

“No more sleepwalking”

Sermon by Dan Harrison, pastor at Church of the Covenant, 7/19/20

Habakkuk 2:12-14

Good morning my dear community! We had a good time of fellowship last night in the heat. It was like being in a sauna together. There is certainly more bonding happening in such extreme conditions than one would have even hoped for, and the prediction is that the heat will be even more extreme today. Be careful, stay hydrated. Gary Sullivan brought a great word, sharing from his own story, out of his own experience how we can approach these times of difficulty. Thank you, Gary for your authentic truth!

On the heels of his message I start today with a series of questions centered around, “how?” Like the prophet Habakkuk’s warning to the people who built their kingdoms out of injustice, I must ask us, “How?”. How can we seek justice when we our lives have been built out of injustice? Unjust labor, unjust systems, unjust ideologies, unjust religious orders. How can we seek equity, when we ourselves have benefited from systemic INequity? How can we move forward into real justice at that cost of moving backward in our own personal wealth? My question then turns to simply this: How can we not? How can we NOT sacrifice to make what was so wrong, now justly rightened? How can we not seek correction where we have been in error? How can we not turn the tide on the injustices that have plagued our very rise to power by now acquiescing from it? It is not a matter of “how?” It is a matter of “when?” When will we decide to change the very trajectory of our lives to align with a movement toward justice? When will we seek to fix what was broken by our ancestors? When will join God in a lifetime of restorative justice on this earth? When? When? When?

Let us join with our Creator this very day in loving the planet so lovingly made, by accepting our union with it, as Gary pointed our “unity,” our “yoga” with all living things around us. May we stop fighting it! Stop the hostility towards it all! It is us! We are it. We are ONE.

In 1910, in his book of poems called *Gitanjali*, the Bengal poet Rabindranath Tagore said, “The stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and death, in ebb and in flow. I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.”

It is simple. We long to live, but we then forget all things that want to live in peace around us. All people, all creation. Just yesterday my son Elijah’s girlfriend Ashley was helping my oldest son Jeremiah by taking photos that he could use for his medical school applications. She is a gifted photographer, and she had him stand in various places outside around the house. She had him stand with trees and bushes in the background and then for comparison she had him stand with the red brick of the house as a backdrop. Oh, the difference. We both looked at the difference of the pictures. One was sterile, lifeless, while the other had blooming vitality to it. We couldn’t explain why, but the background of plant-life enlivened the picture in such a way that made Jeremiah seem teeming with vitality himself. His smile

seemed more in harmony, more genuine. We couldn't put our finger on it, but with the red bricks in the background, he just seemed more disconnected, more in opposition to, not flowing with. Not "yoga."

We are one, yet we act as though we are apart, separated, don't we? Maybe it is in our arrogance from when we learned we were created in the image of God, as it says in scripture, "for in their image we were made." I want to emphasize the "their" part of the sacred scripture. Yes, that's right, a plural was used to describe God. We are one, united with one another. No one separate. I am we. We are not individual... our gift is in plurality and yet we act as if we are alone and superior—but the truth is, of course, we are not. We are one with another. As Gary so wisely pointed out Jesus' teaching yesterday, that "they will know you are my disciples by your love for one another."

Oh how easy we forget this though, and then seek to dominate, abuse, consume and destroy all that is around us, taking it for personal consumption only, simply to discard the unwanted parts. The great Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh sounds the alarm to our barbarity when he says, "The bells of mindfulness are sounding. All over the earth, we are experiencing floods, droughts and massive wildfires. Sea ice is melting in the Arctic and hurricanes and heat waves are killing thousands. The forests are fast disappearing, the deserts are growing, species are becoming extinct every day, and yet we continue to consume, ignoring the ringing bells. All of us know that our beautiful green planet is in danger. Our way of walking on the earth has a great influence on animals and plants. Yet we act as though our daily lives have nothing to do with the condition of the world. We are like sleepwalkers, not knowing what we are doing or where we are heading."

So, I say, let us wake up! Let us wake up to the urgency of our plight. We treat each other abusively because we see the world for personal consumption, and this includes all of the earth, including people, plants, land, animals, and things. We see it all for our own personal gratification, nothing more. For if we believed it to be something greater, something worthy, something created in balance of unity, equity, and communal respect, we would indeed treat everything and everyone differently, right? The proof is in the pudding itself, as they say. So, my hope today is that we can move from being simple self-centered consumers to something much deeper, much more life-giving. From "sleepwalkers" to awakened, caring souls who seek harmony and peace with everyone and everything. Let us find our paths forward into restful peace. Let us denounce the kingdoms we've descended from that were built out injustice by creating a new "kingdom" like Jesus announced, when he said "the kingdom of heaven is like a tree." Let us watch this video one more time together. Many of us have seen it already, but I think it warrants a second look. It is the reason we chose the "tree" as our new logo for the church, so please watch this illustration I made a few months back. Let's learn from nature rather than fighting against it. Shalom