

(Jesus tells listeners how God's graciousness is missed when we are not present and aware. With this in mind we consider how to approach our daily lives so as to be more attuned to the Spirit.)

Our story for this week has been timely for me.
We had children and grandchildren with us the past two weeks.
I've been keenly aware of the time I had with them -
because it was limited.
We did a lot of things –
hiking and more hiking – fishing and more fishing -
playing music and listening to music – watching for foxes -
building things with blocks - going places - running for cover when it rained -
playing tag in the park - eating – reading stories –
going to bed and waking up in the morning.

All these things took on special meaning.
We had not seen them since October and won't see them again for awhile.

Time goes by so fast

Times goes by so fast – and it is so easy not to notice it.
You may have read the poem from Dr. Seuss that goes like this:

*How did it get so late so soon
It's night before it's afternoon.
December is here before it's June.
My goodness - how the time has flown.
How did it get so late so soon?*

We know that life is short.
We don't want to spend our lives as if we have nine of them to spend.
It is easy to give away our days to so many things.
We give them away to worry – or distrust – or anger -
and then wonder where they have gone.

Sometimes we act as if life is always about to begin.
And yet it is already on the way.

How do we live in a way that balances as many of the activities
we think we must do - with the things we want to do -
and the persons we want to be?
We do it by finding balance.

Finding Balance

I want to say a few things about finding balance.

Where to begin is the challenge.

I would like to suggest some states of mind
that will help us find balance as we encounter the world.
I will suggest states of mind from which we encounter the world -
and as we contemplate every opinion or action.

Then I'll give you some qualities or characteristics
we can observe in ourselves as we go about our daily lives -
in the quest for balance.

The quest for balance is also a journey of the spirit.

First, we could

do everything we do from a source of deep love.

To have faith is to me to do everything from a source of deep love.

And that deep love provides me with a perspective
that is open to the future – or what may happen.

It overcomes fear – and we know that fear knocks us off balance.

It helps with courage and willingness.

There is a place in the Letter to the Hebrews about faith
as the firm foundation under everything
that makes life worth living.

It gives us a handle on what we cannot see.
What that feels like to me is a wellspring of love -
although it could feel merely like something to count on.

To come from a deep place of love -
does not depend on what anyone else might do.

So the first thing for me in finding spiritual balance in my life
is to approach everything from a deep source of love.

Second, we could
live with a profound curiosity
about why we humans are here at all.

Carry a reverence for curiosity.
Be willing to question how things came to be.

For example – why would a place on earth be plagued
by poverty - or violence – crime?
Ask the questions before judging the situation or dismissing it as the way things are.
Just – be curious because it opens our minds
to preconceptions we may already have.

Third, we could
always look for deep connectedness -
and that can often be the next step after
our willingness to be curious.

Look for the relationships
and the oneness that is part of all that diversity in the world.

Connectedness is portrayed for us in the Gulf with the oil spill
when we see wildlife injured –
the presence or absence of fish and shellfish -
the work and livelihoods of so many people.

We see connectedness as we learn about ecology
and physics and space and microbiology and economics
and the human condition.

Looking for connectedness –
is easy when you come from a deep source of love
and a curiosity about what is happening and how we are all a part of everything.



We don't do those things if we are too much in a hurry -
if we are distracted with less important things - or emotions that draw away our energy.

So - there are three ways of being that help improve our balance.

When we are more balanced
we are more aware of the Spirit.

They are also three ways that make some space for us
to consider the bigger picture -
which is a way to think about God - and the world – and us.

It is a way to be spiritual.



Now – let's turn to some qualities or characteristics
we can observe in ourselves

at different times and places.

Being aware of these characteristics
helps us know we are indeed on the trail of Spirit in our lives.

Spiritual Awareness and Growth

Finding balance spiritually is also about
“mindfulness” in how we make decisions in our daily lives.

Mindfulness and balance are words that help us
think about how God is involved in our lives.

Let’s think of a continuum or a polarity
about where we are in our daily decisions and actions.

Let’s look at some things on that continuum.

The first I want to suggest is **profound gratitude** on the one side
and a sense of **entitlement** on the other.

There is **patience** on the one side
and **impatience** on the other.

There is **trust** on the one side
and **worry** on the other.

There is **humility** on the one side
and **arrogance** on the other.

There is **consideration** on the one side
and **carelessness** on the other.

There is **generosity** on the one side
and **stinginess** on the other.

There is **energy and timeliness** – we could say enthusiasm on the one side
and **procrastination** on the other.



And – how do these qualities relate to our story today?

In our story today – God is portrayed as a bridegroom
and head of a household –
as being enthusiastic - being generous – being careful and aware -
being trusting and trustworthy.

All of these ways of being are in a story
that seems oddly patched together.

And yet it would have contained what Jesus
wanted the disciples to take with them.
Their time was going by quickly - and before they knew it -
Jesus would be in Jerusalem facing the last week of his life.

Verse 41 - which was not a part of our lectionary reading today -
but I think it wraps up the story well.

Peter says -“Lord, are you addressing this parable to us
(the disciples) - or to everyone else as well?
That is quite easy to answer.

Today is a new day -
and we have plenty of opportunities to find balance -

to be aware of the world
and how God is calling us into life at its best.

Let's consider where we are – how mindful we are
about a few things:

Profound gratitude on the one side
and a sense of entitlement on the other

Patience on the one side
and impatience on the other

Trust on the one side
and worry on the other

Humility on the one side
and arrogance on the other

Consideration on the one side
and carelessness on the other

Timeliness and energy on the one side
and procrastination on the other

Generosity on the one side
and stinginess on the other



And that takes us back to those ways we encounter the world.

To begin our journey into Spirit – into God’s call -
we can approach life from a deep source of love.

We can live with curiosity
about how we fit into it all.

And we can look for the connections -
the deep connectedness that exists in the world.

And – as for Peter’s question about whether Jesus
meant the story – the parable for the disciples - or for us all.

Well – we know the answer to that.

Conclusion

Time just seems to go by so fast.
I hope these ways of being in the world will help you think about
your own spirituality and how it can guide your life.