

## Honour Yourself

Today I am going to share one person's story with you. As I do, I encourage you to reflect upon your own story, as an adult, as a parent, as a child, and as a child of God.

She did not want to go to the upcoming family gathering. Everyone who would be there would try to keep the peace and pretend that everything was fine and that everyone liked everyone else. All of them knew differently. There was bad blood there. They smiled and exchanged pleasantries. They hid the anger and fear that was seething beneath the service. So she tried her best to figure out an excuse so that she would not have to go.

As a child were you taught to speak when spoken to? Were you taught what not to say or do so that it wouldn't upset anyone? As children, most of us are taught to know our place around big people. **They** are in charge. **They** are right. We do things **their** way. Even when we become big people ourselves, there are always people who are older, bigger, and more important than we are. Sometimes, in honouring big people, in honouring others, **we dishonour ourselves**. Sometimes we acknowledge and applaud others, even at our own expense. When we dishonour ourselves, **we dishonour the God that lives within us**.

Do you ever find yourself in conversations when you refrain from telling the truth about how you feel, what you need, and what you think? As a child she was told to accept what big people told her. If her thoughts, feelings, ideas were different, she was to keep them to herself. As she grew into adulthood, the big people in her life continued to be her parents, grandparents, teachers, and employers. She did everything in her power to honour **their** feelings and **their** desires, **often at the expense of her own**.

She found out that when she lied to herself about what she needed, or wanted, or felt or believed, she eventually lied to others about the same things. When her date showed up late, that was ok. When they did not call as promised, that was ok. They chose where they went, what they had to eat, and what they did. Her opinions and desires and choices were not of equal value to theirs. In discounting her needs and desires and opinions, she dishonoured herself and the God within. Even her peers became the Big People in her life. Can you appreciate this?

She had been married, given birth to 3 children, and divorced when she found herself standing in a circle of strangers. Most of them were older, wiser, wealthier and more educated than her. They were the Big people. One of the Big people looked her in the eye and asked, “What do you want?” She froze. “What do you need?” Still froze. “You need to honour yourself.” The voice said. “You need to speak your truth”.

It blew her mind. Someone – a Big person - actually cared about **what she thought, and felt and believed**. It mattered. **She mattered**.

The person running the workshop stated that if we truly believe that we are made in the image of God, if an expression of the Divine truly lives within us, then what we believe and feel and need really matter. If we believe God lives in us, we honour God when we speak our truth, and live our lives out of that truth. It is God’s truth. With love and grace and compassion, we must express what we think, see, feel, believe.

There was a time in my life when I was surrounded by very conservative fundamentalist Christians. Life and faith were black and white....no appreciation for mystery. For every question of faith there was a definite, clear cut, undebatable answer. So when I doubted. When I did not quite agree with them. When some of what they said made me uncomfortable, even though I did not know precisely why, I kept quiet. They were the Big people in my life at that time. I assumed they were right and I was wrong. Their points of view mattered. Mine did not. I look back on that time now and I think how I dishonored my truth and the Divine presence within me.

I know that as Christians, when we are in the company of people who use harsh language or talk about inappropriate things, sometimes we do not speak our truth. Sometimes we shove the Divine presence in the corner and we keep our mouths shut. They become the Big people. We shut our mouths and sometimes in doing so, we dishonour ourselves, and we dishonour the expression of God that lives within us.

Psalm 139 declares how well God knows us....every part of our being, every where we go, everything we do, everything we think, everything we say and refrain from saying. The

Psalmist declares that he is fearfully and wonderfully made. God goes everywhere with us. Do you claim that for yourself? Do you claim that for others? Do you honour that?

In II Corinthians 5, Paul cautions us to regard no one from merely a human point of view. "If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation."

How often, when you are with someone, do you consciously acknowledge that they are a child of God, and the Divine lives in them? Do you see others as merely human, or as a person within whom an expression of God lives?

In 2 Timothy, Paul states that not only is the gift of God is within you, but that God gave you a spirit of power and love and self-discipline - not a spirit of cowardice. Do you claim that for yourself? Do you dishonour, and ignore, and hide your own truth and beauty and dignity because you are fearful, or intimidated, or ingrained with that cliché that children are to be seen and not heard? Big people run the show, and you are not a Big person!

Do you remember the book I'm OK – You're OK?. It was very big in the '70s and '80s. Transactional analysis is a psychoanalytic theory and method of therapy that looks at the child, parent, and adult within us all.

(Slide #1) Have a look at the chart.

Parent	Parent
Adult	Adult
Child	Child

Think about yourself with one other person....it could be anyone – a friend, an adult child, your partner. Think of a time when you simply spoke with them or engaged with them adult to adult. Adult to Adult.

Now, can you think of a time when you might say, you acted as the parent and they the child? Perhaps they needed you to take care of them. Perhaps they needed

advice. Perhaps they just needed you to listen to them and express your care and concern. Parent to Child.

Finally, can you think of a time when you might say that you acted very child-like? You were silly. You teased. You just joked around. Child to Adult.

Even though we are all adults, we can move between these three forms of expression easily and frequently throughout the day depending upon who we are with and what the circumstances are.

Whatever the dynamics of our interaction with friend, stranger or foe, we would do well to always remember that we are not just physical beings. We are spiritual. The spirit of God lives within us, and within them.

Trouble comes when we see ourselves as child and everyone around us as adult or parent – a Big person. We once were a child and we know only too well what children are supposed to do. How about your boss at work- do you relate to them as adult to adult? Or are they one of the Big people in your life and you relate to them from the perspective of child? How about your partner – is your relationship to them mostly adult to adult? Or child to child? Or parent to parent? Do you share in decision making? Do you speak what is on your mind or do you bury your own thoughts and ideas and desires?

The lady I have been talking about decided to live Adult to Adult with her family. She did not go to the family gathering. She stayed home and opened all the windows letting the fresh air blow through the house. But she could not help stop imagining all the terrible things her aunt and grandmother were saying about her for not going to the family gathering. Eventually she found herself sitting on the edge of the bed crying. She tried to figure out what felt worse, not pleasing the Big people in her life or dishonouring herself.

How often do you hear me proclaim that God loves you? Do you believe it? How many times do you really receive that truth for yourself....not just in your head, but in your heart?

Lately we have been spending time referring to the Divine that lives within each of us....that expression of God, Love, Peace, Forgiveness, Grace, Joy....that is not us, but God in us.

There are so many people in this congregation who do such wonderful, loving, unselfish things for other people. In those moments, those people have opened themselves to the Spirit of God. They have responded to the nudge. They have allowed the Spirit of God within them to move and find expression. They have been conduits for God's blessings to touch the lives of others. It is God's expression in and through them.

In Romans 12:2, Paul calls us not to be conformed to this world....the physical, material, eye for an eye world. He calls us to be transformed, changed, open to the workings and ways of the Divine, that we might know and act in ways that glorifies the one who's name is Love. That we might live as a Big person, filled to overflowing with grace and love, and compassion and that we might enable everyone else to do the same!

Let's read this together: (Slide #2)

Honour your own Self

Kneel to your own Self

Understand your own Self

God dwells within you as you.

God bless you on the journey!

Amen