

5-28-17

Radical Unity John 17 selected

This past week in the midweek message I wrote, "Science's great genius is to break things down into smaller pieces in order to understand them. Religion's great genius, however, is to remind us that there is a great cosmic unity. A "One-ness" to all life." As Jude and I have said often during our soon to be 36 years of marriage "I was Wrrr..... Wrrr.." Well you get the idea. Not that what I said is totally incorrect, but it only tells part of the story. Wonderful scientific unifying theories: Quantum Mechanics, Relativity teach us a great deal about unity, oneness. It is science that has given us a picture of this singular beautiful planet upon which we live, home to us all. It is science that has discovered that all of us, humans animals plants rocks are made of the stuff of stars. It is science that has shown us that belief that there are different races has no basis in genetic biology, it is a human social construct. For science, there is but one human race.

The second way the statement is partial is that religion does not always unify us, but sometimes divides - often resulting in the worst of inhumanity. I understood that when I saw a cartoon depicting the one who set off the bomb in Manchester, England, going to hell where a devil says, "Come on in, we have a special place here for you." We will return to this young man in a minute-

Memorial Day, which we celebrate tomorrow, originated as Decoration Day after the American Civil War in 1868, when Union veterans in Decatur, Illinois, established it as a time to decorate the graves of the Union war dead with flowers. By the 20th century, competing Union and Confederate holiday traditions, celebrated on different days, had merged, and eventually became Memorial Day where we honor all Americans who died in military service. Memorial Day's origin after the Civil War reminds us that not that religion has long been a tool to divide us. A twisted version of christianity and, by the way, skewed scientific proof was used

to defend the rebellion which led to literal incidents of brother killing brother, and not just American born ones. Over 40 % of Union soldiers were immigrants or children of immigrants, many Scottish, Irish and Italian, but others too. And the Confederate Army had recruits from these same nations, so some who had escaped from the same poverty and injustice in Europe shot at each other across the battle lines here on American soil. A belief in the superiority of the system in which people lived was mixed with religion in just the right amounts to inspire the Confederate soldiers to fight, believing that God was on their side and they were fighting for the right.

The young man who blew himself up in Manchester, Salman Abedi, also believed he was on God's side and was fighting for the right. Because we live in a difficult and broken world, Islam, like Christianity, had to work out the ethics of military self-defense in the context of faith. Much of the Qur'an was written while the Muslims were being driven out of cities and attacked for their faith and so in the Quran is ethical allowance for self-defense, encouragement to combatants that if they die in defense of others they will be especially blessed, and the instruction that the moment an enemy wants to negotiate you seek peace with them. This is the part that the leaders of the so-called Islamic State do not mention when they were teaching Salman Abedi. Nor did they teach him that the Qur'an expressly forbids suicide as an affront to God and God's sovereignty. Nor did they teach him that the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, would not stop weeping if he knew they were teaching this young man that killing little girls was part of God's plan.

Jesus prays for the unity of all people of faith, but he also has words of warning to those with the responsibility to teach the children. Matthew Mark and Luke all record Jesus as saying, "If anyone causes one of these little ones--those who believe in me--to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." Jesus, the one who prays for unity of all the faithful, also calls to account religious leaders who use God's name to teach others that murder and robbery and

violence are ok. We are called to be compassionate and forgiving, those are the ways we are called to emulate God. But we must not let anyone, Muslim or Christian or Jew or Buddhist, teach that God wants the destruction or the oppression of any of God's children. So often we humans allow others to twist faith just enough to convince us that "they" the "other;" the Muslim, the Christian, the Jew; the Democrat, The Republican, The Socialist: the black, the white, the yellow, the red, the welfare queen or the 1% should be denigrated, or punished or even totally destroyed.

The only group Jesus ever judged was hypocritical religious leaders. But though Jesus pronounced that they would be judged, I believe his prayer and his hope was that they would awaken and be freed from the shackles of their sin.

As a way to celebrate and model the radical unity Jesus teaches us, let us hear some sayings and prayers from other faiths. These prayers that remind us that people of faith desire the same things. They reveal that so many supposed divisions are artificial and shallow. Some of these we shared at this past week's prayer service for Manchester and the world. They are corrective anchors to help us weather the storms of false division and violence, wherever they pop up.

Mohandas Gandhi, a lover of all humanity once said, "Like the bee gathering honey from the different flowers, the wise person accepts the essence of the different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions."

Baha'i Prayer for Peace Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.

Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness, and a home to the stranger.

Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

Be a breath of life to the body of humankind, a dew to the soil of the human heart, and a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Tibetan Buddhist Prayer May you be at peace, May your heart remain open.

May you awaken to the light of your own true nature. May you be healed,

May you be a source of healing for all beings.

Jainism Prayer for Peace Peace and Universal Love is the essence of the Gospel preached by all the Enlightened Ones. The Lord has preached that equanimity is the Dharma. Forgive do I creatures all, and let all creatures forgive me. Unto all have I amity, and unto none enmity. Know that violence is the root cause of all miseries in the world. Violence, in fact, is the knot of bondage. "Do not injure any living being." This is the eternal, perennial, and unalterable way of spiritual life. A weapon howsoever powerful it may be, can always be superseded by a superior one; but no weapon can, however, be superior to non-violence and love.

Muslim Prayer for Peace In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful.

Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and made us into tribes and nations, that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other.

If the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God, for the Lord is the one that heareth and knoweth all things.

And the servants of God, Most Gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and when we address them, we say "PEACE."

Words of Jesus Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they shall be known as the Children of God.

But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from those who take away your cloak, do not withhold your coat as well. Give to everyone who begs from you, and of those who take away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. AMEN

## John 17 selected verses The Message Jesus' Prayer for His Followers

Jesus said these things. Then, raising his eyes in prayer, he said: Father, it's time. Display the bright splendor of your Son So the Son in turn may show your bright splendor. You put him in charge of everything human So he might give real and eternal life to all in his charge. And this is the real and eternal life: That they know you, The one and only true God, And Jesus Christ, whom you sent. I spelled out your character in detail To the men and women you gave me. They were yours in the first place; Then you gave them to me, And they have now done what you said. And my life is on display in them. For I'm no longer going to be visible in the world; They'll continue in the world While I return to you. Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life That you conferred as a gift through me, So they can be one heart and mind As we are one heart and mind.

## Native American Prayer for Peace

O Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise my pipe to you.  
To your messengers the four winds,  
and to Mother Earth who provides for your children.  
Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect,  
and to be kind to each other so that they may grow with peace in mind.  
Let us learn to share all the good things you provide for us on this Earth.

## Shinto Prayer for Peace

Although the people living across the ocean surrounding us,  
I believe, are all our brothers and sisters,  
why are there constant troubles in this world?  
Why do winds and waves rise in the ocean surrounding us?  
I only earnestly wish that the wind will soon puff away  
all the clouds which are hanging over the tops of the mountains.

### Sikh Prayers for Peace

God adjudges us according to our deeds, not the coat that we wear:  
that Truth is above everything, but higher still is truthful living.  
Know that we attaineth God when we loveth,  
and only that victory endures in consequence of which no one is defeated.

### Sufi Prayer for Peace

O Almighty Sun, whose light clears away all clouds,  
We take refuge in you. Guide of all people, God of all deities, Lord of all angels,  
We pray you to dispel the mists of illusion from the hearts of the nations  
And lift their lives by your all-sufficient power,  
Your ever shining light, your everlasting life,  
Your heavenly joy and your perfect peace.

### Zoroastrian Prayer for Peace

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world:  
that understanding triumph over ignorance,  
that generosity triumph over indifference,  
that trust triumph over contempt,  
and that truth triumph over falsehood.

John O'Donohue, 20th century

"The hunger to belong is not merely a desire to be attached to something. It is rather sensing that great transformation and discovery become possible when belonging is sheltered and true."

### Buddhist Prayer for Peace

May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses.

May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free.

May the powerless find power, and may people think of befriending one another.

May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wildernesses—

the children, the aged, the unprotected---

be guarded by beneficent celestials,

and may they swiftly attain Buddha-hood.

### Jewish Prayer for Peace

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

that we may walk the paths of the Most High.

And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares,

and our spears into pruning hooks.

Nation shall not lift up sword against nation—

neither shall they learn war any more.

And none shall be afraid,

for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

### Mother Teresa of Calcutta, 20th century

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

### Fred Rogers, 20th century

"The connections we make in the course of a life--maybe that's what heaven is."

## Hindu Prayers for Peace

Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real.

Oh God, lead us from darkness to light.

Oh God, lead us from death to immortality.

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.

Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in celestial regions.

May there be peace on earth.

May the waters be appeasing.

May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and plants bring peace to all.

May all beneficent beings bring peace to us.

May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all through the world.

May all things be a source of peace to us.

And may thy peace itself, bestow peace on all,

and may that peace come to me also.