

# The Theology of Love

I woke up the other morning with a start. Maybe you know that feeling where you sit straight up in bed fully awake. As I contemplated my thoughts and sat in that moment I felt like I was having one of those, “I should have had a V8” epiphany. I texted ten of my nearest and dearest friends to share my thoughts and then I proceeded to share them on my blog, on our FPS member’s website, in Facebook and on twitter. The central theme on my mind was: “We are all co-creators of this reality called life.”

We are all co-creators. I have spoken about this with you over the last year and a half and some would say that this is completely and totally obvious, that we are co-creators, which I would agree with and yet, how many of us feel at times totally out of control and utterly powerless in our lives? How can we be co-creators if what is happening to us seems random and at times beyond our reach? Maybe we face a diagnosis or loss of a loved one or loss of income or self-esteem. There are so many different experiences that can make us feel out of control. Even having all those children that you love and cared for go off to college and travel the world making their own way. It is scary to let go and maybe a bit sad to have the house so empty. Yet, they are also co-creators on a journey and have been since they were born.

Epiphany – co-creators. Just like having a V8 might be an obvious choice for some people for me, it is a basic premise in my life. I truly believe that you and I are powerful beings. You see six weeks after my birth I miraculously found my way into my father’s arms, yet I could not walk or speak or advocate for myself. My father was a man who would tell me multiple times every single day that I could be whoever I wanted to be. He convinced me that I was smart enough, courageous enough, and even though I was a girl, I was strong enough to follow whatever path I might choose and ultimately be successful if I put my mind and heart into it. Feeling so loved, I believed my father and began my journey. What I have realized over the last five decades is that he was right. That a daughter of a deputy sheriff could travel the world, be successful based on societies standards, earn her masters and her doctorate, take care of herself most days and be a spiritual leader.

Each one of us has our own story of how we arrived in this moment and place. We have our own injuries and accolades – some of us see the world as being like a glass that is half full while others of us view the world as being half empty or broken. That distinction is incredibly important to understand and to realize which we might be – half full or half empty. *I woke up the other morning remembering that if you and I are able to be positive about our collective journey, embrace the reality that we are co-creators, and make whatever outcome we select manifest itself, then we will be successful.*

Let me say that again. *If you and I are able to set aside our negativity, suspend our judgment and dare to be positive about our collective journey. Then, if we embrace the*

*fact that we are co-creators and can make whatever outcome we select manifest itself, we will be successful no matter what we choose to do.* We are powerful. Communities throughout history have manifested their dreams over and over again – think of Selma and the civil rights movement. It began in a church with people who believed. Did they face adversity, absolutely? Did they have vast resources at their beck and call, no they did not. Were they tired and old and fed up, yes they were. And yet they had a dream.

So what do we want to do? Do we want to feed and house the homeless? Do we want to provide clean drinking water to third world villages? Do we want to save the planet from humankind? Do we want to invest in educating and lobbying about alternative energy, economic justice, climate change, and immigration? Lets pretend for a moment that First Parish is absolutely perfect just as it is. Let us expect that canvass will be bountiful and that we will have all of the resources, including hands, minds, and money that we will need to accomplish whatever it is that we want. Let us put away the worries, doubts and judgments, and dare to co-create together. Oh I can't do that. I am burned out or too tired or just done with it all. We will never be able to succeed, it is already too late. You can hear those voices can't you? They come from inside, they are afraid of failing, or losing, or whatever.

How will we ever be able to move forward with all of that “can't do it stuff” hanging all over us? That “stuff” actually weighs us down, holds us back, and constricts our souls. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King had a dream and as outlandish as it seemed at the time, when he shared it, no matter how many people tried to crush that dream and continue to try to stall the progress of racial and economic justice, people believed and got on board, even in the face of persecution, pain, and death, they followed him.

I am so bold as to have a dream, to dream that this world and its many species and cultures and in the face of our differences, could someday live peacefully as one; to live in harmony, to live in love, to truly care for one another with a compassionate mind and heart filled with loving-kindness. This is not a new dream. It has been a dream of the ages. The Jewish prophet, Isaiah had visions of such a time when he prophesized in 740 BCE that, “<sup>6</sup>The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.” All in peace, all beings whom we would consider not to have an understanding of love compassion or living in harmony, all as one.

What will it take to realize such a dream? As my opening reading this morning I turned to Saul who was struck by lightning on the road to Damascus and was suddenly awake, alive, and renewed, he would change his name. Paul, awake and open, believed in the gospel of loving kindness that Jesus' early communities were built upon. He would share with a community that he established in Corinth in 51 ACE (After Common Era)...

When I was an infant,  
I spoke as an infant, I reckoned as an infant;  
when I became [an adult],  
I abolished the things of the infant.

For now we see through a mirror dimly, but then face to face.  
Now I know in part, but then I shall know  
as also I was fully known.

But now remains faith, hope, love, these three;  
but the greatest of these is love.

Love, “alls ya need is love...” Since I shared my first sermon with you in September of 2013, I explained that love begins with, “Sharing our Truth in Love” with one another. About a month later I explained how important it is to truly listen to one another. Not to sit there in judgment thinking of a response, but to focus on what the person who is speaking is really sharing. It is not always easy. We may have a difference of opinion and we may in fact think that only I can be right so that means that you must be wrong. Let me share a secret with you. There is one grand truth and we each carry within us a part of it. To understand and know the wisdom of that grand truth, we must listen and learn from each other in love.

There is nothing more important than love and compassion for our neighbor. When we stop to look into the eyes of another we are, in fact, looking into the eyes of God. This is the blasphemy that Ralph Waldo Emerson left the ministry over. Until we meet one another and see our kinship and our connection we will be destined to wander in the desert.

During a week that is all about love what might it feel like if we gave whole-heartedly to one another or maybe to everyone we meet, even those whom we do not know yet. What if we were willing to be present and vulnerable with everyone we came in contact with. Truly loved all others as we wish to be cared for and loved by them? Would it be exhausting? I think not, because love is an inexhaustible, instantly renewable, resource that is sweeter than sugar without all of the calories. Deep abiding love returned gives us energy. I have a dream – that from this moment forward you and I will be the love that will change our world. That it will begin here and travel out into the world and will affect every single person and being that wave of love touches. I have a dream that we will love the hell out of those who are angry and violent, those who are afraid of scarcity instead of feeling held in abundance. I believe that we are powerful; I believe that we can make a difference; and, I believe in the power of love. What do you believe?

This morning I would like to open worship to a discussion about the theology of love, and would love to hear what you think about this topic. In the spirit of sharing let us allow one another to speak their truth in love and let us open our ears, hearts, and minds to hear the word. Also, I would ask for those who speak to try to do so only once until everyone has had an opportunity to speak before attempting to share again. As our youth explain, step up if you are not one to share and step back if you are one that shares a lot. You know who you are...

Let us begin...

For this we pray, blessed be, amen

Please rise in body or spirit to sing **Hymn #108** – in the grey hymnal: **How Can I Keep From Singing**