

## And All Is Swell

The title for this final sermon comes from the way my children learned to end the Prayer for Protection. As is popular in YOU, Wherever I am, God is, and all is swell! Seemed a fitting title for an ending sermon. I thought a lot about what to say. After 11 years, I mostly say the same things, I just try to think of a different way to say it. So then I thought about—what are the basic things I think I keep saying? Even if you've never heard them before, here are some seeds I hope I have planted in your hearts. And, a detour you really should expect from me, even on this day, even in my last sermon.

Probably the one thing I talk about the most, at least in my mind, is the love trinity. It is the highest priority for Jesus. He gave this as the most important commandment for a Jewish audience used to the tablet of 10 rules Moses got. The trinity is Love God, Love your neighbor, Love yourself. No matter what the question, love is the answer. No matter what the problem, love is the solution. I have preached this for 11 years in different words. And I hope you heard it.

For 35 years I have studied and attempted to live Unity principles. The Fillmores called Unity "Practical Christianity". Practical, meaning, we use it every single day. Charles describes love as "the power that joins and binds in divine harmony the universe and everything in it." Without love, everything falls apart. The events of the past couple weeks have snowballed. I feel compelled to take a detour here in my final sermon to address a practical application of healing love that I feel we have failed to take seriously for centuries. The first thing that happened was an article in the Morning Call noting a small, black baby doll hanging in a rope noose which was observed in a local garage service bay, in public display. This is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and this is very disturbing. The second thing that happened was a scene that unfolded as I sat in a grocery parking lot. A silver, jacked-up pick-up truck wheeled into a space facing me and a very angry white man leaned out his window shouting and shaking his fist. From behind me, a young black man and woman, wearing masks, walked by my car. The young man said something to the man in the truck and edged towards the store entrance, wary of turning his back to the truck. I immediately got out my phone, whether I needed to call for help or film what unfolded, I was frightened for the black couple. The truck sat there for several minutes after the couple got in the store. I watched to see that the truck actually left the parking lot and didn't double back. A few minutes later, the young man came back out, searched for the truck and checked to see if his car was ok. He did not feel safe in a neighborhood store. Then I had to watch the video of George Floyd, an unarmed black man, pinned at the neck by the knee of a white police officer, pleading for his life, until he died.

Now there are riots and reports of white, neo-nazi anarchists, initiating fires and looting in what can only be called a war tactic to paint a negative picture of the protestors and elicit condemnation for the protest. They want you to shut down the protests. They do **not** want justice or change. We must be discerning in evaluating the events unfolding—how they appear and what else is going on.

Racism is a disease in this country that is lethal. Hate is contagious.

We have certainly **not** applied nearly the energy to healing racism that we have applied to healing corona virus. Practical Christianity demands that we not only “be love” but that we be **love in action!** There will be no justice in this country until there is a systematic dismantling of the racism and racial bias that corrupts our law enforcement and justice systems; corrupts our access to economic and academic success; corrupts our civil rights and our churches. I was eight years old when I discovered racism and I didn’t like it. That’s 57 years of advocacy as a white ally. I cannot deny my white privilege. I cannot pretend to know the experience of brothers and sisters of color. However, I am fierce in face of injustice and hatred. I don’t know any other way to be. I will not apologize. I will not be silent. I will rock the boat, even to the end. We must advocate for individual justice but in the end, we must dismantle the systemic racism that continues to provide case after case of individual injustice. Every person of every hue in every town should be calling their leaders to demand racial bias training, de-escalation training and body cameras turned on for every officer given a gun and the job of putting their life on the line to maintain safety and order. It is not a simple job. I am not condemning the professionals who do their job with honor and dignity and there are many.

Love is our spiritual nature but it is certainly not the conditioning for many of us. **We must hold one another accountable.** There can be no code of silence in any profession. Love is not silent in the face of death.

Even as I have planted the seeds of love as the highest priority, I hope I have also planted the seeds of **love in action** in the face of injustice as part of our role in co-creating an awakened world of peace, harmony and abundance. We must become more adept at staying centered in love and demanding change. A line in one of Kelley Hunt’s new songs last night says, “We must stand when we are called, with our bright lights on.” We are called—right here, right now. We must stand and have our brightest lights on, never wavering in our faith and conviction that we **can** make a difference. Take a breath.

Ok, on to the second seed I’ve planted. I use metaphysical bible stories and other illustrations, not just to entertain but to empower you to discover the divine power within you. Jesus is not the exception but the way-shower to our own power.

Whether you call that power the I AM, the Christ, my higher self, my true self or Edith—I pray that by now you are familiar with the **concept** that you have a divine power within you to tap into. You have divine faculties of wisdom, love, faith, imagination and well, you know the 12 aspects of divine power you can focus on. If you are struggling with tapping into your divine power, I'll move right along to the third point I tend to say a lot.

