



How Breathes Your Soul?

A Sermon by
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We are heading back. Back into time. Breathe in. Breathe out. Prepare for the journey. Grab your bags...all of them...even the ones which are useless baggage. Breathe in. Breathe out. We are traveling back....

"Late Lament"

Breathe deep the gathering gloom,
Watch lights fade from every room.
Bedsitter people look back and lament,
Another day's useless energy spent.
Impassioned lovers wrestle as one,
Lonely man cries for love and has none.
New mother picks up and suckles her son,
Senior citizens wish they were young.
Cold hearted orb that rules the night,
Removes the colours from our sight.
Red is grey and yellow white.
But we decide which is right.
And which is an illusion???

Those last two lines of "Late Lament" made famous by the Moody Blues may well be the closest we will ever come to dogma in the Unitarian Universalist organization. "But we decide which is right. And which is an illusion." Breathe in. Breathe deep. Begin to allow yourself to remember the December 25ths of your life. Breathe. Breathe deep.

Most of us once believed in a Santa Claus. Some of us still do. Many of us once believed in the birth of a Messiah. Some of us still do. A large number of us once believed in a season, a life of faithfully giving of what we have. Some of us still do. Breathe. Breathe In. Breathe Out. Be with that which you have believed. Recall the ghosts of Christmas Past. Many of those Spirits are beloved, warmly embraced, welcome ghosts. We have memories of surprises and family, food and tinsel, the smell of pine or cedar, the glow of lights as home and street transformed into something soft and gentle and beautiful. Feel those loving, delicious Spirits surrounding and protecting, recalling us to a simpler time. Breathe In. Breathe Out. Pause a moment. Ahhhhh yes, there are other ghosts with us too...those often dreadful Spirits of Christmas Past.

You've probably heard me say more than once, we can't love who we are and hate where we have been. In order to savor, to fully experience, to BE in this moment in time, it has taken everywhere our lives and spirits have been to get us here. That sometimes means taking a look at those experiences which formed us...the good, the bad and the ugly. I am talking about the communities of our lives, the beloved and not so beloved communities we have been a part of.

There is the community of family...our families of origin, the families we have been part of as adults...the intimate family or our hearts. Some had awesome experiences of family growing up. That is something I celebrate and sometimes envy deeply. There are those among us who came up in families with no alcoholism or abuse, without divorce or untimely death, free of major disharmony between relatives. Some looked forward to holiday times especially for the family gathered. The rest of us had one, two, three or all of the above types of serious dysfunction to grow through. I would contend it is the whole of our families which influenced who we are being and becoming. As children, young adults, grandparents there are surely events we wish had happened differently, but if they had would we be who we are? Breathe in. Breathe in all that family has been and is in your life. Breathe in the family of your youth...of your adulthood...or your later years. Breathe in that which was awesome and that which was horrendous. Breathe in..... Now exhale. Blow away the haunting, hungry memories of distress and disappointment. Breathe out the recalled failures and faults. Exhale. Do it as many times as you need to. On a breath of kindness, release it, allowing the past to be what it was. Keep with you only those memories which bring a smile to your lips or a song to your heart. Breathe the beloved community of family...and give thanks as you are able, even if it is simply thanks those days are past.

On this journey we refer to as life, there have also been faith communities which have nurtured us and knocked us around. We have been enriched and enraged repeatedly in the name of religion (or religiosity). The community of church in all it's facets has and does without a doubt still speaks in and through us. Breathe in and remember. Breathe in and dare to recall that which was positive and healthy and life giving in your journey with religion. Breathe in and risk remembering those times when speaking on behalf of godbywhatevername others frightened, abused or judged you. Breathe it in, deeply and hold the wind of memory within you..... Now exhale and release each experience when your spirit was harmed in the name of religion. With whatever forgiveness you are able to

muster, blow with vigor and push it away. And just breathe quietly. Allow the music to grow within you and with warmth remember the times your spiritual journey was blessed and enriched and filled through religion or religious leaders. Remember whispering a song on Christmas Eve...not sure you believed it but certain you wanted to sing it anyway. Recall mission work, being able to give to others, seeing friends or hearing a word which spoke to your deepest self. Breathe in the wonder, the delight despite the dogma which came to you through churches. And exhale a melody of thanks.

What we are given, what we have in reality is this particular moment. It's more than a little trite, but our Present is the present. We have a NOW and complicated as your now or my now may be, it is what we have...where we live and move and have our being. We come to this moment many of us grieving loss through death, divorce, separation, estrangement. We come to this moment many of us celebrating the goodness of our lives ongoing or the freshness of new, even if unwelcome, new beginnings. Breathe in. Breathe in the wholeness of your particular now. Breathe in that which you hope will change, and that which you pray will never change. Breathe in the gift that you are and the gift others are to you. Breathe NOW in...cradle this moment in your spirit. Breathe in. Because of or in spite of what is going on in your life right now, you are a gift. You are a gift to your family, you are a gift to this fellowship. Exhale. Exhale the relief and release of knowing you are accepted and embraced exactly as you are, precisely for who you are, simply because you are.

In this moment, each of us is a part of the Beloved Community which IS Red River Unitarian Universalist. Whether you are a charter member present from the first gathering, or one who joined the journey in process, or a first time visitor who found your way here just today...you are a welcome, important and significant part of this Beloved Community. I have no faith in coincidence. None, nada, not even a sliver. For me the particular spirits gathered in a particular place at a particular time is not a coincidence, but a God-incident (fill in whatever terminology works for you there...nature-incident, universe-incident, godbywhatevername-incident...you get the idea). What I am trying to say is I see our gathering here today in this particular combination of spirits as an incident of potential and significance. This Beloved Community is created and re-created each time we gather...for a Sunday Service, or a music night with RRUJAM. It is created and re-created over a baked

potato lunch or heck, even at a cocktail party. In the world of Dianna-spirit, each time we come together as a community is a new beginning. Breathe that one in and give it a moment. Each time is a new beginning of Beloved Community.

This day, this moment, this experience of worship, worth-ship together is our gift to ourselves and to each other. Humbly I would suggest pondering that idea for a while. If you are a newcomer perhaps you have been seeking a place to be and become and that is why you are here. If you are one who is here most every Sunday, maybe you are here today to find a new role or a different niche in the larger life of RRUU. For those who are here seemingly perpetually doing one task or another, possibly you are here today because it's time to move in a new direction within the church and allow another to fill some of the roles you have done. The thing about Beloved Community you see is it doesn't just happen, it is planted and watered, nurtured and nudged into being. Breathe it in. Where is your place in the tomorrows? What will enliven and fill your spirit in the coming year? How are you being called to a richer and more fulfilling life? The Past is what it was. The Present is what it is. The Future is what we co-create it to be. Inhale it...and wait breathlessly for a sense of your part.

May this season of tinsel and trees, eclipse and eggnog, lights and love, babies born and magical miracles be rich with large, juicy, delicious moments for you. And from the Beloved Community that is Red River Unitarian Universalist Church you are welcome here beyond measure. My wish for you, our wish for you in this season and the coming year is you are graced with moments to breathe...in and out. May it be so!