

DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY

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Well, it's Palm Sunday. Welcome to Palm Sunday, everybody. My talk title today is, "Don't Take Anything Personally." I realize I'm getting ahead of myself. That's a little bit more of a Good Friday message, right? But it is Holy Week. So we're going to cover today, Palm Sunday, walking into leading up to Good Friday.

So Palm Sunday is marked when Jesus is entering Jerusalem. Now, before this he's been teaching, preaching; miracles have been happening; and he's getting quite the following. The common folk are starting to call him the King of the Jews; he's being known as the great prophet; and there's a lot of excitement.

Now, this scares the government -- the people, the higher-ups in Jerusalem -- and they want to make sure that if he enters Jerusalem, he's being thrown in jail. They want to get rid of him. So, he decides ... he decides to ride into Jerusalem on a donkey colt. I mean, he says, remember? He says, "*Get me a donkey colt.*" Now why this is very significant: because kings ride in on horses during wartime, but kings ride in on donkeys during peace time.

So, Jesus is ... it's a little bit of a religious political theater here that we've got going on. He knows that if he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, what he's really saying is, "*I am the king of peace.*" I am the king of peace.

So, he rides in on the donkey. Now, the people see him coming. They start to lay down palms. Palms are a symbol of grace and victory. So again, here are the common people coming in; they're excited. They lay down the palms, which are basically saying, "*This is the victory for this King of peace, the Son of God, King of the Jews.*"

Now, there are also people who are asking, "*Who is this man?*" They haven't heard of him yet. There was no social media back then. [Congregants laugh] News didn't travel as quickly. No internet. So, some of them are still asking, "*Who is this man?*"

And they're saying, "*He's the great prophet from Nazareth and Galilee.*" And there's a lot of excitement, right? They're singing his praises: "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.*"

And then the mumblings, "*Who is this? Who is this? Praise be.*"

And as this is happening, what we forget is that Jesus is weeping. He's weeping. And he later tells the crowd as he speaks to them, "*Now my soul is troubled,*" because he knows what's going to be happening; what is to come to Jerusalem and to his own self, to his own physical life.

And despite the threat from the high priests and the Pharisees that, if he enters, they'll be putting him in jail, he still goes into Jerusalem and he goes to the temple to pray. Now when he gets there, as you all know, there's all these sellers and markets that have been set up in the temple. And he gets very upset and he throws them out because he says, "*The house of God is a house of prayer.*" Now this is important; we'll come back to this in a little bit. But the house of God is a house of prayer.

And then, of course, we have a couple stories of preparing for Passover, which Rev. Maraj has mentioned over the last couple of Sundays, and the parable stories. And through all this -- through all of this happening -- Jesus knows that someone will betray him. He knows a close friend of his is going to betray him and that his life will be coming to an end. And yet he's still showing up; he's still doing the work.

So when he gets to the Last Supper, right? Now, we're to the Last Supper. He's there with his 12 disciples, his 12 students. And he says to them, *"One of you will betray me."* Now, they're all looking around. *"Is it you? Is it you? You?"*

And so, Jesus says, *"The one I offer my bread to, that is the one who will betray me."* And, of course, he offers it to Judas. Judas gets up and runs. The gig is up. Right? He's out of there.

And so, now we know the first betrayal: Judas. But then there's even more betrayal. Because he's *brought before the council of Jewish leaders, where they say you're not the Son of God.*

"No, I am the Son of God."

"No!"

Then he's on to Pontius Pilate, who actually, in front of the crowd, says, *"What do you all think I should do?"* He's riling up the crowd. He says, *"I don't know that I really have anything that I can charge him for, but what do all you think?"*

Well, now the crowd's upset because he came in as the king of peace. He didn't come in as the king of war to overthrow the Romans. So, they're saying, *"Crucify him."*

So here he is: betrayal after betrayal after betrayal.

And then, of course, he's placed on the cross to die. And then next week we celebrate Easter, in which he rises from the tomb.

