

Sermon Title: "What is an enemy?"

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Dearly Beloved

I have three items on my agenda for today:

Gratitude,

Goals,

Request

Gratitude

First, gratitude. Thank you. Thank you for inviting me to be here and for lending me your precious attention.

Actually, I'm going to go one step further and use a gratitude formula I learned from one of my teachers, Marshall Rosenberg.

Some of you may know Uncle Marshall as the founder of Nonviolent Communication, which I think should be called "Basic Communication for Humans". I feel confident in saying we would be in a very different world if we had all been exposed to the ideas in that book when we were 8 years old. I was not! My daughter, however, will be.

The goal of Uncle Marshall's gratitude formula is to help me say Thank You in a way that prevents you from denying the contribution you have made to my life. It has 3 parts.

1. I say what you did
2. I say how I felt when you did what you did
3. I say what deep need was met when you did what you did.

A few weeks ago, after I spoke at the Women's March in Sequim, a number of people in this congregation got together and invited me to come here.

When I got that invite, I was blown away. I was really moved. Because not only have I never given a sermon before or spoken inside a church, but I had a vision, a literal

vision, on a mountaintop, a literal mountaintop, that I should begin giving sermons on non-violence, conflict, unconditional love, acceptance, that kind of thing.

In fact, I had that vision -- on the same mountain -- three years in a row. And I was unable to lift a finger to make it happen. And I knew this would be the place. I knew it would be this UU church. And yet, I couldn't make the call, I couldn't put myself out there.

So getting that call from you fulfilled this deep dream of mine I could not do by myself.

So, thank you.

Goals

Second, I'd like to talk about goals.

This is actually a Cultural Pattern I've been promoting for some time -- to get to know each other not by where you were born or what you do for money, but by our sense of purpose. What are we here to accomplish? How do we wish to live? What does the good life mean for each one of us?

My goal is to apply four key values across three distinct fields in my life.

The four values are

- Truth
- Love
- Justice, and
- Courage

Truth also implies the pursuit of knowledge

Love also means non-violence

Justice implies non-stealing, not taking more than I need, and not wasting
and courage means putting oneself in the path of fear.

Those are the four values. If you like Sanskrit, you could say

- Satya
- Ahimsa

- Asteya
- Nirabhaya

I try to apply those values in three major Fields.

The first is my relationship with myself, which is the relationship that takes up most of our time.

The second is my relationship with my community, the people I can see and relate to. My family, my friends, my band, my clients, the people I run into, you.

And third is the larger community of Beings I haven't met yet. Humans all over the planet, the trees on the way to Royal Basin, the Earthworms, the Beavers, Giant Squid, Paper clips, Disposable pens. Everything that might be alive that I am not in direct communication with.

In trying to apply those values to those three fields, I'm guided by two halves of my identity.

One side is guided by math. This is the half that grew up atheist, rejecting anything that cannot be objectively verified by the scientific community. This is the half that went on to study math and computer science and decision-making.

The other side is guided by a song lyric written by my best friend many years ago. It says: The sacred race of love that humans can become.

So there's four values, three fields, and two guiding lights.

When I put all that together, my goal:

“to apply four key values across three distinct fields in my life”

Is equivalent to

I want us to expand my circle of circle
Until it encompasses the entire world and Perhaps Beyond.

So now, let me explain that.

What I mean by circle of concern is the beings whose side you are on.

The most basic circle of concern is yourself.

Not that it's easy. A lot of people are suffering right now from not being on their own side.

We can understand a lot of psychological dis-ease and dis-comfort as a version of this.

Self Attack

Low Self Esteem

Self Judgement

Lack of self acceptance

May result in anxiety, depression, or many other experiences we have or observe in our society, all the time.

So, you're at the center of your circle of concern. And if you're not, you should be. This is what is true and good about Selfishness. It's what is true and good about Ayn Rand's books. And it's what is true about that flight attendant speech with the masks.

Not practicing self-love really does hamper -- limit -- our ability to care for others. The love we have for ourselves and the love we have for each other is the same love. It's like in a video game where you have that life bar. That's our potential to contribute to life. I want that to be as high as possible, so I can use that energy to give to others.

Our ancestors enlarged that circle of concern to include our family unit a long time ago.

Definition of family is contentious. In many human and animal societies a non-biological child is not a family member and subject to abuse or dropping off a cliff. I'm hoping for a little larger circle of concern than that at this point.

The next layer in the circle of concern we learned a long time ago in our desperate quests to stay alive and protect ourselves was the clan.

People that were not directly related but maybe looked a little bit like you or shared your linguistic group or ate the same food. In many parts of the world this is still very present.

I spent five years living in India as an adult and learned a little bit about the caste system, which is close to this clan-level of concern I'm talking about.

There is incredible Beauty and support that can happen within a clan.

It was so humbling and inspiring to see the lengths to which people support each other, very different from how I grew up in my Atomic Society up on Lost Mountain.

But there is room to grow. From my perspective and Gandhi's perspective.

That room to grow is around treating the other.

How big is the circle of concern?

How many people are in it?

How many people are out of it?

And how do we treat the people who are out of it?

