

A Love Too Big to Fit©

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February 25, 2018

This is a sermon about ideas too big to fit into one morning; Ideas that require our whole lives.

It is a Friday and there is a boy standing outside the threshold of my office door. His grandmother had died. His mother, younger sister and father had come inside to sit and talk over the details for her memorial service. The circle of his family, the people who helped him feel safe and secure were sad, anxious, preoccupied. How is he? Sad? Anxious? Angry? Confused? All of the above? Maybe he simply could not stand it...grief. Theirs? His?

His grandmother is dead!

He stands there- alone. Maybe- He was trying to *understand it!*

He knew birth. His little sister was born. He was born.

But Death? It did not fit with his life - so far.

"Hi Ben" I say. Ben is a good name. I have a son named Ben.

He does not answer. He is looking around. His eyes land on a grim, grey, 8-inch uneven, lumpy thing on my coffee table. It's ugly, dried out, broken, and peeling. Weird. It sits in the middle of a circle of stones and dried leaves. It is a kind of seasonal altar. "Want to hold it?" I ask.

He can't resist. He enters, takes it into his hands. It is so light! He turns it this way and that. It's a fallen mud wasp nest. It has broken open the honey combs brood cells within have long been vacant.

"How do they know?" I ask. He looks at me. How do they know? My favorite question. I stick my fingertip into one of the exposed empty holes. One exactly like the hundreds of others! He touches parchment like skin, explores the ragged rims of the incubators, the strength of its construction. Mystery.

How do they do that? I don't know. Do you?" (Maybe it's evolutionary inheritance? DNA? Survival instinct?). Where does that come from?" What power provokes these buzzing annoying (to us) scary (to us) creatures, without brains, season after season, to take dust into their mouths, chew it like a communion wafer, mix it with saliva and spit it out as a paste to paint, layer and lacquer this miracle of a multiple dwelling, that sits up in a tree with rooms to birth multitudes of new life! I call it mud wasp love! That mansion has many rooms.

Then I asked: "Where have they gone?"

As he wondered and examined the altar, his parents and I talked over the service, and I described where grandmother's ashes would rest- on the hill in the memorial garden. I invited them to bring something to put into or onto the earth with the ashes.

Where has grandmother gone? How is it possible- gone? Everyone of us. Some day.

The next day – Saturday- we celebrated and mourned his grandmother. We placed dusty ashes into the embrace of the earth, said simple things, shed tears. He looked around at all of us. Little sister laid a flower. The minster wonders. How is he? How are they? What else is required of me?

The earth turned and now it's Sunday after services. It is quiet. I am in my office, alone. This boy comes in and stands by the mud wasp nest. His father leans through the doorway, says "He has something he wants to give you." This boy cradles fallen leaves. He places them around the broken nest, widening the circle. I go to him. "Thank you, they are beautiful."

He leaves. His father trots back in and says:

He told me: Sometimes his heart is too big to fit into his body. My heart grows and it breaks me open. Again. Sometimes a heart is too big to fit into a body.

We bury grandmothers, mothers, daughters, brothers, fathers, sons, daughters. Friends/strangers/ fall in wars waged for no good reason, are shot on the streets of our nation for no good reason, are shot over and over again in our schools for no reason.

When we are broken? Do we open up or close down? How to do that?

There are also times when our hearts become too big to fit into the body of what we have been told or think we know and so- we must grow.

THERE ARE DAYS OUR HEARTS BREAK US,
AWAKE US, TO MAKE US
MAKE ROOM, IN HERE,
TO OPEN OUR MINDS
SO WE CAN
OPEN OUR ARMS
TO EMBRACE family, friends, neighbors, strangers, REFUGEES,
OPEN OUR EYES and look out, look around, get woke.
Open our voices, to speak up, speak out.
OPEN OUR DOORS, CROSS A THRESHOLD, Welcome in and REACH
OUT,
GET OUT OF OUR SEATS AND INTO THE STREETS.
LOVE INVITES US, LOVE CHARGES US TO LOVE:
THOU SHALT LOVE: It is a commandment, not a request.

"This is the way I have to grieve," said Emma Gonzalez, calling out the stalling tactics that prevent controlling gun violence that allowed her friends to be killed. That was love in action.

YES: LIFE CAN BE UGLY, MUDDIED, ANNOYING, PARCHED,
PAINFUL, SHAMEFUL, SCAREY, BREAKING US DOWN,
TEARING US APART, TELLING US EVERYTHING IS FOR SALE
Including democracy itself...
CAN YOU STAND TO LOVE EVEN THEN?
CAN YOU WITH STAND THE FORCES THAT SAY, DON'T LOOK,
TURN AWAY, FIT IN, KEEP SILENT, SIT DOWN, GO ALONG, SHUT
UP,

CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THE BROKEN PARTS
WITHIN YOU, in YOUR NEIGHBOR, YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?
YOUR NATION?

Emma said, "Everybody needs to understand how we feel and what we went through. If you don't you won't be able to understand why we are fighting for what we are fighting for."

