

Your True Self

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What we're saying, in case you just happened into this place for the first time this morning, is that we need this in life. We need it like we need bread. To live. We need communion- connection, relationship, being a part of, knowing that you *are* a part of, this.... communion with other human beings, of all different ages, communion with the earth-the wheat and the grape, communion with your *true* self, communion with the great mysterious, being itself, God. In fact, we can't live without it.

There is so much that distances us from one another, from the earth, from our true self, from the Oneness. We forget. We get lost. We lose ourselves. We get distracted. We get enslaved by other values.

But every month we gather to remember, to remember the stories we share, about what's most important in life and to commune, we eat the bread of life with one another. Our children may wander away from this path. They may explore other paths. Sunday mornings may be given over to spaces other than a sanctuary. But they may come to hunger for this. May they come to hunger for this—for this bread, this community, this remembering how to live in this good but hard life.

Our pioneer of the faith, Jesus, said we should love God, love one another, love ourselves. How do we do this? We come here on communion Sunday to remember how.

Come with me now on a flight of imagination...

What if, what if the magi brought one other thing to the manger all those many years ago? A most precious stone, more precious even than gold. What if the magi brought this magic stone to the newborn human being, to the universal child born into this world? The Christmas story lingers now in early January.... In our imagination, in our sanctuary... It's still Epiphany. As the story goes, these wise ones bring , gold, frankincense, and myrrh; but what if they also gave him a magic stone to wear as close to the heart as possible, all the days of his life?... You've heard of the mood ring? That changes color, they say, depending on your mood... What if, what if there was a most precious gem, found in the earth, that, when worn near the human heart, could indicate when they were being true to their true self or whether they were living out of a false self. As the child grows into adult hood and tries on different ways of being and goes on different life adventures, the gem would help them stay in touch with their true self. In its own magic gem way it would give the human salvation messages... like... you need more alone time... you need more time with others... this work feeds you... you need more

work-life balance... you need a creative outlet... you need to be a change agent, a part of the solution to something that troubles you in the world... you need Sabbath rest.. you need to leave... you need to stay... you need to start... you need to stop... Just imagine if the magi brought this magic gem....

Zacchaeus, remember Zacchaeus of our bible story, he was separated not only from the community, alone up there in the tree, but from his true self. So he was rich and powerful, but he was alone in the world. He was lost to himself. He didn't like himself. He didn't know himself. I wonder how this happened. I wonder how he got so separated from himself. When did he stop listening to his soul?

But Jesus' kind eyes, connects with Zacchaeus's eyes, connects to Zacchaeus's true self, and Zacchaeus does not avert his eyes. Instead, he says "yes" to Jesus. Yes. Come to my home. Yes. Let us share a meal, break bread together. *You know that in the gentle presence of another, your true self can immerse...* Yes, Zacchaeus says, I will share and Yes, I will make amends and Yes I will be a part of making the world more just, which is my deepest yearning; and Yes I will try to live from this day forward out of my God given nature, my true self. Yes Zacchaeus says to communion with others, with God's world, with his true self. Yes, I hunger for all of this! And more!, he says. He even throws a party at the end of the month, a chili cook off and square dancing party and the people come. They all say Yes to communion and Yes to fun!

It is the best of times and it is the worst times for the true self. The best of times: Increasingly, inexorably, though not without the predictable backlash, our society is open to and affirming of human difference- sexual orientation, gender identity, neuro diversity, and more. Short people, like Zacchaeus, are no longer pushed to the margins. The worst of times: These little devices, will they someday be surgically implanted?, they know where we go, and who we are, they think, and what we want, or can be seduced into wanting... with their algorithms manipulating us, confusing us, deceiving us, occupying us, not giving our true selves any space, any time to breathe.... But perhaps it has always been this way... the best of times and the worst of times... for the true self...and so! the person in all times who hungers for life in alignment with their true self must be ever committed, courageous, wide awake and vigilant.

Because of course there is no magic gem that will guide you to your true self. It's up to you. Will you, in this New Year, re-commit to living your life in accordance with your true self?

In this New Year, listen to your soul! "The soul always wants to communicate. But we aren't very good at listening. Our lives are too hectic or our minds too busy or we're afraid of what we might hear, what we might have to change. But the soul always wants what's best for

us, what's most right for our true self. It will never lead us astray. And when we don't pay attention, the soul will make itself known somehow." (Emmons) Consider finding a companion, a therapist or a spiritual director or a Befriender to help you listen to your soul. Or a centering prayer practice.

In this New Year, release the thoughts, feelings, habits that are no longer useful, if they ever were to your true self. Maybe write it down on a piece of paper, a special piece of paper, what you wish to let go of at this time, be it a place of forgiveness or lingering bitterness or a self-centered habit, or an unhealthy dependency. Light a match to this piece of paper. Burn it. Let it go. (Keating)

In this New Year, commit to being present on these communion Sundays, the first Sunday of the month... to remember your hunger, your need, for communion, with God, with the earth, the wheat and the grape, with other human beings, with your true self. In this new year... May it be so! Amen....

Sources

Emmons, Henry, The Chemistry of Joy. A Fireside Book, 2006.

Honeyman, Gail, Eleanor Oliphant Is Completely Fine. Penguin Books. 2017. (about her growing communion with her true self with the help of the gentle companionship of others)

Keating, Thomas, Faith: An Advent Companion. Contemplative Outreach, 2006.

Bruce Springsteen's play/video about coming back, ultimately, to your religious path