So, I give the full story, because in Unity, we look at Biblical stories and we ask ourselves: How is this reflected in my own life? Is this story one that may have happened or maybe is happening in my life?

Now maybe you haven't written into town on a donkey recently ... [Congregants laugh] But maybe it's a situation where you're doing your best to hold your head up high and walk or ride into a troubled situation, a challenging situation, one you know won't be easy. So you do so peacefully and gracefully, only to feel crucified by the other person or persons or by the situation.

Or maybe you're holding on to the truth of who you are only for a friend to hurt you or betray you.

So how do we not take the hurtful actions of another person personally? How do we still ride in peacefully and do good works? How do we still show up as our divine self, knowing that we might get emotionally hurt? Knowing we might get emotionally injured?

And once we are hurt -- once we are injured -- then how do we cultivate an open heart in such situations? Because that's what we're spiritually being called to do. How do I keep an open heart when I'm betrayed or hurt by another person?

How many of you, if a good friend betrayed you, would be okay with that? Okay, is there one hand? [Congregants laugh] I'm not asking this crowd anymore.

I would say 99.9 % of us would say, *"I wouldn't be okay with a friend betraying me. That would really hurt my heart."* Right?

And so, I, for myself: I've found a few ways to handle the feelings of betrayal. Because, you know, with my own health journey -- my health challenge from 2016-2023 -- there were a lot of doctors I felt betrayed me. There were some friends in my life that I felt betrayed me. Co-workers ... not here. Past job co-workers, I felt, you know, hurt me, harmed me.

So, I have felt those feelings. And so, I feel there's three different things that we can do:

One is to acknowledge: acknowledge the feelings *"Well, that was terrible, well that feels horrible."*

And then – from the book, *The Four Agreements* -- don't take anything personally.

And then, finally, turn within and remember the truth of your being. Remember your own essential goodness so that you can be that essential goodness out in the world.

So let's jump in. So, the first: **ACKNOWLEDGE**. See, you can't move on spiritually or emotionally without first acknowledging your feelings. And I know in Unity and New Thought, a lot of times we want to skip over this one. We want to go right to the, *"Just stay positive; just feel good; just see the good,"* and we don't want to sit in the ick.

But unfortunately, by acknowledging your feelings, or actually when you don't acknowledge your feelings, what happens is you start to bury them. You bury them and you hold them inside you, which then is holding yourself back from the potential growth and forward movement by not resting in the uncomfortable. And when we feel the feelings, it helps us to not have to have our peace disturbed in the future. And we'll talk about that in a minute.

So, helping me feel the feelings now sets a peace that actually will move me forward in future interactions with other people.

Here's a quote I just read from Cory Muscara. He's a podcaster/author. He says, *"You won't find inner peace by focusing on the positive. It's not a mindset shift. It's the result of meeting yourself -- meeting your feelings -- deeply and honestly, until there's nothing left to hide and no more reasons to run."*

You know, sort of like Jesus. He walked right into all of it. He didn't try to pray the situation away. If anything, he asked for guidance and clarity. He also flat out said to his disciples, *"One of you will betray me."* He looked at the situation like it was: *"One of you will betray me."* He wept. We read that he wept; he felt it deeply. He wept. He went off into the garden. And going off to pray, he says to his disciples, *"My heart is full of sadness."* My heart is full of sadness. He acknowledged his feelings. In grief, he prays, it says.

So, I'm not saying to make your feelings your identity, but I am saying we need to acknowledge your feelings. Acknowledge what is there. Jesus saw the situation for what it was, and he embraced all of his feelings around it.

So, like any big emotions that rise, if you don't first acknowledge them, then they're going to stay buried, and it will slow you down from your future growth and even success.

Here was an interesting study from 2011. A study in psychological science found that people who thought that their desired futures and obstacles ... oh sorry ... People who thought about their desired futures and the obstacles in the way, had higher motivation and follow-through than those who just visualized success.

