

**Do Unto Others...**

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**Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, Carmel, California**

**Sunday, September 16, 2001**

*Such is the power of Love - that it is within us and that it comes to the forefront of our hearts and minds when we most need it, and that it reaches out and across incredible barriers to touch others. For this I am so grateful.*

What can I say to you this morning, knowing that I'm your minister, and you probably need a word from me today more than any other day we've shared, and yet being as sad and as confused as each of you? Having no more insight or wisdom than any of you, what can I say? Struggling, just like you, with anger, rage, despair, fear. Searching and clinging to signs of hope. Waiting to see what will happen and trying to be patient - just like most of you, I suspect. So many words have been spoken, all over the world. And yet no end is in sight. What words do I have, do any of us have, that might be of use?

There is so much to say, and there are so few adequate words.

There will be time for talk of what has happened and is happening in our world. There will be, I am afraid, too long a time when this is with us every day. We will analyze, react, reevaluate, think it through, try to make sense of it all, and talk. Such words will fill all the spaces of our lives, I'm afraid. But not this morning. This morning, we need to be with our hearts.

The thing I am really burning to say to you today is that I love you. I am so grateful for each one of you in my life. I am so grateful for the love you offer me, and for the love you offer one another and your friends and family and neighbors and the world.

Love is the word in my heart right now. We just naturally know about love and instantly stop taking it for granted in the face of this crisis, and that is a good thing. A very good thing. The outpourings of love the world around is my source of comfort and hope.

Such is the power of Love - that it is within us and that it comes to the forefront of our hearts and minds when we most need it, and that it reaches out and across incredible barriers to touch others. For this I am so grateful.

The most important thing we can do is nurture this Love within us because God is love. Never mind for now what else God is or is not. Never mind if God is or is not the best word to use. We can go back to picking at that sore at a later time if we must. But for now, when we appeal to God, we call upon the Love in our hearts. When we thank God or the Spirit of Life or Gracious Spirit, or whatever name we use, we express gratitude for the Love in our hearts.

And we know that Love is bigger than any and all of us and that it connects us, one with all others, and hold us in its embrace, even if the face of destruction and death and unspeakable hatred.

When we pray, we call upon and call forth this Love, this Love that connects us, that comforts us when we are afraid, that is the root of our hope for the future. This great Love out of which we were created, through which we are sustained, and in which we are redeemed over and over again.

God is Love and when we call upon God in prayer, we call upon Love. And we so need to do that right now. We need to turn to Love, to lean on Love, to give thanks for and to Love.

We have been in prayer since this horror began, and we will pray a lot in the weeks and months to come. Our prayers will be to the God that is Love. And they will help us to keep that part of ourselves, that part that is Love, that is the God within us, strong and whole and in the vanguard of who we are. For without this love in our hearts, we would be lost in the chaos of these terrible events.

Our topic this morning, chosen months ago when Forrest began planning our new Kid's Church program, was the Golden Rule - *Do Unto Others*. Who could have known how fitting it would be for this morning?

The picture on the front of your bulletin is Norman Rockwell's painting entitled *Do Unto Others*. It depicts the diversity that makes up our nation and the larger world in which we live. Brian and I visited the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Massachusetts just two weeks ago. Most of Rockwell's work is innocent and joyful, scenes of small town homogeneous White American life. And then came World War II, and then the Civil rights movement, the King and Kennedy assassinations, and Norman Rockwell was moved to take on more serious subjects in addition to his more nostalgic illustrations for *Saturday Evening Post*.

*Do Unto Others* is such a painting. It hangs in a separate room toward the end of the exhibit. It took my breath away when I came around the corner and saw it. I just had to stand there in silence and take it in for awhile. You can't tell here in this black and white copy, but the colors are wonderful. Rockwell is great with light and shadow and depth of perspective and detail. The colors and facial features, and even the costumes of the people, are mesmerizing.

We are so *beautiful*, we human beings of so many different colors and shapes and sizes. Seen together like this, we are so beautiful. It breaks my heart that we can't all know how beautiful we are, and that we can't all honor and protect this collective beauty and give thanks for it.

It is such an easy rule to say. As Forrest said in the story, we can say it standing on one foot: *do those things to others that you would like to have others do to you*. So easy to say, but so hard to do. It takes a lifetime to even begin to get it right. And the longer we work at it, the more complex it becomes. *Do Unto Others* calls us to look beyond our own blind assumptions based upon our own cultural experiences.

Rockwell's painting reminds us that *Others* have different faces, different cultural experiences and different religious understandings. Just as we would like them to accept and respect ours, we need to accept and respect theirs.

This is sometimes so very difficult. But Love, that deep Love within us that is God, calls us to try. Doing unto others, in the spirit of Love, is so very difficult, but it is so very important, especially now.

So we will pray. We will pray for the wisdom and the strength to *Do Unto Others*. We will humble ourselves before Love, ..before God, and ask Love's help, ..ask God's help, that our leaders might find the wisdom and strength to remember *Do Unto Others*, even as they are called upon to make such very hard decisions with so very many things at stake.

As I said earlier, we will be here for a time of prayer on Tuesday evenings for as long as we need to be. For what shall we pray? For peace, certainly. For justice, too, and for the restoration of right relations in the world. Like *Do Unto Others*, this is incredibly complex. We won't always agree on how to best achieve either peace or justice, or on which is more important at any given moment.

Terrorist acts are acts of hatred and if we answer hatred with more hatred, we only increase hatred. Yet terrorism cannot be allowed to prevail, or else no one, in America or the rest of the world, is really free. And without freedom, there can be no peace for freedom loving people. Peace and justice will be so very hard to accomplish.

It will be so very hard to know if our leaders are doing the right thing. There will be so many opportunities for error, like trying to navigate an enormous ship through an intense storm. We will each have our own thoughts and feelings about what course is the right course.

So we won't always agree. It may become divisive. But that is exactly why we need one another. That is why we will gather and hold one another and the world in prayer in the spirit of Love. We will call upon Love, ..we will call upon God, to help us support and care for each other even when we do not agree. As we sang earlier, *we would be one... in greater understanding.... in living for each other..... in building for tomorrow a nobler world.*

We will call upon Love, we will call upon God, to keep us from turning our frustration and our concern and our righteous anger into hatred.

If we can do it here, we can help it to be so in our community.  
If we can do it in our community, we can help it to be so in our nation.  
If we can do it in our nation, we can help it to be so in the world.

God bless America.  
Love bless America,  
and each one of us as we struggle in the days to come. Amen.