

Sermon: Tolerance

New North Church, Hingham

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Based on **Isaiah 55:1-9; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31**

The news lately has been full of negativity: tough politics, Mosques invaded and people killed, and a myriad of other examples of man's inhumanity to man. We blame the Internet for all that is wrong in the world. I will agree that some folks use the Internet to spread hate and even run videos of their crime sprees in real time. These things definitely cause us to think the medium is the problem. There has always been trouble in the world! What is different today is that everyone gets the news instantaneously! We have found an excellent tool to spread our hate and deceit. There are no editors to prove the facts before disseminating truths and untruths.

I would ask you to look at another aspect of communication, this time for the good. We have more power in our pockets than the mega computers that I used to work with that took huge spaces and tons of cooling to make them work. We have a question pop to our minds and within seconds we get the answer through Google or Yahoo. This is wonderful! You want to go to a movie? You pick up your phone or tablet and you, almost instantly, have a list of what movies are showing and at what time. We pick up that same device and text people sitting across from us at the dining room table when we could have spoken to them. We are using our devices to lose our human touch. Is it any wonder there is so much miscommunication?

What we need today is a better method of communicating with each other and I am not talking about a mechanical or electronic device. The first part that is so necessary is to understand the *other* people in this life equation. We tend to think of ourselves as unique, and we are in so many ways! We each have perceptions, skills, traits that set us apart from everyone else. BUT, we are all part of a whole. All creatures whom God has made are his children. We may not all conceive of God in the same way, but He conceives of us as a parent sees their children, different but equal. I read the chapter from Corinthians rather than the one recommended in the Lectionary because it accentuates this concept. We cannot be whole, that is as a person, country or world unless we see ourselves and everyone else as part of our family.

If we are a family, we need to understand each other. We need to be tolerant of what other folks believe. Maybe we should walk a mile in their moccasins and see what their journey is like. In no way am I tolerant of terrorism in any form and I am not trying to make excuses for the perpetrators. What I am say is that we need to understand where they are and why they act as they do. Maybe we need to make some changes so they will not find it necessary to kill us. We don't think of it often today, but missionaries and crusaders in the name of Jesus Christ caused death and destruction much as the terrorists are doing in our generation. The attitude in both cases is similar, "My way or the highway", "If you are not for us, your are against us", and, I think you know what I am driving at.

I am not sure I know HOW to solve our dilemma, but I do believe love and communication will go a long way to making life a LOT better.

Even though Freemasonry is not a religion, it does teach and practice religious principles. One such lesson in Royal Arch Masonry concerns the circle, a geometric form. As we explain the circle, "The circle is a striking emblem of the relationship between the creature and his Creator. As every part of the circumference of the circle is equally near and equally distant from its center, so is every creature whom God has made, to Him equally near and equally distant". To take this a little further, every point on the circumference of the circle is indistinguishable from the other, no variation of color, of race, or levels of wealth or intelligence. If God loves all of his creatures equally, why can't we seem to love one another? Why can't we tolerate another's opinion without flying into a rage?

It is no wonder that Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, put an explanation of how we should get along. I would like to read from First Corinthians, chapter 13 (NIV):

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

³If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of

wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.