The good news is, it's all consciousness. The bad news is, it's all consciousness. Letting go of limits, limiting thoughts and beliefs is our OWN work. It can't magically be done for us by someone else. Life is a "DIY, Do It Yourself" project. The good news is, we control our thoughts and beliefs. We can't control the outer world: pandemics, racism or heat and humidity. We have control over the thoughts we generate in response to every single stimulus our brains receive from our senses. We may not entirely control our reptilian brain reactions but we can cultivate an awareness of those reactions and train ourselves to take a breath until we can consciously choose a thought response from our higher self. Remember when I said that sitting in the parking lot I was frightened for the black couple? When I recognized that reaction, I took a breath and began affirming peace and safety for all parties. I kept my phone out. I remained observing the situation. I changed my consciousness. As easy as it is to *blame* all the activity, actions, words and even energy outside us for shaping our experience, it is ultimately **within our choices** that the form of our experience manifests. I think I need to say that one more time. You've heard it before. As easy as it is to *blame* all the activity, actions, words and even energy outside us for **shaping our experience**, it is ultimately **within our choices** that the **form** of our **experience manifests**. I choose peace. I choose love. I choose healing. I choose forgiveness. I choose possibilities. Even now.

That's hard. Personal responsibility and accountability for our consciousness is challenging. Here is point 4 that you have seen all over my office: Pigs Fly. Life is messy. Make peace with it. If you have heard any of my When Pigs Fly messages, you may know that a lesson in miracles is not all happy endings. In the story of the healing of the man named Legion, a village's herd of pigs fling themselves into the sea (hence briefly flying), the village casts Jesus out and Jesus refuses to allow Legion to go with him. The miracle is that Legion is healed. The details are the messiness of life. Spirit does not follow **my** calendar. Clearly the Universe did not cooperate with **my** plan to retire without drama. We continue to believe in the **unexpected good we don't understand** which is what I consider the miracles **AND** we must learn to make peace with all the messy details we also did not expect. Look at the new channels of ministry opening up through Facebook Live, Zoom classes and workshops, and YouTube. Maybe it didn't unfold in the orderly, timed way we would have

liked. How do we make peace with the messy-ness and utilize the miracles in co-creating an awakened world of peace, harmony and abundance? Our work!

One last point which is a seed I hope has taken root in our spiritual community: Life, church, work, it's all our **relationship laboratory**. We are all in this together. Physical distance. Mental and emotional barriers we construct. Masks. None of that changes the reality that we are inter-dependent. We are all ONE. We get to work on our spiritual and emotional skills **if** we are open and willing. We've talked about being vulnerable and taking risks. We've talked about nonviolent communication and connection practice and lots of tools we can use in the laboratory. Perhaps the most important thing to remember about this seed is that there is no right way to grow and there is no wrong way to grow. Every way is what is. It is the laboratory. We are figuring things out. Here's what I am certain about in the coming weeks and months: you will be sad, you will be angry, you will be confused and people will NOT meet your expectations. I can pretty much guarantee those things will happen in the laboratory. What do you do? I hope you will ask, **What would love do?** We go back to the very first point. Love is the answer and the solution.

Some people may leave the laboratory. Bless them on their journey without judgment. Some will stay and they will be the community that shapes the future of ULV. From our work together, here are some guideposts about what I think love would do, for those who stay:

1. Love would take a breath and return to Source. Our humanity may be a heavy mantle at times. Ego mind will be pretty loud under stress. Breathe. In the quiet place of Oneness, we can hear the still small voice of our higher self. Take time to go within and listen.
2. Love would insist on Agreeing And Disagreeing In Love. As you begin the process of grieving and begin to adjust to changes, right now get out the document and review it. It's on the website. This is how we have agreed to navigate in the laboratory together. Remind yourself now before anything blows up in the laboratory and you have broken all the rules.
3. Love would insist on healthy boundaries. It's ok to say no. It's **necessary** to hold one another accountable with a gentle nudge and kind reminder.
4. Love **forgives** and begins again. Not seven times but seven times seventy. As often as it takes. Forgive yourself and then forgive others.

There you have it. Eleven years of saying the same basic 5 things, over and over. And I'm still learning. I'm still a work in progress.

I am also very grateful for the opportunity to spend 11 Christmases and 12 Easters with you. Grateful for the highs and the lows and the level ground.

Grateful for the lessons we've learned; the times we've picked each other up. We have celebrated new lives through birth and marriage and we have celebrated lives beginning a journey on a new plane of existence. I have been loved and supported through a significant health challenge. I have been supported in work in the Unity Movement and have tried to share those connections with you all. I have tried to give my best at all times, and make a difference, not only in our community but in the community of the greater Lehigh Valley. As you grieve, know that I grieve too. As you struggle, know that I struggle too. As you begin again, know that I am beginning again. Most of all, know that we are all one in divine love.

Now I have the honor of sharing a song that John Thomas wrote for this occasion. The video will be posted on Facebook after service and will be available on our YouTube music playlist.