

An Unlikely Teacher

Theodore Parker Church

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Opening Words – THE GREAT TEACHERS IN LIFE

By [Jason Cook](#)

We seekers are on a quest:
A quest to discover truth and meaning.
Sometimes we think we've found it—
Wrapped up, glimmering with newness
Straight off the intellectual assembly line.
All the answers right here for us
And others, if they'd only listen.
But truth has a way of coming in disguise,
Sometimes wearing rags and sometimes finery,
But so often cloaked from our immediate sight.
And sometimes, that which we have rejected,
That which we have let go of
Or decided was only for others
But not us—
Can be our teacher.
Let our time of worship be an acknowledgment
Of the never ending journey toward truth and meaning,
And our appreciation of those we learn from along the way.

Prayer for a Pandemic

krug the thinker

May we who are merely inconvenienced
Remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors
Remember those most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home
Remember those who must choose between
preserving their health or making the rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for
our children when their schools close
Remember those who have no options.
May we who have to cancel our trips
Remember those that have no safe place to go.
May we who are losing our margin money

in the tumult of the economic market
Remember those who have no margin at all.
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home
Remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country,
let us choose love.
During this time when we cannot physically
wrap our arms around each other,
let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace
of God to our neighbors.
Amen.

Homily

An Unlikely Teacher the Rev. Anne Bancroft

First – let me tell you how sorry I am that we are not all together enjoying a service with tons of jazz music hearing about Michael’s journey through evangelical life into the music that captured his heart so many years ago. I was so looking forward to it, and am really hopeful that we can make it happen sometime this spring!

And, second – for those of you who have been able to join us, let me tell you how grateful I am that we are able to be all together this morning, even in a different way – that the gift of technology has made it possible for us to gather; and, many thanks to Michael and Rose and Steve and Gretchen, Eli and Sam for helping out with today’s service.

Charles Dickens came to mind for me recently. Many of us know the beginning of the *Tale of Two Cities*, right?: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” He was referencing the era of the French Revolution, and the early era of enlightenment and industrialization when the reality of extremes was more evident: “it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us”

Good/bad; best/worst; either/or A bit like these days – all dark, all light; all good, all bad – very little in the middle, everything described as what he called, “the superlative degree of comparison.”

This situation we’re in inclines us to think in very either/or ways. In times of stress or fear, we tend to retreat, often to hyperbole (i.e., it’s the WORST; there has NEVER BEEN A TIME LIKE THIS!). And, we are being encouraged to practice extreme measures – social distancing which feels like isolation; normal things disrupted, closed, inaccessible, unavailable.

But let's step back a minute and remember that we ALWAYS have the choice to be "both/and" thinkers. We are far more creative and resilient than we often give ourselves credit for or than we take time to REMEMBER! We can both distance AND stay connected. We can both do without AND make accommodations. It won't surprise you, but there has not always been toilet paper!

I'm guessing that many of us are over the top with time online and on the television learning about and keeping up with the virus that feels like it has interrupted everything in our lives: everything personal, everything social, everything political. AND, we are discovering that this particular crisis, in fact what every crisis makes us aware of is that it can't and it hasn't interrupted our spiritual lives, our spiritual longing. Hopefully it has only encouraged our attention to the meaning-making part of our lives, the part that seeks understanding, that tries to be mindful and appreciative; the part of us that craves meaning and substance; the part of us that eschews reason, and seeks hope. That part of us is alive and well, I think.

In a recent post I noticed the comment that it was during the plague that Shakespeare wrote King Lear. We have amazing capacity for creativity when life as we know it is challenged; when we are shaken out of routine and required to adapt.

Let's choose to live in THAT space during these challenging times. We have no idea how long this will last, or what the impact will be. This we know, for sure, that there will be a time when we can look back and reflect on how it was we managed. I hope that reflection will have us remembering how creative we were; how adaptive and thoughtful we have been; how we remembered that we have weathered bigger storms and managed; that the resources still available to us – like the internet, but also like compassion and empathy and care – those resources are still at our fingertips, our very clean, freshly washed fingertips.

This time is our teacher, and the great thing is that we get to CHOOSE what we learn.

A Canadian doctor, Dr. Abdhu Sharkawy, posted his advice online, ending with the salutation, "Clean hands, open hearts."

Clean Hands. Open Hearts.