

SOME OF US EXPERIENCED A SLIGHT JOLT WHEN WE HEARD THE TOPIC FOR THIS MONTH WOULD BE "SALVATION." I WANTED TO REVERT TO LAST MONTH'S TOPIC OF "LETTING GO," LITERALLY.

HOWEVER, I RATHER ENJOY A NARRATIVE CHALLENGE, SO, HERE I STAND....MAYBE A LITTLE BIT ON A SOAPBOX.

LET ME BEGIN BY ACKNOWLEDGING IN MY HUMBLE OPINION THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION IS A LITTLE OFF KILTER WITH ITS RECENT SUGGESTION UU'S NEED TO INCLUDE MORE REVERENTIAL WORDS (SUCH AS, SALVATION, I PRESUME). I THINK WE ALREADY USE BEAUTIFULLY SACRED AND REVERENTIAL WORDS.....BELOVED COMMUNITY, ENCOURAGEMENT, TOLERANCE, ACCEPTANCE, COMPASSION, SPIRITUAL JOURNEY, GRATITUDE, VALUING, TRUTH, LOVE, SUPPORT, JUSTICE, JOYS, CONCERNS, EMPATHY, WELCOME, MYSTERY, MIRACLE, REASON, DIVINE SPARK, NAMASTE, SALAAM, SHALOM, BLESSED BE, PEACE, GOODWILL, JOY, WARMTH.....A VERITABLE TAPESTRY.

SO, WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO USE SUCH A WORD AS SALVATION? WHAT IMAGE DOES THAT EVOKE? I WAS BROUGHT UP IN A PROGRESSIVE PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION. "SALVATION" WAS NEVER USED IN A THREATENING MANNER. THE REASON IT NOW GIVES ME AN IMAGE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE IS, I BELIEVE, FROM HEAVY HANDED RELIGIOUS RIGHT-WING FUNDAMENTALISTS AND THEIR SO-CALLED FAMILY VALUES CAMPAIGN, AND HOW WE ARE BORN INTO SIN AND THUS, NEED TO BE "SAVED."

HOWEVER, I AGREE WITH PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER AND AUTHOR, FREDERICK BUECHNER'S DESCRIPTION OF SALVATION: "IT'S AN EXPERIENCE, FIRST. DOING WHAT YOU'RE BEST AT DOING (AND LIKING TO DO BEST), HEARING GREAT MUSIC, HAVING FUN, SEEING SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL, WEEPING AT SOMEBODY ELSE'S TRAGEDY...ALL THESE EXPERIENCES ARE RELATED TO SALVATION BECAUSE TWO THINGS HAPPEN:

- 1) YOU LOSE YOURSELF AND
- 2) FIND YOURSELF MORE FULLY.

WHETHER YOU THANK GOD OR YOUR LUCKY STARS FOR SUCH A MOMENT, IT IS ONE THAT OPENS UP YOUR WHOLE LIFE. DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK ON SUCH A MOMENT AND HURRY ALONG TO BUSINESS AS USUAL. MAYBE YOU ARE THAT MOMENT FOR ANOTHER PERSON."THIS IS DEEPLY POWERFUL AND FULL OF PROMISE.

GREEK AND LATIN DERIVATIVES OF THE WORD "SALVATION" INCLUDE: SALVE, DELIVERANCE, RELIEF, RESPITE, A BALM, HEALTH, WHOLENESS.

IN ADDITION, OTHER DESCRIPTIONS POINT TO SHELTER, MEND, REUNITE, RECONCILE.

I ESPECIALLY LIKE A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST MINISTER'S DESCRIPTION OF SALVATION AS BEING "SAVED FROM OUR OWN SELF INVOLVEMENT." AND, A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE MENTIONS BEING "SAVED FROM CIRCUMSTANCES THAT DESTROY THE VALUE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE."

THOSE REFERENCES BOND WITH OUR SEVEN PRINCIPLES (**LISTED AT THE END). THE CHALLENGE IS TO FEEL THEM TO THE DEPTH OF OUR BEING.....AND HERE'S THE KICKER: TO ACT ON THEM WITH INTENTION, AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE. INCREMENTALLY, PRACTICING, FALTERING, RENEWING. AND THAT BECOMES OUR SALVATION IN OUR LIFETIME.

WE ARE LITERALLY A TAPESTRY, AND SHARING OUR STORIES CONNECTS US IN WAYS WHICH EMBOLDEN AND FORGE OUR VISION. SALVATION IS SEEING, ABSORBING, AND ACKNOWLEDGING ALL OF IT, ALL OF US.

IN HIS BOOK, "ETHICS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM," THE DALAI LAMA DESCRIBES WHAT I CONSIDER AN ENCOMPASSING VIEW OF SALVATION IN HIS PRAYER:

"MAY I BECOME AT ALL TIMES, BOTH NOW AND FOREVER
A PROTECTOR FOR THOSE WITHOUT PROTECTION.
A GUIDE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR WAY
A SHIP FOR THOSE WITH OCEANS TO CROSS
A BRIDGE FOR THOSE WITH RIVERS TO CROSS
A SANCTUARY FOR THOSE IN DANGER
A LAMP FOR THOSE WITHOUT LIGHT
A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR THOSE WHO LACK SHELTER
AND A SERVANT TO ALL IN NEED."

NAMED IN THAT PRAYER ARE: PROTECTOR, GUIDE, SHIP, BRIDGE, SANCTUARY, LAMP, REFUGE, SERVANT."

I FEEL THESE ARE THE EMBODIMENT, THE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE, OF OUR SEVEN PRINCIPLES. WHEN I HEAR THE WORD "SALVATION," I HAVE AN IMAGE OF CLASPED HANDS AROUND OUR EARTH.

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM IS A NON-CREDAL DENOMINATION. INSTEAD, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING SEVEN PRINCIPLES:

1. THE INHERENT WORTH AND DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON
2. JUSTICE, EQUITY AND COMPASSION IN HUMAN RELATIONS
3. ACCEPTANCE OF ONE ANOTHER AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH IN OUR CONGREGATIONS
4. A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE SEARCH FOR TRUTH AND MEANING
5. THE RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE AND THE USE OF

THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS WITHIN OUR CONGREGATIONS AND IN
SOCIETY AT LARGE

6. THE GOAL OF WORLD COMMUNITY WITH PEACE, LIBERTY AND JUSTICE
FOR ALL

7. RESPECT FOR THE INTERDEPENDENT WEB OF ALL EXISTENCE OF
WHICH WE ARE A PART.

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TAPESTRY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION