

“The Enneagram: Peacemaker:

A Sermon for University Congregational Church

Sunday, September 2, 2018

Rev. Paul E. Ellis Jackson

Traditional Word

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” Matthew 5:9

Contemporary Word

“It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.” --Eleanor Roosevelt

“The Enneagram: Peacemaker”

Well, here we are—the end of a nine-part sermon series that has taken us through the summer of 2018.

The Enneagram—an ancient tool for better understanding our neighbors. Today we look at the ninth

Enneagram type—The Peacemaker—and we put our finishing touches on what has been, at least for

me, a very thought-provoking and enjoyable excursion into learning more about what makes other

people tick. And why you all can't think like me. And why we don't just all think the same way. And why

can't we all just get along....ahh!

So, on to Type 9. Are there any 9's here today? It's estimated that about 10% of the population is a Type

9, so there should be a few of you out there. Enneagram Type 9's are accepting, trusting, and stable.

They are usually creative, optimistic, and supportive, but sometimes 9's can also be too willing to go

along with others just to keep the peace. They want everything to go smoothly and be without conflict, but they can also tend to be complacent, simplifying problems and minimizing anything that seems upsetting. They typically have problems with inertia and stubbornness—not mentioning anyone here by name (Duane) but I totally get this stubbornness thing. At their very best, 9's are indomitable and all-embracing, they are able to bring people together and heal conflicts. The key motivation in the life of a Type 9 is to create harmony in their environment, to avoid conflicts and tension, to preserve things as they are, and to resist whatever would upset or disturb them. Which might stand in stark contrast to their basic, underlying default of Peacemaker. Because to do the difficult work of peace-making we must first be at peace with ourselves.

People have called personality type Nine *The Peacemaker* because no type is more devoted to this quest for internal and external peace for themselves and others. They are typically “spiritual seekers” who have a great yearning for connection with the cosmos, as well as with other people. They work to maintain their peace of mind just as they work to establish peace and harmony in their world. The issues encountered in the Nine are fundamental to all psychological and spiritual work—these are great truths for all of us: Being awake versus falling asleep to our true nature; presence versus entrancement, openness versus blockage, tension versus relaxation, peace versus pain, union versus separation.

Ironically, for a type so oriented to the *spiritual* world, 9's are the type that is potentially most grounded in the physical world and in their own bodies—ask Duane about his life as a dancer or the meaningful work he does with our gardens and lawns at Sprucehouse. This contradiction, between spiritual and physical, is resolved when we realize that Nines are either in touch with their instinctive qualities and have tremendous elemental power and personal magnetism, or they are cut off from their instinctual strengths and can be disengaged and remote, even lightweight.

To compensate for being out of touch with their instinctual energies, Nines may also retreat into their minds and their emotional fantasies. Furthermore, when their instinctive energies are out of balance, Nines use these very energies against themselves, damming up their own power so that everything in their psyches becomes static and inert. When their energy is not used, it stagnates like a spring-fed lake that becomes so full that its own weight dams up the springs that feed it. When Nines are in balance with their Instinctive Center and its energy, however, they are like a great river, carrying everything along with it effortlessly.

People sometimes call the Nine *the crown of the Enneagram* because it is at the top of the symbol and because it seems to include the whole of it. Nines can have the strength of Eights, the sense of fun and adventure of Sevens, the dutifulness of Sixes, the intellectualism of Fives, the creativity of Fours, the attractiveness of Threes, the generosity of Twos, and the idealism of Ones. However, what they generally do not have is a sense of really inhabiting themselves—*a strong sense of their own identity*. Ironically, therefore, the only type the Nine is not like is the Nine itself. Being a separate self, an individual who must assert herself against others, is terrifying to Nines. They would rather melt into someone else or quietly follow their idyllic daydreams.

I found my own type-9-ness on display this past week during a board meeting for a community non-profit that I work with. Now this non-profit was, just a few short years ago, a small organization with just a few staff members and able to function with a seat-of-your-pants approach that the executive leader was most comfortable with. This man, a local minister, had built this organization up from nothing to where it is now—a substantially much larger organization that oversee about a dozen major projects and grants throughout Wichita, in fact we learned just last Wednesday that we have received a federal grant of \$500,00.00...1/2 a million! Well, last Monday's board meeting (actually the past few) had some tension in it—because the organization has grown so quickly and we've added new board members, there is a much more "corporate" feel to the board. Decisions that in the past would

have been made with brief deliberation and general consensus are now being discussed for most of the meeting and motions are made and amended and discussed some more. This board has morphed from a small advisory type board to a major board responsible for significant amounts of money. Well, the tensions this is creating are what you would expect when the founding minister is still part of the board (ex-officio) and is trying to understand why we can't do things the way we always have. He is experiencing some great frustration and there is one board member in particular who seems to be vexing him and that would be the new treasurer of the board. And that makes sense—it seems it's usually money that causes these tensions. How to pay what new staff member from what account....so, there were a number of points during this meeting that voices raised and there was a palpable feeling of anger—because these two gentlemen were not understanding where the other was coming from: One thought the other was being too much of a nitpicker and the other thought the lead minister was being too loose with the rules. It was a great example of the law versus grace...so, I knew I was going to be called to give our closing meditation and since I don't really care that much for conflict I took the opportunity of their spat to begin preparing my benediction. I wanted to...if not mend the rift in some way, to make peace, to at least make space for both men's frustrations and to remind us all that this is part of the process—the growing pains that accompanying an organization's change from a small operation to a more substantial one. I called forth my powers of 9-ness, my "peacemaker" skills and crafted words that I offered to group as a whole. Fortunately, you could feel the tension escape the room and the smiles on the faces as they recognized both themselves and the recent blow-up in my comments. I ended my benediction with a paraphrase of the "Prayer of St. Francis" and we went on our way. I did what I could, using my own 9, peacemaker, skills to make room for the energy of conflict. This is a trap I think we find ourselves in—we so want to create peace that we forget it is an active verb, peace-making....we forget we must constantly create peace—within ourselves and others. I like Eleanor

Roosevelt's quote in your bulletins regarding Peacemaking: "It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it."