There were those who -- when they were thinking about their goals -- they considered the roadblocks and bumps in the way, and had more success than those who just stayed positive; who just stayed in the "feel-good" fantasy of it all. They acknowledged the ones who went on with, *"Let me visualize what might get in my way as well as the success."* They acknowledged that there's going to be difficulty, which then made them to be able to prepare which, in turn, created a reality-based optimism and then more success.

See, we heal -- including betrayal -- we heal through loving ourselves; by caring for ourselves. But first, it means being honest with ourselves that there's something to heal.

I like to say, you know what? With that, when it comes to that other person, let the universe take care of the accountability, so that you can bring the energy home within you and take care of your heart.

Healing your heart puts into motion healing your world: your world, and then the greater world. Leave the accountability up to the universe and come home and tend to your heart.

So, another spiritual tool for working through betrayal. **DON'T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY.** Again, from the book, *The Four Agreements*, by don Miguel Ruiz.

And, boy, don't we take things personally! I mean, heck, if someone puts something on your social media, you're upset. Or they don't like your social media. Or maybe they put a thumbs up instead of a heart. Upset, right? Or they walk past you without saying, "Hello." [Gasps] "They must be upset with me!" No, they've just got to go to the bathroom, right? [Congregants laugh] But we're making a whole story up about it.

Someone's speeding past us on the highway. "How dare they do that to me!" Right? We take everything so personally.

I had a friend in sixth grade I was thinking about it. I had a friend in sixth grade who betrayed me that I kept thinking about; took me years to forgive her and realize that I shouldn't take it personally, especially since we were sixth graders, right?

Yet, Jesus realized in a moment what I have come to learn during those many years of gratitude ... or not holding a grudge, but looking at the gratitudes of forgiveness and working through them; not taking it personally. And here's what Jesus learned in a moment: "They know not what they do." They know not what they do.

"But Stacy, yes they do. They knew exactly what they were doing to me."

No, no, no. They're acting from a place of unhealed trauma and pain. They're reacting from a place of a fractured hurting self.

See, now when I see someone hurting someone else, I think: What trauma took place in their life? I ask myself: What unmet needs are they still trying to get fulfilled? What has caused them to want to kick and scream and kick back at the world and everyone they meet? I get curious. I get curious. What is the fear and the pain inside what has happened?

And then I remind myself: they have forgotten that they're whole already. They have forgotten that they're an expression of the living Spirit that infuses all of life. They have forgotten their divine nature.

Individuals who lash out are very much like Jesus' accusers. Jesus' accusers were so afraid of him being seen as a king. They were so afraid of him being seen as powerful that they were willing to forget their own divine potential -- and the good that they could have been doing -- to take down this person. It was out of insecurity and fear that they struck out against him.

And I want to make sure you hear that abuse in any way is not okay. So, if you are in a situation in which it's not safe physically, then get yourself to a safe place to do the healing work. What I want to make sure that you hear, though, is that when the other -- when that other person does something that upsets you or hurts your feelings or betrays you -- what they're really betraying is their own indwelling divine presence.

Here's what Don Miguel Ruiz says in the book. He says, "Even when a situation seems so personal -- even if others insult you directly -- it has nothing to do with you. What they say, what they do, and the opinions they give are according to the agreements they have in their own minds."

Their point of view comes from all the programming they received from what he calls "domestication." In other words, their point of view comes from all the programming they received from their family of origin, from society, the culture at large.

The child who bullies at school is often the child being bullied at home. If someone tells you that you're not smart, that you're stupid, it's because they're feeling inadequate about their own intelligence. It's not about you! We'd love to make it about us, but it's not about you.

And don Miguel Ruiz says that, when you agree with what they're saying -- if you hold on to it -- then what you're doing is you're taking their poison and you're eating it up. You're agreeing with what they've said.

So, there's a great example of this from the book, *Eye of the Storm*, by Gary Simmons. I'm going to be teaching a class based on this book in a couple of weeks here. And he says, you know, if someone were to come up to you and call you a frog -- they were to say, "*You're a frog. You're a frog!*" -- you'd probably laugh, right? Because you know you're not a frog! I mean, I hope you know you're not a frog.

