

The Incredible Lightness of Being

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

July 6, 2008

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Dear God,

May my words and our presence together bring us all closer to being and living in your grace,
Amen

To be or not to be:

Let it be:

Be here now:

Be spacious:

Be present:

Don't worry, Be happy

Be the change you want to see in the world

Be still and know that I am God, Psalm 46:10

Be still before the lord and wait patiently for him. Do not fret. Psalm 37:7

Do not worry about tomorrow.

Whether it is the words of Shakespeare, the Beatles, Ram Dass, Rinpoche, Bobby McFerran, Ghandi , or the Psalmist, or Jesus, this call to “be” is ever present in our souls. It is a simple but not always an easy call.

In my life, as for many of us there have been a lot of changes, lots of movement and doing, and not always as much time as I would like for “being”. 27 different houses, 12 schools. Several different permutations of families and careers. For many years it felt like I was always arriving or leaving, always planning or preparing for my next entrance or exit. My evolving ministry against this backdrop has been a gift for me not only to learn to serve, but to begin to learn to live in the present –to be fully in life, in community, in relationship, rather than simply moving through it in perpetual motion. It is one thing I love about this community—you know how to be together.

But life for all of us can feel a bit like being on a train, moving so fast it is hard to take in what is going by—especially in this city—we can be in life, absorb it and it's people and places

deeply, or spend a lot of our time and energy worrying about it, surviving it, moving through it. But we can learn through the grace of God to be fully in the gift of our lives. To be more present, to slow down, to listen, to be still, or as my son might remind me “to chill.”

To be or not to be. When Shakespeare offers this question he illuminates a choice, both internal and external. A choice of life and death, but also an existential choice of how to live.

And so many spiritual teachers have reminded us to be in the moment to live in the now.

In the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 6, Jesus reminds to not worry about tomorrow. To have faith that God will care for our needs as he does the Lilies of the field and the birds of the air. In Matthew 11:25-30 as we heard this morning, Jesus invites us to learn to “Be” lighter:

“Come to me all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

To be. To rest. To lighten our burden. The incredible lightness of being. This lightness of being when we experience it is incredible. We have all felt it. That moment when time and burdens give way to the pure ease of the spirit...

So why is this so hard to hold on to? There was a movie called “The Unbearable Lightness of Being.” Some of you here may remember it. But what would make the lightness of being unbearable and what makes it incredible? If we have been caught up in “doing” and “having” for a long time, the experience of just being, may be very enticing, but it can also be scary, and almost unbearable.

How can we let go of it all—our attachments, our burdens, when we identify so strongly with what we do or who we think we are? We are attached to this doing and having, we take pride in it—we do some pretty good stuff, we work hard for what we have, we are good

people. But like Paul tells us in Romans 7:15-24, we may still live separate from our inner selves, and be frustrated by our own failings and inability to stay true to our inner heart. We may feel at war between our inner law, and what our outer self or “members” do.

So we often end up trying to fix things, to do more, better, and different.

In the process we often pressure our children to do the same.

We don't always truly know or trust our inner selves, as we identify ourselves so much with our biography, our resumes, our bodies, our titles, our stuff, our houses, our family dramas, our schools, our grades, even our credit cards and social security number. These can all become heavy burdens to carry. Yet we live in fear of losing all or any of them: We have even created the ultimate cultural and economic fear: Identity theft. But can someone really steal your identity???

The Tibetan Buddhist teacher Sogyal Rinpoche author of the Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, talks of such fear “Without our familiar props we are faced with just ourselves, a person we do not know, an unnerving stranger with whom we have been living, all the time but we never really wanted to meet. Isn't that why we have tried to fill every moment of time with noise and activity, however boring or trivial, (or I might add important, to ensure that we are never left in silence with this stranger on our own?”

He further teaches us that: *Samsara* is the mind projected outwardly, lost in projection. While *Nirvana*, (what we are seeking) is the mind turned inwardly, recognizing it's true nature.

We may not always know ourselves, or be able to access our true nature, but God does know us as Psalm 139 reminds us: knows our inner being, and in that place, we know God. We can be more in touch with that knowing as we learn to take time to be, to be still.

