

Order of Service Oct 6th, 2019

Call to Worship: Hymn # 361, *Enter, Rejoice, and Come In*

Welcome & Announcements

Reading A Place to Forgive and to Be Forgiven By Cathy Cartwright-Chow

Prelude

Chalice Lighting Based on Maimonides, Mishnah Torah: Hilchot Teshuvah 5:1

Joys and Concerns

Hymn #112, Do You Hear

Story for All Ages Based on Jewish Folk Tale

Sing out the Children -

*Go now in peace. Go now in peace. May the light of love surround you
Everywhere, everywhere, you may go.*

Reading We Cannot Merely Pray By Jack Riemer (Adapted)

Moment of Reflective Silence

Hymn #123, *Spirit of Life*

Message: Building the Bridge that is Our Faith

Hymn #218, Who Can Say

Offertory:

*Let this be an offering to sustain and strengthen this place, which is so
sacred to many of us, a community of memory and hope, for we are the
keepers of the dream.*

Closing Words and Discussion

Extinguishing Chalice

Welcome & Announcements

Reading

A Place to Forgive and to Be Forgiven
By Cathy Cartwright-Chow

For those we have hurt in any way, whether through words or deed or thoughts.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

For the excuses we have made, just to be right.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

For the blame we have placed on someone else, again and again.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

For passing up the opportunity to help because we were afraid.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

For hiding the truth from someone.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

For working beyond the anger and resentment.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

For the times I have not felt heard.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.

Forgiveness is never easy, whether for yourself or someone else.

Here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven.¹

Prelude

¹ Cartwright-Chow, Kathy. "A place to forgive and to be forgiven." WorshipWeb Library. Accessed October 2019.
<https://www.uua.org/worship/words/litany/place-forgive-and-be-forgiven>

Chalice Lighting

Every person has been given free will. If I wish to turn to the good way and be righteous, I have the power to do so; and if I wish to turn to the evil way and be wicked, I am free to do that. Every person is capable of being righteous like Moses or wicked like Jeroboam, learned or ignorant, merciful or cruel, mean or generous. Nobody forces me, or decides for me, or pulls me in one direction or the other; but I myself, by my own volition, choose the path I wish.²

Joys and Concerns

Hymn #112, Do You Hear

Story for All Ages, Jewish Folktale

A rabbi and a soap-maker once went for a walk together. The soap-maker said to the rabbi: “What good is Judaism? After thousands of years of teaching about goodness, truth, justice, and peace, after all the study of Torah, and all the fine ideals of the Prophets, look at all the trouble and misery in the world! If Judaism is so wonderful and true, why should all this be so?”

The rabbi said nothing. They continued walking until he noticed a child playing in the gutter. The child was filthy with soot and grime. “Look at that child,” said the rabbi. “You say that soap makes people clean, but see the dirt on that youngster. What good is soap? With all the soap in the world, that child is still filthy. I wonder if soap is of any use at all.”

The soap-maker protested and said, “But, Rabbi, soap can’t do any good unless it is used!” “Exactly!” cried the rabbi. “So it is with Judaism. It isn’t effective unless it is applied in daily life and used!”³

² Based on Maimonides, Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Teshuvah 5:1. The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: Celebrating 50 Years in Pursuit of Social Justice. Accessed October 2019.

<http://rac.org/sites/default/files/Readings%20for%20Social%20Justice%20Services.pdf>

³ No Author. “Jewish Folktale.” The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: Celebrating 50 Years in Pursuit of Social Justice. Accessed October 2019.

<http://rac.org/sites/default/files/Readings%20for%20Social%20Justice%20Services.pdf>

Sing out the Children -

*Go now in peace. Go now in peace. May the light of love surround you
Everywhere, everywhere, you may go.*

Reading

Spoken (slowly): Now we begin our time of meditation and reflection. After the reading we will have a few moments of silence. As you settle into the noisy silence of the room, center yourself on being in this space together. Allow yourself to relax comfortably in your chair, eyes open or closed. We will close this moment of silence with singing "Spirit of Life", please remain seated.

We Cannot Merely Pray by Jack Riemer (Adapted)

We cannot merely pray to God to end war;
For the world was made in such a way
That we must find our own path of peace
Within ourselves and with our neighbor.

We cannot merely pray to God
to root out prejudice;
For we already have eyes
With which to see the good in all people
If we would only use them rightly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end starvation;
For we already have the resources
With which to feed the entire world
If we would only use them wisely.

We cannot merely pray to God to end despair;
For we already have the power
To clear away slums and give hope
If we would only use our power justly.

We cannot merely pray to God to end disease;
For we already have great minds
With which to search out cures and healings
If we would only use them constructively.

Therefore we pray instead
For strength, determination, and will power.
To do instead of merely pray
To become instead of merely to wish;
That our world may be safe,
And that our lives may be blessed.⁴

Moment of Reflective Silence and Hymn #123, *Spirit of Life*

*Spirit of life, come unto me.
Sing in my heart all the stirrings of compassion.
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
move in the hand, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold me close;
wings set me free;
spirit of life, come to me, come to me.*

Message: Building the Bridge that is Our Faith

Unitarian Universalism seeks to bridge a new understanding of faith

For many of us, our faith is not so much what we believe, as what we don't believe

The bridge we seek to create is made of values

not beliefs

it is made of commonalities

not dogma

⁴ Reimer, Jack. "We Cannot Merely Pray." The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: Celebrating 50 Years in Pursuit of Social Justice. Accessed October 2019.

<http://rac.org/sites/default/files/Readings%20for%20Social%20Justice%20Services.pdf>

for those who enter our doors

we do not ask for a pledge of unwavering conviction

we ask for the desire to journey

to seek the truth in love

as we began this morning, we shared with one voice these words:

here is a place to forgive and to be forgiven

Let us seek such a place,

“A place to forgive, and to be forgiven”

Yom Kippur in Hebrew means Day of Atonement.

All year long, according to Jewish tradition, our deeds are recorded in the book of life.

On Yom Kippur, the judgment entered in these books is sealed.

This holy day is your last appeal, your last chance to change the judgment, to demonstrate your repentance and make amends.

But the blessing of Yom Kippur atones only for sins between you and God, not for sins against another person.

To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person,

Righting the wrongs you committed against them if possible

I know that as a child I was exposed to teachings of Judaism and

I know in college and seminary I studied the basic concepts

And I attended services at more than one temple in my life

But 2010 was the first time I experienced Yom Kippur as a Minister

It was the first time I stood in front of congregants and spoke about a holy day set aside to “afflict the soul”⁵

It was a profound experience to think about how this holiday could resonate with me

And it stuck with me as something I needed to share again and again

I love the words “to afflict the soul”

What does that mean and what would that look like?

Traditionally afflict means to cause pain or suffering

to afflict the soul is to make ourselves uncomfortable

in the words of Reinhold Niebur,

we must comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable

a day of atonement is a practice in afflicting oneself

to willingly embrace discomfort in order to create space for healing

to create space for forgiveness

What would it look like if we, as Unitarian Universalists, could embrace this holy practice and holiday?

It might look like this prayer By Katie Kandarian-Morris⁶

“Spirit of Life, Spirit of Love, Spirit of Generosity,

As we draw near to that quiet essential side of ourselves,

may we open enough to consider the sacred choices we make

each minute, each hour, each day that add up to a lifetime.

Let us become aware that here is the place to be forgiven,

⁵ Rich, Tracey R. Judaism 101. “Yom Kippur.” Accessed October 2019. <http://www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm>

⁶ Kandarian-Morris, Katie. “Here is the place to be forgiven.” WorshipWeb Library. Accessed October 2019. <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/prayer/here-place-be-forgiven>

and to forgive ourselves for any past thoughts and actions;
here is a place to begin again with love.

As we are forgiven, let us open our hearts to forgive others,
to pray for them well-being and joy,
that they be lifted from worry and burden into peace and abundance,
may we all be blessed with riches of the spirit
and moment upon moment of peace and serenity.”

The tradition of Yom Kippur is part of the Days of Awe

Or the high holy days of the Jewish faith

It began with Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, on Sept 29th

Yom Kippur will begin this coming Tuesday

The ritual will begin at dusk and continue until sundown on Wednesday

It is 25 hours of fasting and prayers.

Genesis is a major part of the scripture that is read aloud during the holy
days, I want to share this portion from Genesis 22, chapter 9-13

⁹When they came to the place of which God had told him,
Abraham built the altar there
and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son
and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

¹⁰Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife
to slaughter his son.

¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said,
“Abraham, Abraham!”
And he said, “Here I am.”

¹²He said, ^p“Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him,
for now I know that you fear God,
seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked,
and behold, behind him was a ram,
caught in a thicket by his horns.

And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.⁷

What we can learn in this reading varies from person to person

Some see it only as a test, of Abraham by God

Other's read it as the power of God

The mandate to fear God

But in the tradition of Yom Kippur

It is a story of forgiveness

It is a story about the relationship between God and his people

It gives hope that God may spare those that he loves

"The liturgy of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur hinges on the idea that all of us have sinned.

"I know that sounds very Christian, but it's very Jewish at the same time," says Rabbi White.

"There is no one on the face of the earth who hasn't sinned."⁸

For Unitarian Universalists to unpack Yom Kippur we also have to unpack sin

The word is very culturally and religiously loaded.

How else might we talk about sin?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines sin as "an offense against religious or moral law;

⁷ Genesis 22. Accessed October 2019. <https://www.esv.org/Genesis+22>

⁸ Miller, Susan Katz. "Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Interfaith Connections." Published September 4th, 2013. Accessed October 2019.