WHEN WE STAND UP, STAND WITH THAT LOVE
WE UNDERSTAND, NO THING CAN SEPARATE US
WHEN WE LIVE OUT OF THAT **TOO BIG TO FIT LOVE**
A TOO BIG TO FIT LOVE FILLS IN THE BROKEN SPACES AND
PLACES, SO NO ONE STANDS ALONE
WHAT IS NEEDED MOST IN THIS WORLD RIGHT NOW AND
ALWAYS IS A **LOVE TOO BIG TO FIT**

When we understand that we will STAND TOGETHER,
WITHSTAND THE FORCES OF VIOLENCE HATE AND BIGOTRY
INJUSTICE MEANNESS DISRESPECT GREED
WHERE EVER YOU FIND THEM –
IN HERE IN SELF, NEIGHBOR, NEIGHBORHOOD, STATE OR
NATION.
WHAT IS NEEDED MOST IN THIS WORLD IS A TOO BIG TO FIT
LOVE is able LOVE WHAT IS NOT PERFECT
A BROKENNESS THAT WE ADMIT WE SHARE
SHARED BROKENNESS IS A WAY WE MAKE ROOM FOR A BIGGER
KIND OF LOVE AND ARE ABLE TO LOVE WHAT IS NOT YET VISIBLE
INTO VIABILITY, INTO VIBRANCY.

I wonder. I think of 50 years ago people in this desert had that kind of TOO BIG TO FIT LOVE AND FAITH. They planted this community—*UUCOD*.

Look at what you started—here in 1959- you joined it to UUA whose values called you into some larger concerns so you could stand with others and they would stand with you--for the long run--so you would build up ethical values of integrity...build up- ethical values- not tear down.

As Rev. Julie Forest told you, "You are an oasis, a place of refuge and a place to get refreshment: A place to build resilience for the personal spiritual renewal that we all need? A place to find the strength to persevere in protecting and growing the common good?"

Who was here in 1959?

Others built it for most of you who are here now. It was here so you would find an oasis in the desert for your spiritual well being. Don't support this place for what you get out of it--though it matters and it is a comfort to know you have a spiritual home somewhere. Support it for what it calls you to give, how it calls you to grow, and to know that you are not alone.

Who here helped build this church building in 2005 So that I just get to show up!

A congregation is fragile because of who is within it-- human merely being --and what is within us--our hearts. To be alive, a congregation must have the hearts of her people.

Just like those mud wasps know to build once is not enough. A nest ruined and rebuilt every year...out of a love that is as irrepressible, if not more so, as any human community of faith. Whether with steel, or stone or mud, love calls us to build and rebuild community. Just as a nest is recreated season after season, out of a love that is as irrepressible, so too must we.

Creation and re-creation take the dust of our mortality combined our tears, chewed over with juicy spit of a powerful and persistent love.

Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. Do justly now. Walk humbly now. You and I are not obligated to complete the work. But neither are we free to abandon it. (The Talmud)

Nothing could be more practical for our times than to open to a LOVE THAT IS TOO BIG TO FIT INTO ANY ONE OF US. The loving heart of creation is too big to fit in this room or any one church or synagogue or mosque or temple or meeting house. Unitarian Universalist hearts are too big to fit into one body of readings or rituals, creeds or customs. Too big to name or explain while riding an elevator.

We are called to open the closed doors of our hearts, habits and houses of worship to open the blinds of our minds to new revelations, mysteries and wonder! That we may bring it to life through us. Rev. William Sloane Coffin (1924-2006) wrote:

Everybody knows that I have only one life to lead...and life is pretty precarious...people sense insecurity, and try to secure themselves...by power, By money...and false search for security is what does everybody in... life alive...is very unsettling... It requires that we find our way and keep the faith. Even if we feel lost... in a new place...it is an illusion to think that we can become new and stay the same. ...That sacrifice won't be required of us. And we cannot know ahead of time if it will be worth it... We may not know even in our lifetimes... but we know we cannot really turn back to our old way of being in this world.

You are here together at this time, in this lifetime of UUCOD to appreciate, to look behind and ahead, to look around and take the hand of hands of our neighbors, friends, companions in faith, love and justice and allow YOURSELVES to be held in a greater love than any of can stand or understand, as WE take the pulse of OUR times along the lifeline of this community.

OUR HEARTS ARE BEATING! WE ARE ALIVE. RIGHT NOW!

We cannot choose the times in which we live, only how we will live in the time that we have together. Look around; look around.

Keep the faith, bring the love, be the peace, and bless everyone no exception.

Let the people say: Amen!

CLOSING

A TOO BIG LOVE--THE KIND THAT FACES DOWN BIGOTRY AND VIOLENCE AND WITHSTANDS THE BATTERING OF POLITICAL STORMS AND KEEPS HATE OUT...

HOW DID YOU WITHSTAND THE FORCES THAT SAID YOU ARE OF NO WORTH.

DID SOMEONE UNDERSTAND YOU AND LOVE YOU?

DID SOMEONE CARE FOR YOU ANYWAY?

DID SOMEONE OPEN THEIR DOOR AND INVITE YOU IN WHEN YOU WERE LOST?

DID YOU FIND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO RESTORED YOUR FAITH AND HOPE AND ABILITY TO LOVE? WHO GAVE YOU A PLACE TO REBUILD, REBIRTH LIFE WITHIN?

IDEAS TOO BIG TO FIT INTO ONE MORNING- you will have time together to learn how well you keep your promises. That is why we create congregations, connections, community and practice living our values in this world...

References

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