

Here are some random thoughts. It is wise that you let many people give messages. Ruthie, Johan, Jon, Krista, Leann, Taylor, Laverne, Walter, David and Lois, all of those message givers clearly let the Light speak through them. I am never sure about me. I hope I did not leave anybody out. Because my church, the Catholic church, does not permit laity to give homilies and excludes women from ordination. It hobbles along like a person with 1 leg. It saddens me because Catholicism could be so much more.

You sometimes hear a lot about all that is wrong with young people. One notable person said, "***Our youth have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders, and they love to chatter.*** Another said, "**What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders. They disobey their parents. They ignore the law. Their morals are decaying.**"

The first quote was from Socrates and the second from Plato.

I have been teaching for many years, and I believe that my students have not changed much. Young people at their core have always been good. What they are dealing with has changed. My present students have to deal with the evils of social media and will soon have to figure out how to clean up the mess my generation and several younger than mine have created. I have had jobs where I supervised adult employees and I prefer to work with students.

My father had an interesting take on working with employees. He was born in 1912 and grew up on a farm in the Palouse. He became a mining engineer, which was ironic. He had two younger brothers that both became pilots. They went up in the air, and my father went down in the ground. In 1935 my father started working at the Pend Oreille Mine and even though he was an engineer he had to start out as a laborer. He worked for 43 years at the Pend Oreille Mine. One time he told me, "John, you know the most pleasant employee I ever worked with was a horse."

Well enough of that.

Luke 17: 5-6 The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' The Lord replied, 'If you had faith as small as a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you.

Mark says move a mountain. Luke toned it down to a mulberry tree.

The state of my spirituality is not the greatest, but I hope I have faith at least the size of a mustard seed. I do not have a mulberry tree but if I can't do it to this jade plant then there is no way I could do it to a mulberry tree let alone a mountain. Time to fish or cut bait.

“Jade plant, be uprooted and planted in the sea.” Maybe the plant did not hear me. “Jade plant be uprooted and planted in the sea.” Maybe my tone is too harsh. “Jade plant, I have never seen a plant with such beautiful leaves, such a brilliant green. I am going to ask you to cast yourself into the sea. Please know that 2 minutes after you touch the sea, I will call you back, so you are not damaged by the salt water. So be uprooted and planted in the sea.” Nothing. I may as well throw in the towel and chuck this whole Christian thing. Looks like when it comes to faith, I am a failure.

Obviously, a literal interpretation is wrong. Jesus is purposely using symbolism and exaggeration to make a point which I think is this: People with just a little faith can accomplish wonderful things. Things way more important than moving mountains.

What does Jesus mean by faith? I would say that most Christians would associate faith with believing the right things. Buying into all the doctrines, dogmas and beliefs of their denomination. Every Sunday at mass we recite the Nicene Creed. Here is one part of it:

*I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, **Light from Light**, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father.* I hope you noticed the phrase, “Light from Light”.

What is that credal excerpt about? In the 300’s a debate was raging in the church. On one side you had the followers of Arius who believed Jesus was created by God and therefore distinct from God. On the other side, the followers of Athanasius insisted the Son is eternal, uncreated and truly God. The Emperor Constantine, wanting uniformity in the Empire, summoned all the bishops to Nicaea to hammer it out. The creed clearly indicates that the followers of Athanasius prevailed.

All well and good but you could believe every single dogma and doctrine of your denomination, recite creeds with fervor and be a total jerk. You just have to talk the talk. I wish that right after reciting the creed we would recite a distillation of the beatitudes which ask you to walk the talk. The folks that are adamant about putting the 10 commandments on the courthouse wall don’t want to put this on the wall, “Judge not lest you be judged.” Or “Love your enemies.” Just because you put something on a wall doesn’t mean it is in your heart.

Christianity has been at its worst when different factions became so obsessed by “correct belief” they persecuted and killed each other.

Instead of the word faith I think that trust, optimism and having a worldview of abundance are what Jesus is talking about. The most fundamental, absolute grounding has to be trusting that God is good. That God is really good. That God cares more for me than I do for myself. As bad as things seem, it is all going towards the good. Three steps forward and two steps back but in the end more steps forward.

