

“Imagine Peace”

Reverend Bill Clark

I have always been a collector. Ever since I was a kid I collected things. It started with baseball cards - with such collectables as Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Yogi Berra - yes I know I am showing my age but it was a long time ago. Do they still make baseball cards? The next item was Marbles - and not just any marble - they had to be what we called “puries.” Those larger bolders that you could see clear through. Next, in adulthood, I moved on to music boxes for a while until they became far too costly for my collecting habit.

Final in seminary I moved on to cheaper collectables - words! And not just any random words rather I began to collect quotations - collecting as many interesting, intriguing, informative and enlightening quotes as I could find.

Two of my favorites are, one by JFK from 1963 where he said; “The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by skeptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need men and women who can dream of things that never were.”

The other is; “Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Albert Einstein

I don’t know I find these words incredibly inspirational. For, to me they say that you can have all the knowledge, be the brightest, smartest, most intellectual person around, but without the use of one’s imagination, creativity, vision, all the know how, all the facts, figures, theories and theorems will not permit you

to put this knowledge into practice. “Imagination is more important than knowledge.”

For the purpose of today’s sermon I want to apply these words of Albert Einstein to this idea of peace. You know, it is Sunday, perhaps a good day to talk about peace. And using these collected quotations we can see both men saying similar things. Kennedy says we need people who are not cynics and skeptics but rather people who can see beyond the obvious realities; the world realities of violence, warfare, hunger and disease; to use their imagination, creativity, and possibilities to create something new, to dream of something that has never come into being – and as President Kennedy was speaking in Dublin Ireland at the time – I believe he was talking about this ideal of peace!

With Einstein’s “Imagination is more important than knowledge” we can clearly see living in today’s world of chemical and nuclear weapons, terrorist attacks, weapon arsenals, we certainly have all the knowledge of weapons and warfare we will ever need. We try diplomacy, negotiations, embargo’s and still peace – world peace is something that has never come into being.

Can we use our imagination, creativity and unimagined possibilities to manifest this ideal of Peace? Can we dream of things that never were?

This reminds me of a story of General Dobey, the British commander of Malta during the First World War. He was stationed near the holy land in 1916, when an aide approached him and said, “Sir this is a funny war we are fighting. The

Muslims won't fight on Fridays, the Jews won't fight on Saturdays, and the Christians won't fight on Sundays."

With Solomon like wisdom, Dobey replied, "Well, if you can find four other world religions that refuse to fight on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays, because of their holy days, you have solved the problem of world peace." (The Speaker's quote Book: Zuck p.407)

So if Peace may only manifest as a result of holy days. In that case, I as a Unitarian Universalist minister declare everyday a holy day.

This may be one way to Imagine Peace - declaring holy days - unrealistic - yes - but imaginative, creative, and out of the box thinking - this, is Imagining Peace.

In our responsive reading this morning by Lao-Tse, the ancient Chinese philosopher and teacher of the Tao lays out a clear path to imagine peace.

The way Lao-Tse makes it possible is that he details how peace can be achieved - he outlines a path to follow. If there is to be peace in the world - there must be peace in the nations. If there is to be peace in the nations there must be peace in the cities and from - cities to neighbors - neighbors to homes - homes to hearts. There must be Peace in the heart. The ideal of world peace begins right here - in your own heart. With a peaceful heart one can Imagine Peace. It begins right here. This sentiment echoes the words of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama; "World peace must develop from inner peace. Peace is not just the mere absence of violence. Peace is the manifestation of human compassion."

And certainly human compassion begins right here – in the human heart.

It is like a story told by Siddhartha Gotma the Buddha. It seems there was once an old wise man who had the reputation of being a peaceful man. He prayed and meditated night and day. One day a man come from far away and tried to antagonize the peaceful old man. He spent days insulting, intimidating and harassing the wise man, but the old man would not falter from his peaceful state of mind. Finally in exasperation the antagonistic man asked this peaceful wise man a question; “I have tried for several days to arouse your anger with insults, harassments and intimidations, but to no avail. How is it that you still stay so peaceful?”

The wise peaceful man replied with a question of his own. He asked; “If someone offers you a gift, and you do not accept the gift, then who does the gift belong?”

You have come here with your gifts of insults, harassments and intimidations and I do not accept them; go, take them back they belong to you.”

As our second reading by Jack Kornfield reminds us; “from a peaceful center we can respond instead of react. Unconscious reactions create problems.

Considered responses bring peace. With a peaceful heart whatever happens can be met with wisdom – wisdom is meeting each experience, free of anger, ill-will, judgment and fear, and with an open and free heart respond from that place of peace. Remember Peace is not weak. It is unshakeable!!

My friends, hear the words of the poet Berry; when despair for the world around me grows.....I come into the place of wild things.....

I come into a place of peace. Find that place for yourself, be it wild things, calm things or quiet things, and breathe deep into that space where awareness, love and peace abide. May it be so and blessed be.