

Homily: July 7, 2019

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We Are All One

Psalms 133, Verse 1 -- Oh, how good and pleasant it is, when brethren live together in unity!Oh, how good and pleasant it is, when brethren live together in unity!

Picture that – a world living in harmony and peace. In the words of the anthem sung at the 10:30 service “We are all one, we are connected, we are all one, we are all one.” (The words are printed on the bulletin.) Why can’t we have a world where we all live in peace and harmony and respect each individual. We do not have to be the same (how boring) or agree on everything, but we need mutual respect for others.

What was the most important message Jesus sent to us? Love one another as I have loved you. Love is the most common theme in Jesus’ teachings. Through love you can learn acceptance of others who are different. He did not say just love those that are like us, but love everyone. He was constantly being remanded for the company he kept – tax collectors, prostitutes, lepers, - the scum of the earth as far as the Pharisees were concerned. He loved and respected them just as much as his close disciples. Skin color was not a reason to deny this love. In fact, they were all mid-easterners - dark complexioned. They were all his children.

In the gospel of John, Jesus says: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

What is the definition of this type of love? Well, I went to my copy of Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (Yes, I still have and use my 1977 edition). The Mamas and the Papas had a song out about the meanings of love in Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, page 498. My edition had the definition on page 681. Definition 4 is the one that applies here: “a : unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: (1) : the fatherly concern of God for man (2) : brotherly concern for others, b : a person’s adoration of God.” There are no conditions or bail outs in this definition.

If you follow Jesus’ teachings you will love all your fellow people. There is not a caste system that some are more worthy than others, but all are equally deserving.

The flip side of love is hate. How many times did Jesus say you should hate others, especially if they are different? I don’t think that that word hate was in his vocabulary. Going back to Webster’s the first definition is “1 a : intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury.” This definition evokes in me an unease inside. Fear is a great contributor to hate. Fear of someone different who speaks and acts different from you is a leading cause. Hatred and happiness do not occur together. Haters are never truly happy or at ease.

Maya Angelou said “Hate: it has caused a lot of problems in the world, but it has not solved one yet.” When one is full of hate one cannot solve problems or see what is best for the majority. A hater becomes an egoist – wanting everything his or her way and feels that everyone should

bend to his way of thinking.

We have one human race. The genetic differences between people from different regions is very miniscule. The majority of all our genetic make up is the same. There is not a superior DNA coding which makes one person better than another. “We are all one, we are all connected.” This is true at all levels. There are very small genetic tweaks which make someone a concert violinist and someone else a top athlete, or a brilliant mathematician, or someone else just plain average joe. Can you say that one is better than the other? The basic human needs for life are the same – good food, clean air and water, and a need to be loved.

In the Broadway play, Oklahoma, Aunt Eller states it very well with: “I’d like to teach you all a little saying, and learn the words to heart to heart the way you do, I don’t say I’m no better than anybody else, but I’ll be dangd if I’m not just as good!”

Jesus said that we should be loving and welcoming to all especially strangers. In today’s Gospel he sends out 70 people in pairs with the instructions “I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!”

These were strangers entering a town and asking to be cared for. Is that not what is happening here? People are coming to us asking for our help and protection. They are fellow human beings. We as Christians should be welcoming, offering solace, food and drink and take them in. The Fundamentalists are definitely not Christians, with their spewing out hate and derisions for those arriving at our borders. Just because they speak a different language, have different skin color they are subject to horrendous treatment. The Fundamentalists must be reading a different bible – maybe it’s the bible whose original version was written in English, because their Jesus was white and spoke English! The true Jesus advocated love and acceptance of all, most especially the poor and needy. When he was confronted with a horde of 5000 what did he do. Throw them in cages? No, He fed them! We should follow Jesus’ leadership and offer these poor souls asylum and refuge, not cages and deprivations as if they were non-human.

Early followers of Jesus felt that to become a Christian, one first had to become a Jew. Paul in his letter to the Galatians started to break down that barrier, castigating the holier than thou zealots. “It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised — only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. (Egoists) May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!” Circumcision was the symbolic pathway to Judaism but Paul was stating that it was not as important as loving and following the ways of Jesus. He opened a way for the pagans and gentiles to be a part of Jesus and his teachings.

The Dali Lama showed the universality of Jesus' teachings beautifully. "Whether you believe in God or not does not matter so much, whether you believe in Buddha or not does not matter so much; as a Buddhist, whether you believe in reincarnation or not does not matter so much. You must lead a good life. And a good life does not mean just good food, good clothes, good shelter. These are not sufficient. A good motivation is what is needed: compassion, without dogmatism, without complicated philosophy; just understanding that others are human brothers and sisters and respecting their rights and human dignity." This is a concept which basically underlies all religions. Love and understanding are the foremost traits. Hatred comes when people use their religion to attack others who have different beliefs.

It is through love and patience that one can find inner peace. You can spread that peace through your actions. Some years back when I went grocery shopping, I would get upset when someone totally blocked an aisle while they read the labels in trying to make a decision. After three or four of these incidents on a trip I would leave the store with my stomach in a knot and all tense. I made a conscious effort to change my ways. When held up now, I just smile and wait patiently. After a minute if they were still oblivious to what was happening around them, I would just say excuse me please and smile at them. They were usually apologetic, and I would just say that's OK and mean it. One time a person caused a big blockage and a woman trying to come the other way and was delayed. Well, she came through in a big huff. I just gave her a warm smile as I let her go through first. She gave me the strangest look of puzzlement, but then burst into a warm smile and said thank you with her eyes. Just as hatred is contagious, so also is love. It is so much better to spread love than hate. Everyone feels so much better. Through our own actions we can make our immediate world a better place

In A. A. Milne's Winnie the Pooh series there is a thread of love and acceptance. "One awesome thing about Eeyore is that even though he is basically clinically depressed, he still gets invited to participate in adventures and shenanigans with all his friends. They never expect him to pretend to feel happy." They accept him as he is and don't discriminate because he is different. This is how we should live our lives. Be loving and accepting to all.

We are all one, we are connected. We are all one, we are all one. What the world needs now is love, sweet love. Go out into the world spreading the love that Jesus instructed us to do. Then, they will know we are Christians by our love.