Faith is trusting in a worldview of abundance, refusing to buy into the lie of scarcity. The lie that there is not enough food, not enough health care, not enough housing, not enough jobs. A world where selfishness trumps the common good. Living in fear. Spending more and more to guard what we have lest “those people” get the same. Needing more guns, more weapons, tighter security, more protection, more ICE agents, bigger walls, more money going to the Department of War, less to the poor.

Much of the world has a worldview of scarcity. Richard Rohr talks about abundance and scarcity: *A worldview of scarcity tells us to protect what we have, because there's never enough to go around. It's a competitive, win/lose worldview. It moves us toward anxiety, toward consumerism, and toward possessiveness, because we don't want to lose what "little" we have—even if what we have is really more than enough. It's easy to look at life in terms of scarcity, convincing ourselves that there isn't enough. There isn't enough of goodness. There isn't even enough of God.*

The worldview of abundance depends upon us recognizing that we are in touch with an Infinite Source. If we've never made contact with our Infinite Source, we will be stingy, even selfish. We will guard and hoard the portion we have. This affects much of our politics and policies in this country. We're always afraid that someone else is taking what we have earned, as if we had earned it entirely by ourselves. Most of it has been given to us, yes, by our work, but also by grace and freedom, and the choices of many other people, almost despite ourselves.

Jesus represents the worldview of abundance in every one of his multiplication miracles and stories. There's always the making of much out of little and there are always baskets left over.

I mentioned the common good. It is core to many faith traditions. Quakers deeply value the common good seeing it as a societal state where everyone can thrive, rooted in their core belief in the "that of God in everyone," which necessitates equality, peace, simplicity, and integrity for all individuals and communities. This translates into practical action: opposing war, challenging injustice, promoting social equity, and working to create cooperative systems that benefit everyone, not just a few. You may not have noticed. Everything I just said has serious political implications. I will read them again: opposing war, challenging injustice, promoting

social equity, and working to create cooperative systems that benefit everyone, not just a few. It is impossible to be apolitical.

Erin and I have excellent health care insurance through the Public Employees Benefit Board. Lots of people with excellent health coverage are against national health care claiming it won't be as good. So? So? If mine won't be as good but folks with none would now have some then what is there to object to? "I've got mine, to hell with you." I don't get it. What does the Gospel say? Jesus personified free health care. Before all of His healings Jesus never asked for an insurance card. There were no copays. Jesus didn't care if you were Jewish and didn't care about preexisting conditions.

People of trust see a world of possibilities. People of trust know that at the center of it all is a good and gracious, benevolent God. People of trust see the Light in all. People of trust don't need to guard anything because there is more than enough. People of trust know that they don't deserve anything because it is all gifts.

Richard Rohr does a synthesis of writing by Habakkuk and by Paul in Romans related to the faith scripture I read at the beginning. *"Write it down. The vision is clear. It will have its time. It will press onto fulfillment. It will not disappoint. If it delays, wait for it. It will come. It will not be late. And this is the vision. This is the message. The just man will live by faith."* A faith that trusts that God is good. A faith that trusts that God's goodness is right here, right now. A rock-solid trust that God is on our side.

Maybe on an individual basis we only have tiny bits of faith but if we put the bits together we might have enough so that no one would go to bed hungry, our criminal justice system would be based on restorative justice instead of retributive justice, no one would be homeless, everyone would have access to a quality education, adequate health care, war would be no more, nuclear weapons would be decommissioned and the pentagon would have to hold bake sales to buy bombers.

In 1936, the Quaker mystic Thomas Kelly became a professor at Haverford College. He published the dissertation for his second doctorate in 1937, but he failed in the oral defense due to a memory lapse; this failure put Kelly into a period of grief, during which time he had a spiritual awakening.

He wrote this: *In worship we have our neighbors to the right and left, before and behind, yet the Eternal Presence is over all and beneath all. Worship does not consist in achieving a mental state of concentrated isolation from one's fellows. But in depth of common worship, it is as if we found our separate lives were all one life, within whom we live and move and have our being.* In the spirit of unity let us now quietly listen for promptings from the Light. Thank you