

“Joy In The Journey...Now!”

“Show Up and Make Love Real”

The Gospel of Thomas Saying #25;

John 10:11-18; 1 John 3:16-24

April 25, 2021 Eastertide

Introduction to Easter worship:

Christianity is a spiritual practicum, a
chosen behavior...
our daily actions.

Christians practice involvement,
kindness, and non-violent passionate
resistance in the All and Everything that
is unjust...

that is humiliating in our
individual and corporate lives!

Easter is

“personal **crucifixion**” moving into a
corporate resurrection.

It’s not that you are saved, it’s that we
are!

We CAN put things back in the right
order!

Prompting:

Jesus walks the talk with us beyond the
cross to a new way to live life daily. He
knows...and we are coming to
know...as in today’s readings...

being Christian is about relationship.

And how you show up
matters...showing up matters!

To show up, you may have to think
differently (let go of long held
assumptions) and live with uncertainty
(let go of outcomes to focus on process
instead of results)...
the worshipful work of faithfulness!

Have you yet realized...your best
thinking cannot be done alone, outside
of meaning centered relationship?

This is Biblical! You know...wherever
two or more...

The Eastertide stories call us to
relationship...

A “speaking truth in loving kindness
relationship”

even when we mistrust situations,
doubt others, are afraid.

We are called to live in the tension of
uncertainty and to think differently...

living in that creative tension between
wanting and having, being and doing,
right and wrong,

acceptance and denial,

your way or the highway,

encouragement and discouragement,

the serenity of monochrome living

or the pop of divergent

thinking and contrasts.

Facing these aspects of yourself means accepting how others may respond differently to you

as you enlarge your repertoire of responses to daily life situations.

It means letting go of the illusion or delusion of control that you can avoid messy matters.

Are you willing...

not to let anyone be humiliated in your presence,
not stand idly by, rather be an engaged bystander,
see the elephants everyone rides,

and come alongside with the focus on listening...curious to discover nuances which may reveal faulty thinking... theirs and yours!

*Isn't curiosity a form of hope? (Jack Teisch)

You see God is not only up to something new in you!
God is at work in each of us...yep, even him...her...them!

Relationship is key. Showing up:
Elephant to elephant, sheep to sheep...key.

And, you have a life competency
that will more than get you through!

The first letter of John makes clear *that our core competency, main focus as Christians is to love one another.*

We're made for this! The first and last commandment:
Show up, know each other, be in relationship...
meaning you have to spend time together...
and embody what it is you say you believe.

The love of Jesus is more than a nice idea and a noble concept — it is, in fact, a new way of thinking and a pattern of behavior put in action.

“How does God’s love abide in anyone,” asks John, “who sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?”

Short answer: It doesn’t.

That really stings when you realize how many people in need we walk by each day... unknowingly as well as knowingly!

And we’re not only speaking of the needy person standing on the corner.

We are just as much talking about the person across the kitchen table, board room table, meeting table.

You know, the one you ignore and judge because so far, it’s been too hard to think differently and live in uncertainty with them.

And so far, you haven’t focused on skills that help you know how so you can be different in the moment...know what to say in the moment.

God’s love lives in you when you see a need, and respond with help. Not complaining or judging others or prejudging outcomes.

You have just what the other may need most
already within you. Just be authentic...isn’t that what love looks like...our authentic
humanity showing up
on the outside of our bodies?

Respond to each other with acts of selfless love... **Jesus said it this way: Love your brother or sister like your soul. Guard each of them like the pupil of your eye.”**

that means showing up...with an understanding attitude and real help (from their perspective, not yours!)

...support through action and not more hugs and prayers.

That’s what John is talking about when he challenges us to love one another. Each of us is and so embodies love.

So why is it so hard for us to concentrate on this core Christian competency?

For too many Christians.....

- it’s easier to argue. We are logic bullies.

- many are more comfortable taking a stand than understanding. Hatred has become a way of belonging.
- many would rather write a check to a cause than put their bodies alongside others in need.
- many prefer to make pronouncements on sexuality than figure out what it means to be gay and Christian...let alone heterosexual and Christian! Pronouncements on racism and sexism rather than put their bodies between those at risk and the real harm they face.
- many of us find it so much simpler to define our religious duty in terms of attending church and making offerings, rather than doing the complicated and challenging work of moving forward as community:
feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and
visiting the imprisoned....
and most importantly, doing something about the world that creates these needs to
begin with...
doing harm to people....good people.

Why?

Is it that we're still afraid? Are you?

**We are desperate to belong and yet afraid
or unable to respond.**

We often don't know how to expand our repertoire of responses and won't ask someone to help us know!
(So...go back though Lent!)