I think you can see where I'm going with this. You can imagine clans growing into city-states growing into Empires growing into unification of multiple principalities.

A circle of concern growing to hundreds or thousands of miles in diameter, like in the U.S or China or Argentina or Brazil.

Millions of people being aligned with a single language and a single flag through force and murder and historical accident.

People willing to serve and sacrifice for and love the unmet members of that in-group, when all they share is that flag, that fiction of nationhood.

This is a very advanced and large circle of concern. Or, it could be.

To go back to my goal of enlarging my circle of concern, this nationhood process is an important part of it. But it's not the end of the process.

Everyone has their own definition of God. The divine, the mystery, the Unseeable.

Mine comes from an ancient Indian text and says that God -- which they call Brahman -- is "The one without a second".

The one without a second means that so many things are encompassed in that definition of God that nothing can be outside of it. If there was anything that was not in the God group over here, then the definition would be violated. So you got to keep throwing things in this pile until there's only one pile.

That's where I want to get to with this circle of concern.

Okay, we did some gratitude. I shared my goals. You now should have a clear idea if you're aligned with my goals or not.

So here's my request.

I'm not asking you to include the Israelis and Palestinians and Ukrainians and Russians or peoples of the Amazon or Central Africa in your circle of concern.

I will ask you that on another day. When we're ready. But, honestly, I don't think we're there yet.

Today, I ask you to include the many people you disagree with into your circle of concern. All the people who voted the opposite way you did a couple of Tuesdays ago.

And this works for you no matter how you voted.

Equal opportunity! If you voted for RFK, Jill Stein, or Cornell West, you actually have a lot more opportunity than the average person to grow your circle of concern.

All of those people who have a different vision of the future than you do.

I want you to imagine how you would treat them if they were admitted, into that holy circle of concern.

And, because I'm all about fun, I want to add a constraint.

I do not want you to agree with these people, accept their positions, accept the way they see things as true, stop your activism, or stop your advocacy.

I want you to hold on to your passion, your motivation, your values, your sense of what's right.

while adding those OTHERS into your circle of concern.

Imagine yourself successfully doing that. How might you behave differently than how you behaved yesterday?

Would you say or do or think anything differently?

(get answers)

We're in this process together, so if I were to fully integrate this and successfully expand my circle of concern, I would take every opportunity I could to understand Why.

To ask questions.

And get to the Authentic, Incontrovertible, Unarguable, Personal experience of that person. That which led them to have such wacky beliefs I can't stand.

We could argue positions all day long and sometimes we should. And often, of course, it's useless and even counter-productive.

Any productive intellectual discussion has to be contextualized by relationship.

There's just no point in me getting into it with you on immigration policy in the Isle of the Clallam Co-op, based on the hats that we're wearing.

If I don't know you, you don't know me, I don't know that you care about me, you don't know that I care about you, then what? Then I'm afraid of you. You're afraid of me. Afraid of each other's judgment, afraid of our physical security.

Freaked out. Those are not good conditions for learning something. That's not conducive to the softening of the heart that must be present when we're talking about something complicated.

And right now the ratio in our society is really off.

There's a lot of arguing on one side. Some of it out loud, some of it online, and a lot of it just in our heads.

And then there's a little bit of good questions and relationship building over here on the other side.

I want us to flip that.

What this is equivalent to -- I'm gonna bring us in for a landing here -- what this is equivalent to is looking at the definition of an enemy, and expanding that circle of concern to squeeze out the space an enemy requires.

I want to marginalize the idea of enemyhood because I don't think it's helpful.

Keep your intellect.

Keep your values.

Keep your positions for now.

But include the other beings as worthy of understanding, of getting to know.

Worthy of understanding their deeper why.

Which means Removing them from the Enemy column.

(ding)

I'm gonna close us out with some ancient wisdom. The title of this talk is: "What is an enemy?"

I got this phrase from my mentor, Ken Cloke. He's a man in his 80s who has been mediating for 50 years and has done tens of thousands of mediations.

Ken participated in Non-Violent Disobedience action in the South during the Civil Right Struggle in the 60s and kept growing from there. To me, Ken is an example of living Gandhians ideas in the interpersonal and political space.

And this is what he told me the other day about what an enemy is. I'm going to share with you, verbatim, his words.

And then I'm going to say, thank you and close this moment together.

What is an enemy?

> Someone whose sight, smell, sound of voice, or even name generates a feeling of anger, fear, grief, shame, guilt, jealousy, or hatred inside you.

> Someone to whom you no longer extend empathy or compassion.

> Someone for whom dignity and respect are conditional and easily withheld.

> Someone for whom it is possible to rationalize or justify acts of meanness or cruelty.

> Someone in whose presence you become inauthentic, off-balanced, stressed and are different from who you are naturally.

> Someone for whom you already know the answers without having to ask open-ended questions.

> Someone you feel unprepared to forgive or reconcile or trust.

> Someone with whom you are unwilling to engage in dialogue.

> Someone it is easy to dehumanize, stereotype, demonize, marginalize, prejudge, and discriminate against.

> Someone for whom you cannot experience love, generosity, gratitude, or kindness.

> In other words, someone who owns you.

Thank you.