

Rejoice in the Light
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The Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene
May 3, 2009

Rejoice in the Light!

This morning let us rejoice in the light of our religious heritage, celebrating the spiritual ancestors of this congregation and of Unitarian Universalism. Let us rejoice in the light of Music, where body meets mind, heart, and soul, creating physical vibrations that travel through the air, enter our ears and evoke harmony and joy. What a miracle this is! Let us rejoice in the light of Life. There is something in all times and ages that leads people to cast aside bonds of the spirit and say YES to life. Let us rejoice in the light!

Come, let us worship together.
Hymn #187, It Sounds Along the Ages

Reflection – Rejoice in the Light

"Time is singing, always singing with us" -- the poet's words have vibrated in my mind for days. What does this mean? Martin Luther King says time is merely a neutral medium through which we act. Eckhart Tolle says time -- the past and the future -- is the playground of the ego, and the only moment in which we live is Now.

I have found a useful tool for understanding the first line of a poem is to read the second line.

"Life is singing songs to lift high our hearts,
Words of joy and praise for all to hear.
Voices from our past come bringing wisdom..."

Time, life, voices from our past, lifting our hearts, bringing joy and wisdom.

Time is singing -- the past is singing to us, and perhaps the future is, too,
asking for our passion, for our principles,
to share "a future both compassionate and fair,
to make of humankind one family."

Time is singing -- the past, the future, "the light of this new day."

Our meditation was a poem by our past minister, Rev. Carl Nelson.

"Nothing is really alive that does not sing."
I love this line! I'm sure our choirs do, too.
How can you truly sing without being alive?
How can you be truly alive, without singing, in some way?

My favorite lines are these:

"It is I who sing
when the wind pipes its melody
around the corner of the house,
when stony brooks babble songs to themselves
as they rush along,
when flowers blend their colors in chorus."

These lines take me back to Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" and to one of his inspirations, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and to some of Emerson's inspirations, including Hinduism and the Sufi poets. These great poets all speak of moments of knowing oneself as part of a greater Self. Emerson, the key figure in Transcendentalism, began his career as a Unitarian minister and continues to inspire to us today.

This is one of Emerson's most famous passages:

Crossing a bare common, in snow puddle, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear.... Standing on the bare ground -- my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space -- all mean

egotism vanishes. I became a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me. I am part and particle of God.

Emerson describes an experience of "I" that is much greater than the self -- the realization of which brings a sense of awe and all-seeing coupled with a sense of nothingness without fear -- the loss of one's small self.

In "The Over-Soul," Emerson writes,

Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence.... I am constrained every moment to acknowledge a higher origin of events than the will I call mine...

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE....

The soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like that power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and will; is the background of our being, in which they lie -- an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all..

Rejoice in the light!
Rejoice in the light of our heritage, of music, of Life.
Rejoice in the light that dispels the illusion of our separateness from Life,
that reveals our unity with all that lives.

I invite you to join with me in the spirit of prayer.

Light of Life,
kindling in all that lives,
within, among, and beyond us,
we turn to you now.

May we know that we are never alone.
May we remember that our sense of separateness is an illusion,
that we are quilted together in one fabric,
that what happens to us, affects others,
and what happens to others, affects us.
May we know that our connection with others
is not limited to our species.
May we honor our very real kinship with crows and ladybugs
and spiders, and all that lives.
May we know deeply that the same Life moves through us all,
the same Music, the same Light.
May we surrender ourselves to this Life, this Music, this Light,
becoming a pure manifestation of its nature,
and serving the rebirth of Life, Music, and Light in others.

Blessed Be and Amen.

(Hymn 22, Dear Weaver of Our Lives' Design)

Benediction

May we rejoice in the Light
of our heritage,
of Music,
of Life,
of Presence.