

A talk about a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning,”
about our individual spiritual journeys

Presented by:
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Reading Before the Sermon --
Go Boldly
By Jean M. Olson

May you be brave enough to expose
your aching woundedness
and reveal your vulnerability.

May you speak your deepest truths,
knowing that they will change as you do.

May you sing the music within you,
composing your own melody,
playing your song with all your heart.

May you draw, paint, sculpt, and sew,
showing the world your vision.

May you write letters, poetry, biography,
slogans, graffiti, the great novel,
laying bare your words to love and hate.

May you love even though your heart
breaks again and again.

And until the end of your days,
may your life be filled
with possibilities and courage.

Source: "[Becoming: A Spiritual Guide for Navigating Adulthood](#)"

Today I want to talk about a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning”

About our individual spiritual journeys

About the wounds

And the healing

I want to share a favorite story with you

It’s an old fable about a land and a time when people used to be able to see one another’s heart

And from seeing them we could better understand love

The tale is called the “Most Beautiful Heart”

http://www.indianchild.com/most_beautiful_heart.htm

“One day a young man was standing in the middle of the town proclaiming that he had the most beautiful heart in the whole valley.

A large crowd gathered and they all admired his heart for it was perfect.

There was not a mark or a flaw in it. Yes, they all agreed it truly was the most beautiful heart they had ever seen.

The young man was very proud and boasted more loudly about his beautiful heart.

Suddenly, an old man appeared at the front of the crowd

He said, “Why your heart is not nearly as beautiful as mine.”

The crowd and the young man looked at the old man’s heart.

It was beating strongly, but full of scars, it had places where pieces had been removed and other pieces put in, but they didn’t fit quite right and there were several jagged edges.

In fact, in some places there were deep gouges where whole pieces were missing.

The people stared — how can he say his heart is more beautiful?

The young man looked at the old man’s heart and saw its state and laughed.

“You must be joking,” he said.

“Compare your heart with mine, mine is perfect and yours is a mess of scars and tears.”

“Yes,” said the old man, “Yours is perfect looking but I would never trade with you.

You see, every scar represents a person to whom I have given my love –

I tear out a piece of my heart and give it to them, and often they give me a piece of their heart which fits into the empty place in my heart, but because the pieces aren't exact, I have some rough edges, which I cherish, because they remind me of the love we shared.

“Sometimes I have given pieces of my heart away, and the other person hasn't returned a piece of there heart to me.

These are the empty gouges — giving love is taking a chance.

Although these gouges are painful, they stay open, reminding me of the love I have for these people too, and I hope someday they may return and fill the space I have waiting.

So now do you see what true beauty is?”

The young man stood silently with tears running down his cheeks.

He walked up to the old man, reached into his perfect young and beautiful heart, and ripped a piece out.

He offered it to the old man with trembling hands

The old man took his offering, placed it in his heart and then took a piece from his old scarred heart and placed it in the wound in the young man's heart.

It fit, but not perfectly, as there were some jagged edges.

The young man looked at his heart, not perfect anymore but more beautiful than ever, since love from the old man's heart flowed into his.

They embraced and walked away side by side.”

I love this story because it's about changing your perception

It's about coming to realize that what you believe may not be correct and that someone else has something to offer you

But for me it's about love

The freedom to love

The ways we love

The journey of love

The joy, the pain, the laughter, the passion and the “aching woundedness” of love

For me our spiritual journey is similar

We as Unitarian Universalists believe in a “free and responsible search for truth and meaning”

A process I believe “exposes our aching woundedness”

Sometimes you give a piece of yourself

Sometimes a piece is taken

When I worked in hospice ministry I discovered many individuals where this was true

Sometimes we give our love to a person and sometimes to an organization

Such as religion

I remember a man I knew who had spent his whole life as a faithful Catholic, in his heart, his faith never changed

But he gave a piece of his heart to the church

Believing they would always support him and his family

Later in life, one of his children went through a divorce

The church told him his child was no longer welcome

And for that, he too left the church, and a piece of himself with it

And life continued on, until he got sick, very sick

Thanks to hospice, I got to know him, spend time with him, and then one day he asked me, will you do my funeral?

With joy and sadness, I said yes

And again, a piece of heart was exchanged, from him to me and me to him

Sometimes we receive a gift of spiritual or religious experience

Our founders, the transcendentalists, taught us about religious revelation

That the individual is capable of making their own meaning of spiritual experience

And that we are all connected

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a transcendentalist, emphasized these principles in his Divinity School Address,

He stated ideas that promoted “a direct connection with God is available to and exemplified in each and every person.”

"The soul knows no persons. It invites every man to expand to the full circle of the universe, and will have no preferences but those of spontaneous love."

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/t/thoreau-emerson-and-transcendentalism/emersons-the-divinity-school-address/major-themes>

Again we return to love

May we be fortunate in our sharing of our “broken woundedness” with one another to experience this,

This shared connection with all of humanity

To know that there are no regrets in sharing pieces of our hearts

Because without our wounds, we will not love fully,

And we will not experience love fully

This is the choice of our free and responsible search for truth and meaning

To experience our world with open eyes and open hearts

To make meaning together

To be vulnerable to one another

And most importantly, to love

In the words of Henri Nouwen,

“When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an

hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares.” (from Out of Solitude https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Henri_Nouwen)

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