[Congregants laugh] You're not a frog.

But now, if someone were to come up to you and say, "*You're stupid. You're stupid.*" [Gasps] "*Wow. They think I'm stupid. Am I stupid? I must be stupid. I'm stupid.*" Right?

We have two different reactions to that. Why do we have two different reactions to those statements? Because in one statement, it's taking you to a past unhealed hurt within yourself. There's some unhealed pain experience that has been buried inside.

Maybe a teacher or a friend or a parent called you stupid, or said you're not the brightest whatever, and it's still living inside of you. You haven't rectified it yet; you haven't healed it yet. That wound is still there and alive.

See, for me, if someone were to call me a frog or a stupid ... to me, it's the same. I'm not saying this from an ego point of view. But with my own childhood and life experience ... You know when they used to split the kids off into different groups, and we all caught on really quick; there was like a higher reading level and a higher math level, right? I was always in the higher math level; the higher reading level. I was in the top 10% of graduating class from high school. I went to two very good colleges and universities. I had a family of parents who supported this idea that I was smart. Right?

So, you could come up to me and say, "*Stacy, you're stupid.*" And I'd go, "*Well, that's interesting.*" [Congregants laugh] "*That's a funny opinion.*" There's been nothing in me that-- in my own life that supports that.

Now, there's other things you could say to me that would get a reaction from me. And that is my unhealed parts within me that I need to look at and start to say, "Ooh. Wow. Okay, there's something I need to heal."

So, notice if you're feeling pain -- if you feel that emotional trigger, that emotional big energy around something that someone has said to you -- then that's something for you to heal. "*Wow, I'm reacting strongly to this. There's something inside me that still needs to be healed.*"

Or diving into this question, you can do some journaling, or talking with a minister, talking to a therapist. But the question: What within me still needs to be healed? What pain point is this touching up against?

Again, it's not okay for anyone to treat you poorly. Some -- or maybe all -- of this work might need to be done away from that person or the situation that hurt you. But what is important is: if we embrace the other person's fractured, unhealed self, then what we're doing is we're really embracing our fractured, unhealed self, instead of our spiritually whole self.

Jesus realized -- and he says this in the book of John -- Jesus realizes it was their fear that was making them do what they were doing. It was their fear.

So, in Unity, since we look at the Bible as humanity's conscious evolution or unfoldment, Jesus knows everything he's going through is for his soul's growth; for humankind's conscious evolution. He knew as a direct expression of God, that he was to be a teacher of peace and forgiveness and love. And his teachings always came back to forgiveness. Forgiveness: *"For they know not what they're doing."*

And metaphysically, Jesus Christ means the one who best expressed their spiritual perfection.

We, too, are human and we, too, can express our spiritual truth, our divinity, our divine nature. We, too, can be that spiritual perfection. Remember, Jesus says, *"Whatever work I have done, you can do greater works."*

So here's a greater work: don't take anything personally. Each of us are healing some part of our human self, our human experience. The greater work is to have a spiritual transformation through healing. That's how we have spiritual transformations: through healing. Your healing ... and your healing then goes on to heal the world. It starts with your world -- starts with you, your world -- and, again, flows outward.

So here we are 2,000 years later, and we can see the Palm Sunday story as a story about healing. It's a healing story. It's a spiritual transformation -- a spiritual evolution -- which we can now apply to our own lives.

And Jesus, his two great messages were: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and love one another,"* meaning seek the inner heaven of love, which you are. Turn within, open your heart, and sit in the feeling -- the knowing of the essential loving goodness that you are that is who you are. And then share the love that you are. Don't lose sight of your purpose: your purpose is to be here as love expressing on earth.

Jesus asked God, *"What is mine to do?"* And you, too, can ask: What is love asking me to do? What is love asking me to do? How can I cultivate an open heart, even -- maybe especially -- when I've been betrayed or hurt? How can I cultivate an open heart? How can I remember oneness? That we are all connected through this loving awareness that lives through all beings?