Be still and know that I am God, Psalm 46:10

Be still before the lord and wait patiently for him. Do not fret Psalm 37:7

Do not fret. Don't worry be happy.

Jesus encouraged us to take up his yoke, to find rest in him. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. With all Jesus ultimately bore, how was his yoke easy, and his load light. Because he lived simply, humbly, he lived in love, without fear, he lived being present to everyone in every moment.

We can lighten our load through prayer, through meditation, and through letting go of fear, and exercising our freedom to be-- our freedom to love, (as K reminded us in his recent Update) that goes beyond simply free will to do. We lighten our load, not always by fixing, and doing, and acquiring, but by letting go, and being still, and being patient—having faith. And by seeking the rest for our souls that Jesus offers.

With the celebration of July 4th, we are now fully into the summer—the paradox of time to rest and more activity. As we celebrated our freedom and our country, maybe somewhere, between the bangs, and the hot dogs, and the beers, there was that moment, when we saw the beauty of the color and light suspended for an instant silently in the sky and let out our breath and went Ahhhh.....

As we watched the celebration with all its pomp and circumstance and call to patriotism, we can be mindful of a patriotism and a freedom that's about more than prosperity and power and purchasing and pomp. In our freedom and privilege we have choices. We may have the

freedom to do more to have more than many, but also the freedom and time if we take it to be, to love, and to learn to be humble in heart.

With so many of our daily needs met, we have the freedom to choose the Incredible Lightness of Being, over self-importance and suffering. We live in such abundance that our fear of loosing it has become one of our greatest burdens. Can we focus on the freedom to practice brotherhood from sea to shining sea, and ultimately, through our faith, the freedom from the fear, the lightness.

They say that, *“The reason angels can fly is that they take themselves so lightly.”*

We can access this lightness in life, by being present to the spirit of love and forgiveness in every moment. By being present to God.

But this simple being present can be harder than we might think. But the good news is that it really is ours for the receiving or the giving, one moment at a time, one prayer at a time, one breath at a time.

We can strengthen that inner most mind that Paul talks about.

We can bring more peace to that war between our intentions and our actions.

We can let Christ lighten our load through forgiveness when we miss the mark.

We can thank God for this...

In their wonderful book Spiritual Literacy , Frederic and Maryann Brussat speak of Being Present in each moment: “Leave the past to God’s mercy, leave the future to God’s discretion. The moment is all there is. Pledge yourself to the moment and let it teach you. Surrender yourself to the moment and let it preach you.”

The 18th century Jesuit spiritual leader Jean Pierre de Caussade reminds us that: “No moment is trivial since each one contains a divine kingdom and heavenly sustenance.”

I heard an interview on NPR last week with Maggie Jackson about her recent book *Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming of the Dark Age*. She spoke of our high-speed culture of sound bites and multi-tasking costing us our ability to attend, to think and listen deeply, to be in deep relationships, to “be” period. She foretells a coming dark age where we will have to evolve recreate our capacity to focus and to be.

But we can start now, in this moment to bring lightness to this dark. To give ourselves and those around us the gift of our attention, of being fully present. To experience the incredible Lightness of Being—in each moment. That feeling of ease when you know you are living in the spirit, and not in the rush of thinking, fretting, and doing.

We can start now this summer, on our vacations, as we do new things and go to new or dear places and visit new or special people—to take time to really be in those places and be with those people. How many of us in the whirlwind of our vacations could write a postcard like the character in *Postcards from the Edge*. “Having a wonderful time.” Wish I was here.”

So take back the time to think deeply, to meditate, to pray, to listen, to play, to deepen your relationships and to get to know yourself—the deeper self, the one God knows—the identity that can’t be stolen. Take time for the freedom to be.

Time to lay down your burdens and take Jesus’s yoke of ease upon you.

Let’s begin now as I close with the sound of the bell, to sit in silence, in stillness, in our breath, in the presence of our God, to be with ourselves, to be with one another.

To let our selves live the incredible lightness of being.

Ring of meditation bell for minute of silence, singing of *Let it Be*.