

Along life's journey, one must ask only one question, "what am I doing for others?"

With this thought in mind, one's work should be directed toward nurturing oneself, one's neighbors and our cosmos. If we believe, as Unitarian Universalists do, in the inherent worth and dignity of each human being, then we must do all of which we are capable to bring no harm to each other and to support one another on our spiritual journeys. If each individual is able to operate in an environment that supports their spiritual journey, then they will be able to develop an inner grace.

This inner grace will enable them to become more confident in their ability to pursue a spiritual path, and as they gain strength, good works will naturally follow, and the dark world in which we sometimes find ourselves in our consumer driven society will give way to a world of light. Once we have moved to a world of light, a shadow of strength will follow us from the darkness. William D. Watley explains this life changing metamorphosis in his powerful sermon "Healing Shadows."

*Shadows, as I have said all through this message, emerge when the conditions are right. There must be light to see a shadow. And when the light is present, when the conditions are right, you can't stop a shadow from showing up. When we walk in self, that's darkness. When our theme song is "I did it my way," that's darkness. When we walk according to the wishes of others, that's darkness. But when we walk in the Word of God, that's light. Service is the Word of God, and that's light. Enlightenment is the Word of God, and that's light. <sup>1</sup>*

It seems possible that people need to come to the understanding that we are all part of an unfolding spiritual story, and that we must direct our energies toward a successful outcome for that story. I believe we are all indispensable, that we are all part of “the plan.” I once listened to a symphony orchestra perform a lengthy piece, and took note of the man sitting in the back simply turning page after page intently and not contributing. But twenty or so minutes into the piece, he adjusted his tuxedo and picked up a small triangle. As the orchestra reached a crescendo, he tapped the triangle once, and then sat back down. That “ping” may have seemed insignificant to listeners, but in the mind of the composer, something would be lost without that moment. Each of us is that “ping,” and this world needs our imagination and attention and works to enable the unfolding story of creation to manifest.

I believe that our work can and should have some spiritual significance, and that work does not have to necessarily preclude a spiritual component. Fortunately my work is a direct product of my spiritual life. When pondering the “what am I doing for others” hypothetical, I believe my answer is “trying to facilitate the ability of others to pursue a contemplative, creative path in a balanced, harmonious environment.”

Part of my work is offering Sunday services at Unitarian Universalist churches, messages drawn from ancient texts that envision a more

compassionate world, a world in which we do work together for the benefit of all.

UU Minister Tom Owen-Towle tells us to:

*engage in “a conspiracy to co-exist with the Crab Nebula, the exploding universe, the mind” right away and every day. We can postpone global extinction by choosing to be compassionate. For what else were we created? <sup>2</sup>*

We can indeed choose to help shape a new history. Whereas old theologies would see us as helpless, impotent pawns in a universe totally controlled by an unseen hand, new theologies invite us to serve as co-creators during our lifetime. This has potential to bring a sense of challenge and joy to our lives. Some believe God rested on the seventh day, and that we are now in the eighth day of the created order. Our work must involve action that brings happiness to not only us, but our fellow creators. As Joseph Goldstein reminds us,

*Generosity, morality, respect, service, listening to the Dharma, and meditation—these are actions for the good. Each one is a practice than can be cultivated and further refined, becoming the causes for our own happiness and the happiness of others. These acts for the good become our gift to the world.<sup>3</sup>*

But as I drive to small churches nestled in the mountains and valleys, I can't help but take note of the businesses that dot the countryside. It's not the megastores so much, it's “Liquorworld,” “Biscuitville” and “Franklin Gun Exchange” that offer a glimpse into the lives and apparent

needs of people of these areas. In our hectic, wireless, cellular society it is becoming more and more difficult to stay focused on work of the Spirit. And many people have given up on the idea that they could “drop out” and live a more serene, contemplative life of service to others.

The alternative seems to be pursue often less meaningful and fulfilling work to buy that one more item that will make everything better. But as comedian Steven Wright reminds us, “*you can’t have everything, where would you put it?*”<sup>4</sup>

We must help people embrace the notion they are responsible for caring for each other and that having some sort of spiritual element inform their work ethic is important. John Wesley challenges us with:

*Do all the good you can  
By all the means you can  
In all they ways you can  
In all the places you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as ever you can.*<sup>5</sup>

My own work, my energy work, is my spiritual life. Working with earth energies is my way of connecting to Spirit. I believe that everyone should have an opportunity to live and work in a healthy environment. If I can help an individual feel like they can access more positive energy for their work and/or create healthy home or work environments for individuals and businesses, then maybe I can facilitate a subtle shift in

the darkness that will bring more people toward the light. And those shadows of strength will become more apparent...