<http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2013/09/interfaith-rosh-hashanah-and-yom-kippur.html>

an action that is, or is felt to be, highly reprehensible”⁹

I feel like this is something we can work with

If we stop defining sin in religious terms and start seeing it in terms of our community, then I believe Rabbi White is right, who among us has not sinned?

As Jesus said, let he who is without sin, throw the first stone¹⁰

What I mean is that sin can be more about our principles than God

As Unitarian Universalists, we have a code of conduct, a way we expect to be treated

That same code is often used to judge the actions of others

We call it our seven principles

they are the beams that support our bridge

the foundation

And within this specific community, we have our covenant

Is there anyone here who CAN'T find an example

where they didn't live up to either the seven principles or their own convictions?

Where we may all have fallen short of our own best selves?

That's how I want us to “afflict our souls”

I hope that today you might take away some hope

Hope that even when you stumble, there is grace.

⁹ “Sin.” Accessed October 2019. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sin>

¹⁰ John 8:7

Maybe not grace from an all-knowing god, but grace from each other.

We can offer each other forgiveness and acceptance.

Yom Kippur is about the relationship between people and god

It's about the grace of God

While traditional Christian religion often expresses needs to God in prayer, very few Hebrew prayers ask anything of God

Accept for Yom Kippur

This is the time of year when Jews ask for God to spare them another year

To grant them life and health

For themselves, their family and their community

And the reason God would do so, as he spared Isaac for Abraham, is because of the purity of their hearts

But there's an exception to this forgiveness

God will not do for you what you can and must do for yourself

God cannot, and will not, forgive for you, for those offenses that occurred between people

During the holy days, during this time of deep prayer and reflection, individuals are also challenged to make amends for the hurt and pain caused between one another

The Jewish calendar offers days set aside to make amends.

If you haven't visited your aging and ill relatives, now is the time to go.

If you spoke harshly to your partner, now is the time to say, "I'm sorry."

If you have not fulfilled commitments to your friends, now is the time to call and ask what you can do to help.

The tradition of Yom Kippur can show us that relationships shared between friends, family, neighbors and community are just as holy as the relationship shared with God

These relationships are one in the same

Just like UU's believe in an interconnected web

Our relationships and actions extend far beyond what we can see

There's a ripple effect in how we live

And because of that, because I believe in the good intentions of people, I also believe in forgiveness

I believe we should all practice a yearly ritual of atonement

A time when we take stock of our lives, the good and the bad, and take the huge step past awareness to asking for forgiveness

It's not enough to be aware

We have to also make those difficult calls

To friends and family

We have to make an invitation for conversation

We have to at least make space for the possibility

And I am fully aware some forgiveness will never be granted.

Some wounds are too deep to travel the journey to forgiveness and in those situations,

I hope we can find the kindness to forgive ourselves.

To accept that forgiveness and move on towards peace.

We all need to brave

We need to reach out and talk out these difficult situations.

It won't always work, but you'll never know unless you take the risk.

I think about what happened with my best friend

When she got married, the day didn't go as planned

Everyone made mistakes, both she and I.

But for a long time we couldn't figure out how to talk about it

So we just didn't talk

And the silence was killing me

Until one day, about six months later, I asked her to just talk

About anything

And she did

She told me she missed me,

And she said that's what hurt most about her wedding

She felt that I cared more about her wedding, than I did about her

She had needed a best friend that day,

not a wedding planner, caterer or even a minister

And I told her it had all been too much

Too much chaos and too much to handle

But then, the best thing happened,

it didn't matter who was right or wrong

It didn't matter whose hurt was more profound,

we both just said, "I'm sorry."

What a relief. A heavy burden left my heart.

I am so glad we took the risk.

When my own wedding came to be, now almost two years ago, selfishly, I don't know what I would have done without her

I don't think I could have handled it without her and the amazing support of my family

But I have those things because of intentionality in my relationships

It's not that I'm perfect; God knows I'm not perfect

But most of the time,

I'm not afraid to say I screwed up and try again

Admitting to those stumbles helps create an atmosphere of grace and reconciliation.

And so I offer, today, a new holiday in our UU calendar

A UU "day to afflict the soul"

May today be the day you call that friend

Or visit that difficult relative

And for your soul's sake, risk forgiveness

be the bridge in human relationships that begins the creation of heaven not yet to come, but here on earth, right here and right now

Hymn #218, Who Can Say

Offertory:

*Let this be an offering to sustain and strengthen this place,
which is so sacred to many of us,
a community of memory and hope,
for we are the keepers of the dream.*

Closing Words

May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships
So that you may live deep within your heart.
May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.
May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, starvation and war
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them
And to turn their pain into joy.
And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done.¹¹

Amen. - Franciscan Benediction

Discussion

Extinguishing the Chalice

We extinguish this flame by Elizabeth Selle Jones

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

¹¹ No Author. "Franciscan Benediction." The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism: Celebrating 50 Years in Pursuit of Social Justice. Accessed October 2019.

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