday evening there was a refreshing sense of peace as I walked undisturbed to my door. It has felt as if the Universe has spent the last week asking me—Do you really believe in this love stuff? Cause here is what you might not think is loveable. It's the end of the week and Yes, I still really believe in this love stuff. I don't think God was testing me—I think my sense consciousness and intellect was using the variety of input that shows up in the world to try to move me away from the spiritual path I've chosen. When we give up our divine power to choose, we begin to align with the vibration of the external world and then we become the cause of our own discomfort. Choosing love magnetizes the good I seek to come to me in ways I recognize and harmonizes my awareness into unity with the world.

Love is not giving in or giving up or acting outside my own integrity. Love is not aggressive nor is it enabling but it can be persistent compassion. Love calls me to compassion when my intellect may argue against the worthiness of myself or those around me to receive love. Not expressing love is asking the sun to stop shining. Love is our nature. When we can live in that knowing, it sets up a vibration that is the great attractive power in our lives. It creates a sense of oneness and unity that weaves us into community.

Divine Love expresses through me as compassion, attraction and unity.