The Buddha spoke of Right Livelihood. Roger Pritchard explains:

*Right livelihood demands you take responsibility for making your work more meaningful. Good work is dignified. It develops your faculties and serves your community. It is a central human activity.* <sup>6</sup>

Most people want to be happy. Yet there are many who believe they must perform work that they find intolerable at times because they have no other choice. There are some who would believe that they cannot make a difference. But what is the source of true happiness? In the words of David Sarnoff,

*Work and live to serve others, to leave the world a little better than you found it, and garner for yourself as much peace of mind as you can. This is happiness.*<sup>7</sup>

I spent a semester abroad in Nepal while attending graduate school at Naropa University. When I think of the layers and layers of technology that are employed in insuring that banks in this country are not robbed, I can't help but think of an old man in Khatmandhu who worked in a bank there. He WAS the security system. He sat in a corner inside the front door in a leg iron. One wouldn't think him as much of a deterrent except for the sawed off shotgun he had trained on the lobby.

I always spoke to him and he would smile through his few remaining teeth with chang-glazed eyes, chang being a rather lethal home brew in

the valley, and one could tell he was happy with his work. He was happy with his work...

Work is essential for humans because it brings us joy, it has the ability to transform us, and it connects us more deeply to community. Each of us should be happy in our work, and must aspire, with our work, to help create in this world an atmosphere that supports, strengthens and nourishes each other, for the end result can only be an even more nurturing and creative atmosphere. There is an ancient Native American saying:

*“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.” If we use this ethic as a moral compass, then our rendezvous with reality can also become a rendezvous with opportunity. <sup>8</sup>*

We have inherited a world from our ancestors and transformed it into a place that they could never have contemplated. Their times were less hectic, more family and spiritually centered, and oft times more in touch with Mother Earth. We must reflect on their lives and their teachings, and we need to then focus on our current situation on behalf of generations to come. It is not too late to usher in an atmosphere of compassion and cooperation and caring, both for our planet and its inhabitants, to deepen our connection with Spirit.

I will continue to do energy work as a spiritual practice with the expectation that people I work with will feel better about themselves and their situation, and pass it on as it were. Mother Theresa reminds us

that “*works are links that form a chain of love.*”<sup>9</sup> We are merely stewards of the gifts bequeathed us, be they spiritual, intellectual or economic resources. And we, in turn, must one day pass these gifts on to future generations. The care we direct to these gifts must flow from a compassionate heart.

One can never lose hope. One has to believe that their work is meaningful and contributing to a better world. If one believes, on the other hand, that it is too late or doubts their ability to make a difference, I am reminded of a story about two birds.

One asked how much a snowflake weighed and the other said “nothing.” The first said, “I was on a branch and decided to count them, got up to 3,744,651 and when the next flake landed, the branch broke.” You say one person cannot make a difference... what if you were that next snowflake??

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<sup>1</sup>LaRue, C. J., Ed. (2002). Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare Their Sermons. Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Owen-Towle, T. (1982). Unifiers. San Diego, First Unitarian Church of San Diego, p. November 5, 1984.

<sup>3</sup>Goldstein, J. (2002). One Dharma. New York, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., p. 85.

<sup>4</sup>M. Scott Peck, M. D., Ed. (2003). Abounding Happiness: A Treasury of Wisdom. Kansas City, MO, Andrews McMeel Publishing, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>Ryan, M. J., Ed. (1994). A Grateful Heart: Daily Blessings for the Evening Meal from Buddha to the Beatles. Berkeley, Conari Press, p. 29.

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, J., Ed. (1997). Everyday Mind: 366 Reflections on the Buddhism Path. New York, Riverhead Books, p. August 23.

<sup>7</sup> Peck, p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Frost-Knappman, E. and Shrager, D.S. (2003). A Concise Encyclopedia of Legal Quotations. New York, Barnes and Noble Inc., p. 249.

<sup>9</sup> Gonzalez-Balado, J. L., Ed. (1996). Mother Teresa: In My Own Words. New York, Barnes and Noble Books, p. 37.