

Willingness

(Slide #1) The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Have you ever heard that? You can find it in the Book of Matthew 26:41 Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying that God would not require that He go to the cross. He wanted his disciples to stay at the edge of the garden and pray while He went into the garden to speak to the Lord. In this most poignant and pressing time in His life, all he asked of them was that they stay awake and pray. But they couldn't obey. They were willing in spirit, but succumbed to the needs of the flesh! And so they fell asleep. Not once, but 3 times!

Can you think of any times in your life when you wanted to do something, but you just didn't, as they say, "Get 'er done!"?

Exercise daily. Eat well. Volunteer. Do a random act of kindness for a friend or for a stranger. Watch less TV. Read the Bible more. The spirit is willing.... Can you relate?

I want you to think of a time when you knew very well what needed to be done. You knew how to do it. You had the resources you needed to do it. But you did not do it. You could have, should have, would have.... but you didn't. The spirit was willing..... Often times in life we know what needs to be said or done, but we don't do it!

Iyanla Vanzant, in her book **One Day My Soul Just Opened Up** has something to say about this notion of Willingness.

Here are some reasons that people give for sometimes NOT being willing to do what they should have, could have, would have done: (Slide #2)

- Embarrassment
- Lack of confidence
- Afraid to upset others
- Laziness
- Too busy
- No energy

We can change all that. Living in the knowledge of the Divine within us, enables us to say and do - **in the spirit of love and compassion**. Knowing that God lives in us, we gain the courage to be willing...to say or to do whatever needs to be said or done. We need courage to honour the Divine in the face of human challenges. Acknowledging the Divine with us, with love and compassion and courage, we can eliminate or at least cut down on that list of **could have, should have, would have!**

Consider Jesus' disciples. Somehow they had the willingness to leave their daily living....their livelihood, their families, and follow Jesus. This took courage. They were

willing to learn and to minister. There was physical and social danger to face. The disciples were far from perfect. They got confused. They failed often. But they knew they were in the presence of the divine. They were willing to put their fear and their egos in check to live like Jesus.

This week a friend sent me the daily devotional by Richard Rhor. Have you heard of him? In the Wednesday devotional Rhor says that, (Slide #3) ‘We need to look at Jesus until we can see the world with his eyes. That is when God’s own broad, deep, and all inclusive worldview is made available to us.’ Can you try to imagine, seeing others through Jesus’ eyes?

Rhor goes on to say that too often we (Slide #4) ‘substitute the messenger for the message’. Many times in Scripture Jesus asks us to **follow** him. Not once does he call us to **worship** him!

In verse 9 of John 1 it says in references Jesus as the light of the world. John says that, ‘the true light which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.’ Another way to say that is that the Divine lives in everyone! That light enlightens **YOU!** Do you know that? Do you strive to live that?

Having this light within us, the Divine within us, this allows us to see things in their fullness....to see things as Christ would see things, and to act accordingly. Rhor writes – (Slide #5) “A mature Christian sees Christ in everything and everyone else. That is a definition that will never fail you, always demand more of you, and give you no reasons to fight, exclude, or reject anyone.” So if Christ is in everyone, then who do we not invite to the party.....the poor, the disabled, the imprisoned, the leper, the divorced, the drug addict, the alcoholic, the homeless.....(Slide #6) Who is a member of the club and who is not?

Rhor goes on to say that, (Slide #7) ‘The point of the Christian life is not to distinguish oneself from the ungodly, but to stand in radical solidarity with everyone and everything else. This was the way of Jesus!

When we are in a state of willingness, our words and actions are infused with the inclusive, compassionate light and love of God. A couple of weeks ago I asked one of our members to go over and introduce herself to visitors. She was shocked. Her face got red. She lost her breath. She asked me if I was serious. The idea terrified her! All the things that could go wrong flashed through her mind. But thankfully, she found the willingness and the courage to brace herself and approach this couple. The kindness, and humility, and light and love of the Divine in her, emanated. The people she approached were delighted that she had come and introduced herself to them and welcomed them to Trinity. The

Divine presence within her combined with a bit of courage and compassion - bridges are built. Willingness!

I don't for a minute want you to think that just because you are willing to speak or live God's truth, that it will be easy or that it won't upset some people some of the time. Some saw Jesus as a radical, a disruptor, a revolutionary. He upset the status quo. God, the Divine, lived in Him. His willingness to say and do the right thing got him in all sorts of trouble and eventually lead him to the cross. For Jesus and the disciples, it was never about them. It was about the Divine will. They were vessels of the Divine. Do you think of yourself as a vessel? A conduit through which love flows? (Slide #8) Are you willing to be a vessel for the love and light of God?

Listen to what Mark Twain wrote, (Slide #9) "You may be the only Bible that somebody else reads." What do you think of that? Are you willing to be a witness for Jesus? WWJD?

Willingness does not mean that people will always agree with you or that things will always go the way you think or feel they should . But willingness leads to an attitude of co-operation and unselfishness, and eventually peace. Willingness does not make your life easier. But it will make it easier for you to move through every experience that may confront you in life. Having the willingness and courage to speak your mind and tell the truth (Slide #10)

- form a position of love rather than anger or fear,
- being open to accept the views of others without feeling threatened or defeated,
- relinquishing the ego's need to be in control;

leads to growth. This type of growth, enables the presence of the Divine to grow within you. Your spiritual relationship with God, can be like the relationship you have with your closest human friend - part of the very fabric of your being. Are you willing to take a chance?

Consider willingness -

(Slide #11) Being willing to take a stand

Being willing to be wrong

Being willing to walk the extra mile

Being willing to fall down and get back up

Willingness brings us into the presence of the peace and grace of the Divine. Are you willing and courageous enough to live your life in light and love?

