



Main Street Congregational Church

145 Main Street, Amesbury MA 01913

February 9, 2025 - The God Thing

(Luke 7:1-17)

I am quite certain I have shared this story before and yet I repeat it again this morning. If I know I am repeating myself do I get a pass in the "she's losing her mental faculties" department? It happened over 22 years ago at the weekly peace vigil we had been attending. Each Saturday morning we would gather around the traffic circle in downtown Keene with signs and prayers for peace. While we were taking a stand for peace the United States was warring, I think it was in Kuwait. Moira was despairing and feeling overwhelmed. She spoke of the Quaker man who was the leader for NH Peace Action. He was alive, committed and effective. He kept showing up. Kept gathering people. No frenzy but simple persistence with compassion and conviction. Moira, disregarding and not a fan of the church Moira, asked me, "how does he keep going? How does he do it?" To which I replied, "it's the God thing".

I didn't know the man personally so I had no first hand knowledge of what kept him going but I surmised. He was an active Quaker and with that was a practice of connecting intentionally and regularly with the Spirit. In a time when sides were taken and violence escalating he was taking time to connect to the eternal and infinite love loose and active in the world. His work used his unique gifts and he gave his time to that work but he had a reservoir of love which was continually being filled and sustained by the Holy. He may have gotten physically tired but there was always God present to sustain and provide spiritual fuel.

This conversation came back to mind the other day when I had a meeting with an activist who was asking me about how I kept going in the current struggles. It's the God thing. It's the trust that God is present and will not depart. It's the trust that God's tool of love is what brings healing. It's the trust that God pours that love into me and into each and every one. Continually, constantly. In the most horrific, painful or scary conditions God is present, loving and bringing new life. I may not be able to see that. I may feel like it isn't going to happen. Regardless, God goes about being God which is being present and bringing life from death, hope from despair.

We are in a hugely unsettled time in the United States. Whether you think all this change is the way to healing or if you scared or outraged -we all are feeling the huge shifts and changes. Much is unpredictable. Much of what we thought was solid and sure is being wiped away. Much of how we thought things would be is no longer true. I have had many conversations where the same questions are being asked - what do we do? My mantra for these times is I will connect with people of faith and do things that bring life. I don't deny fear or anger but I don't want to react and respond with those emotions. I want to respond with action to bring life, action powered by love and trust that God will stay close and show the way.

It's the God thing. We have a sacred story that gives us example after example of people choosing to face the challenges and oppression and injustice of the world with love and trust in God. They form community with others who want to do that as well. They go about ministry of compassion, justice and bringing life. We have heard those kinds of stories. Last week it was Jesus helping, bringing life, on the sabbath. Ignoring rules that said wait because he was committed to bringing life. We have heard 2 more stories this morning. Two people in desperate situations and Jesus response to their need was to bring life. I don't know if the miracles literally happened or not but I know the stories are true. Jesus goes about bringing life. No conditions on the recipient. Jesus sees a need and responds. Using the power of love Jesus brings life.

We who are followers of Jesus can do the same thing. We can respond with love and do things to bring life. Yes, there are huge, high level things that need doing and addressing. Maybe you operate in those circles and can bring healing and love there. Most of us are "just" local folk with limited influence in the geopolitical sphere of policy making or policy eviscerating but we can make phone calls to legislators and voice our concern over particular issues and ask them to act for compassion (they pay attention to the volume of calls they get and the issues their constituents care about). We can talk to each other to get courage to do that. I know I always have a knot in my stomach before I pick up the phone even though I know I will either get an answering machine or an aide whose job is to be respectful to me and take my information not to engage in a debate with me about my opinion or ask me for data to back up what I want.

We can add on to that with more local acts of compassion and bringing life. Taking cookies to a neighbor. Writing a note of thanks to someone who has acted for kindness. Sending money to organizations who work for justice. Getting peanut butter for Our Neighbors' Table. Reading stories of faith based activists. Gathering with friends and talking about how we can respond with love and bring life rather than use all our time to despair and talk woe. We can start small and slowly develop our muscle of bringing life.

I have been writing down stories that give me hope and inspire me to action. We have already heard the words of Bishop Marianne Budde. Now these words from Debbie Thomas in the Christian Century. "In the meantime the hope I have arrived at now simply compels me to choose the good, the beautiful, the loving and the just on a daily minute by minute basis - regardless of the results. I will never do this perfectly. But I will make it my goal and I will encourage my children to make it their goals too. Who knows, in the cosmic scheme of things, how our tiny acts of resilience, kindness, reconciliation, reverence will ricochet across the years or generations? Who knows what guises resurrection might yet take? What else is Christianity if not an astonishing commitment to the tiny, the impossible, the fragile, the broken? A mustard seed. An alabaster jar. A crucified carpenter."

These words from Michael Curry former presiding bishop of the US Episcopal Church "God is always seeking to create a world and a society where all are loved, where justice is done, and where the God given equality of us all is honored in our relationship, in our social arrangements and in law."

The God thing. God is present. God is about bringing life. In our reality, in our time, we can lean into God and join in with God. We can be supported and we can be active in bringing life. Amen.

Joan MacPherson
Main Street Congregational UCC

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