We form opinions, quickly setting them in concrete.
No fooling!

We take a fairly easy path of avoidance through judging others, putting our energy into fighting about politics, and

issues like abortion, homelessness and sexuality, Black Lives Matter, Gun Laws (*pick an issue...including pews, gardens, building, budgets*).

We loose ourselves and harm others when we won't face uncertainty, or risk new thinking, blame others,

don't seek to understand, avoid "them", stereotype "them"
...we lose ourselves and harm ourselves as well as them.

This fear-filled limiting life strategy,
gives us the delusion
of an either/or...a this or that world, cut and dry world...

one in which there are good guys and bad guys,
angels and demons, winners and losers,
clear cut right and wrong...hooking us in unhealth.

It is not a binary world and we do not have a binary God as The Thunder: Perfect
Mind taught us!

This perspective is not Christian!

Jesus was never about winners and losers, never about blaming, arguing, crushing his
opponents – geeze...
even in heaven our enemies sit at table with us
(so get over that!). Relationship is key!

If we are really in the fold, we are going to have to take the difficult path of putting
love into action and making it real even with our enemy seated nearby...the wolf, the
hired hand included. Our egos included.

**It is much harder to love one another than it is to fight one another. Isn't it? How
sad!**

Key to rising to this challenge is to realize that love comes from God, not from figuring
out human beings.
Steep yourself in Holiness.

You already have everything you need to love. Let it flow.

If your focus is on God and God's deepest desires for you and others...your love
compels you to act.

You can't live with yourself if you don't!

**We're not required to figure out precise and perfect positions on all the tough
issues of the day
or within this church or in the family *before we act.***

We're required to act in love
continuously reforming our actions based on

new awarenesses and growing self-confidence
and trust in others.

**We are to get comfortable with being successful failures
if that's what it takes to make "love" a verb.**

And *my* experience is that when I am curious and listening, genuinely caring, my authentic self present...and still I fail to understand, they don't focus on what I got wrong.

Instead, because they know I care, they tell me
what it is they want me to know
because they want to be in relationship as much as I do.

John doesn't say we will be blessed by God once we achieve a political victory or articulate a flawless moral position or get our way.

No, he says we will receive from God whatever we ask when

"we obey God's commandments...which often means, getting out of **our own**
way...letting go of fear!"

**And it's not only what we do but how we do it...
not only what you say but how you say it and to whom.**

Are you curious yet? Hopeful?

Our world is in desperate need of a church that puts love into action and makes it real.
that actually practices what it preaches.
Jesus was looking for followers, not admirers.

He wants people willing to be changed,
willing to accept uncertainty and think differently,
to grow their repertoire of responses...
not simply volunteer.

At Tippe, you are invited to walk the talk...show up self-reflectively, to put your focus on God and on the ministry.

Not on personalities or disagreements or disappointments...but on the common good...LOVE.

You are invited to trust enough to be in meaning centered relationship with others not like you and find your voice...

...moving from complaining to dialogue and into action!

Our focus is in constantly re-form-ing our understandings.

Hard worshipful work

...knowing ourselves and each other and moving beyond this world's expectations.

We are to show up...thinking and acting...together!

Just like Jesus, you have the power to lie down your life and to pick it back up. Do over!

...to resist being the fickle hired hand, to face the wolf.

How?

Aahh...remember?

Lie down in green pastures and be led by still and quiet waters where you can hear yourself think.

Let your soul be restored and go down some right paths ...you know where they are.

You are not alone...God comforts and soothes you...

you've felt it. Feel it!?

The Good Shepherd protects and comforts you...if you let Him.

And remember....God loves everybody...even the wolves and hired hands...and has plans for their well-being too.

BUT not at the expense of your well-being.

One table.

So...even though there are wolves around you...you do not have to be so afraid that you freeze or stop thinking or become someone other than who you most want to be.

Remember.

Your cup overflows.

What is it you're pouring into your cup?

You dwell with God, and goodness and mercy are yours to live and offer to others...wisely.

As you do, the hired hand...in you and in others...
will indeed run away
and the wolf...in you and in others...
will be more plainly seen and so kept at a distance.

We are not a family. We are not a club.
We are a flock...a community coming together and growing together, here for each other.

But, you have to show up in your own life!

Friends:

We are to show up in the all and everything of life!
Showing "all we are" to those who are counting on our awareness.

...those who are counting on our being
worn down and out...
counting on our human tendency to go to sleep...

To shut down and tune out, to go away...
mad and disappointed,

To say "not mine".

Easter people show up!

You can live with uncertainty...yes you can!

You can think differently expanding your repertoire of responses to life... **Our core competency is love.**