And this is where we turn once again to Jesus' words during the Holy Week story, where he was very clear: *"I am the Son of God. I am the daughter of God. I am an expression of universal love and wisdom."*

Say that with me: [with congregants] *"I am an expression of universal love and wisdom."*

Again with a whisper: [with congregants] *"I am an expression of universal love and wisdom."*

Yes, and that the temple is a place of prayer ... the temple being your own body temple. So often, we get caught up in the outside -- in the material world -- and this is a reminder to **COME BACK TO THAT TEMPLE WITHIN AND PRAY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR HIGHTER SELF**; with that universal divine guidance that is within you and around you. Get back to the temple within.

So, if we're upset, then there's something going on inside of us that is not yet healed, which oftentimes makes us want to get upset more or angry more or justify or assume -- make some assumptions -- so that we can try to make sense out of it. There's no sense to be made out of it. The other person is hurting. They are functioning from fear. That's the sense we make out of it.

So instead, acknowledge the feelings that arise; remember the person is struggling with their own belief or experience around the situation and acting from their unhealed, fear-filled part of themselves ... which is probably triggering an unhealed part of *yourself*, which means, in turn, to open your heart more.

So here's the big reveal -- the big takeaway -- for Palm Sunday, everyone. When you know who you are, you don't need anyone to tell you you're the worst or you're the best. You're the dumbest or you're the

smartest. You're the ugliest or you're the most beautiful. See, suddenly, neither opinion has any energy around it, because you hold to the truth.

"I am a divine expression."

Let's say that together: [with congregants] *"I am a divine expression."*

Yes! Jesus kept saying, *"I am the Son of God."* So, if we kick that up a notch, we're all here -- all connected in this beautiful, magical energy of allness, of oneness -- to express creatively in the most spectacular way possible, which is unique to each and every one of us.

Jesus was scared; he was troubled; he was unsure; but he trusted. He asked questions. He communicated clearly. And he accepted that all was in divine order, but realized divine order is also my soul's part in divinely ordering it.

He could have said no at any time, but he didn't. He prayed. He got quiet. He talked to God. He talked to loving Presence. And then he surrendered and let go to what was before him, just this, which is essential in our healing.

And then, in our healing realizing: no one is against me. I don't have to take it personally. Instead, I can keep showing up as a peaceful divine expression. Don't take things personally.

As we get to the end, I wanted to share a story I just read a couple days ago. It's about a woman named Corrie Ten Boom. She was in her late teens, early 20s. Her family constructed a hiding place in their attic bedroom to shelter Jewish people in Holland during World War II. The family helped approximately 800 Jewish fugitives find refuge there in their home ... some for a few hours, some for several months.

And then, in 1944, a neighbor turned the family in to the Gestapo, and they were all sent to a concentration camp. And so, of course, while there, she endured very harsh conditions, and yet miraculously survived. And years later, she wrote a book called *The Hiding Place*. And this is what it says. It says, *"'The Hiding Place' details her experiences and her unwavering belief in the power of love and forgiveness, even in the face of unimaginable suffering."* The power of love and forgiveness, even in the face of unimaginable suffering. The power of love and forgiveness. In other words, what Jesus came to teach.

So, know your own light. Know your own ability to do good works. Walk in peace as Jesus did into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday because you, like Jesus, are God in human clothing. Turn to prayer and meditation to receive the answers so that you can continue to remember your connection to oneness; to the allness.

But we're being called. We're being called in this moment. We're being called to be the peace; to be the love; to be the forgiveness that is needed right now in a turbulent world. We're being called. That is Jesus' reminder to us on this Palm Sunday: that it is with the palms of grace that we can move through the world gracefully; peacefully. Your soul is calling you to be divine presence on earth at this moment in time. And so I invite you, friends, to take up your donkey and ride into town. [Congregants laugh]

Blessings, everyone. Happy Palm Sunday!