

“All Of You Are One!”
Rev. Bill Freeman
Sunday, June 19, 2016
Menifee United Church of Christ

Three ministers die and go to heaven. St. Peter meets them at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter asks them what they want to hear their friends and relatives say in a couple of days when they are in their caskets and their friends and relatives and loved ones are standing around. The first minister says, “I want my friends and relatives to say that I was a good spiritual teacher.” The second minister says, “I want my friends and loved ones to say that I was a great servant of God.” The third minister says, “I want my friends and loved ones to say, ‘Look! He’s moving!’” We all have a lot in common. We all enjoy a good joke. We all want to have fun. We all want to have happiness. We all want to avoid suffering. We are all a part of one race: the human race. We all have a lot in common.

Desmond Tutu knows that we all have a lot in common. The South African Anglican Archbishop says, “The God who existed before any religion counts on you to make the oneness of the human family known and celebrated.” Are we one human family? Yes, we are. Sometimes it may not look like that, with wars and rumors of wars, but we are all one. We are one human family. We are all created by God. We are all created in the image of God. We are all blessed by God. We are all loved by God. We are all descendants of Abraham. We are all descendants of Adam and Eve. We are all descendants of Noah. We are all one.

The Apostle Paul knows that we are all one. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul writes, “There is no longer Jew nor Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” And if Christ Jesus loves everyone, regardless of their religion, regardless of anything, then we are to love everyone, because we are all one. Whether we are Christians or Jews, Buddhists or Hindus, Muslims or atheists, we are all one. And we are to celebrate that fact: We are all one.

The Dalai Lama visited the White House this past week. It wasn’t a political visit, it was a personal visit we’re told, because the Chinese don’t like heads of state to meet with the head of Tibetan Buddhism since China overtook Tibet in 1959. So it was a personal visit, not a political visit. They met in the President’s residence. Still, a Buddhist met with a Christian. (And I hope you all know that President Obama is a Christian, not a secret Muslim.) But it seems to me their gathering together demonstrates that we are all one, regardless of our religion, regardless of our faith tradition, we are all one. And we all want happiness, we all want to avoid suffering. That’s a teaching of the Buddha, by the way. We all want to avoid suffering. We all want happiness.

Jesus helped a man avoid suffering. According to the gospel of Luke, a man was filled with a legion of demons, and Jesus healed him, got rid of his demons. How many of us has Jesus gotten rid of our demons, whatever our demons may have been? Whether our demon was addiction, whether our demon was an abusive relationship, whether our demon was anger, whether our demon was hatred, whether our demon was unforgiveness, whether our demon was anything. Jesus got rid of it for us, Jesus got rid of our demons. If our demon was guilt, Jesus got rid of that. I hope that’s true for you, if you ever had any kind of demon, that Jesus helped you get rid of it, because Jesus wants to help us avoid suffering. Jesus wants us to have happiness.

And if you wanted to see happiness, you should have been at the church this past week. We had our Vacation Bible Adventure with a couple dozen pre-schoolers, mostly pre-schoolers, and their moms. And as far as I could tell, happiness was had by all. It was called Vacation Bible Adventure, rather than Vacation Bible School, because the kids didn’t want to hear the word “school,” and because a couple of the volunteers are teachers and they didn’t want to hear the word “school” either. So it’s Vacation Bible Adventure. And they all worked for common goals. They worked together, they learned together, and they played together. Let’s take a moment to recognize our volunteers: Diomy’s not here, but Lucia and Kathleen, they were our volunteers with Vacation Bible Adventure. And what the Vacation Bible Adventure goals were are sort of the goals of this church: to work together, to learn together, and to play together. Because we are all one. We all want that. We all want happiness. We all want to avoid suffering.

The Psalmist tells us that we are all one, that God helps us as one. That God helps people who are poor, or in need, God helps those who call out to God. I hope that God has helped you over the years. Maybe God has helped you overcome the loss of a loved one. Maybe God has helped you to overcome the loss of a job. Maybe God has helped you to overcome any other loss you may have suffered. I hope that God has helped you, because that’s what God wants to do, God wants to help us, because we are all one.

God does help us in times of disaster. When a tsunami hits Japan, God is there helping. And God is there helping in the form of God’s children helping. Or when a hurricane hits Haiti, God is there helping. And God is there helping in the form of God’s children helping. When an earthquake or a wildfire hits California, God is there helping. And God is

there helping in the form of God's children helping. God helps us whenever we're in need. Because that's what God does. God helps us.

And God helps us because we are God's chosen people. God helps us, according to Isaiah, because we are all descendants of Jacob, and Jacob was one of God's chosen people. And we are God's chosen people, whether we're Americans or Mexicans, Canadians or South Africans, whether we're Germans or Japanese, God helps us because we are God's chosen people. And we are God's chosen people and that's what makes us all one.

A new Independence Day movie comes out this week: "Independence Day Resurgence." I haven't seen the movie obviously, but I've seen the trailer. If the new movie is anything like the old "Independence Day" movie, then the whole world will come together to take on a common enemy: Aliens! And that kind of movie demonstrates that we are all one. When we come together to face a common enemy, we are all one. How can we not all be one? If Galatians is to be believed, we are all one. If Isaiah is to be believed, then we are all God's chosen people. And we are all God's chosen people. Men, women and children: We are God's chosen people and we are all one. White people and people of color: We are all God's chosen people and we are all one. Straight people and gay people: We are all God's chosen people and we are all one. The people in Orlando, the 49 people who were killed and the fifty-three people who were wounded: We are with them because we are all God's chosen people and we are all one. Native-born Americans and immigrants: We are all God's chosen people and we are all one. Menifee United Church of Christ: We are all God's chosen people and we are all one.

Let us pray:

God of love,

Help us to know that we are all one.

Help us to know that we are all your chosen people.

And help us to know that all people are your chosen people.

And that all people are one.

Now and forevermore,

By the power of the Holy Spirit,

And in the name of Jesus,

Amen.