The term peacemaker is synonymous with the name Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi. "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." This quote from Gandhi perfectly depicts his lifelong goal, as well as his invitation for us to create change. He lived by those words, he led by example, and above all promoted peace. First in himself, then in his immediate sphere and finally an entire nation and indeed the world.

Mahatma Gandhi dedicated his life to promoting and peacefully fighting for equality—deep social injustices that came about primarily because of imperial British rule in India. He gave his time, his sacred energy and eventually his life to create a better world. He truly was the change he wished to see in the world and was able to successfully implement those changes. His practice of peace-making has inspired countless others to live a life of peace. They have joined in his success of changing the world through peaceful methods.

Gandhi, while a devout Hindu, practiced the universal peacemaking skills that the author of the Gospel of Mathew saw as the supreme marks of a child of God. He recounted Jesus' Sermon of the Mount with the words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." And it's useful to look at Matthew's words because his Gospel was one of the main bridges for ancient Judaism to the new Christ Movement. The author had much wisdom to draw on regarding peacemakers and I think one of the most interesting, and seemingly contradictory peacemakers, was Jonah. You remember Jonah? Belly of the whale? Refused his prophetic mission from God?

The relationship between the God of the Hebrew Bible and Jonah is unique in that Jonah tried to resist his prophetic call (God wanted him to go and remind the people of Nineveh that they had strayed from their covenant) and instead Jonah said, uh, Nineveh, no way, those people HATE prophets and he fled to

Tarshish in the other direction. This was opposed to the behavior of most other prophets—which was to accept the burden of their call and do as God requires. Jonah is problematic in other ways as well: He is disobedient, disloyal, and he is petulant towards God because God failed to treat the people of Nineveh in the manner that Jonah expected from God. Jonah expected Nineveh to be punished and destroyed for their behavior. Instead, God shows compassion, and it is this compassion that further angers Jonah so much so that he cries out in anguish: “Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live”. Because God showed compassion. Jonah’s childish anger at God is both humanizing for the prophet and troublesome for someone trying to find a consistent thread for the God of the Hebrew Bible supposedly being a vengeful deity—God doesn’t destroy the city as many have come to expect from this “Old Testament” God.

In Jonah, God shows mercy and grace to the residents of Nineveh, when the reader (through the eyes of Jonah) is led to believe that God will not show mercy. Viewing these events through the lens of Jonah’s context, it is only fair for the reader to expect God to indeed deal harshly with Nineveh. When this does not happen, when vengeance is not God’s response, one is then left facing a God of *love and peace and mercy* who does not act according to our desires. This God reflects, once again, a divine being that is transcendent and indefinable, ineffable--and one that has again taught its loving children that they had best heed God’s prophets, especially when those prophets tell God’s people what they need to hear.

Sometimes a Peacemaker is one who doesn’t get their own expectations met, but are able to set them aside in the name of peace. Jonah had to do this and was left pouting under a pitiful tree, with little shade and no water, out in the desert. Pouting because God didn’t destroy a city as he had done for all of the other prophets. How often do we feel this exact same way? Why do the bad guys and gals always seem to get away with it? Why did I get the speeding ticket when I was going as fast as everyone else? Why did God make this thing happen to me and not to someone else? Well, there’s a lot wrong with that statement, but I use it because I hear it all of the time. God must have something special in store for me

because I survived some terrible fate. Yes, but what about all of those other good, God-fearing folks that didn't escape that fate? Peacemaking requires us to recognize that some of our neighbors believe in such a God.

The Spiritual Work for 9's, then, lives in this tension of wanting to build and maintain peace and the realization of the difficult work sometimes required of that. Sometimes, and I'm speaking to all of our inner-9 tendencies here—sometimes our desire to go along with others requires some careful examination. Are we going along to simply get along? And are we doing so at the expense or defacement of other humans? Do we share a hurtful joke? No matter how funny? Do we gossip about someone else's misfortune instead of thinking how we might help them out? Do we believe that we have to be truthful at the expense of love? Do you ever do that? Do you ever say—I'm just being honest? Knowing full well that your "honesty" may cause the other person pain. Does your need to be "honest" trump the other person's humanity and dignity?

Another challenge to all of our 9-ness is the unfortunate tendency to ignore what is going on around us. We get so caught up in our desire to be peaceful that we fail to notice our neighbors and their pain and need. Are we paying attention to our complicity in all of the injustice around us? Or are we just content to be by-standers—claiming that it's not my problem—someone else will fix it. What if you are the someone else?

Being a Peacemaker means sometimes missing the important need for conflict. We are humans—there will be conflict. Are we aware of the possible down-side to always remaining calm in every situation? As someone who lives with a 9, I value his ability to remain calm in the face of conflict. AND It's also extremely frustrating to my own 7 nature sometimes because I'm enthusiastic about what's going on, even if it's a spat and my 9 counter-part, while okay with it, doesn't always share my intense enthusiasm for it! Ah—the contradictions of being human!

Like Gandhi, imagine the opportunities for change you wish to see in your daily life. And then live the peace. And like Jonah recognize that your efforts may not be rewarded in the way you expect. Try implementing peaceful actions into your daily life. Use peaceful actions to solve conflict—like my closing words to my board last Monday. Maintain peace when others test your patience—recognizing that conflict indeed exists. But notice how even the smallest offering of peace can create change in the world around you. Peace-making is an action—be at peace first with yourself, then with those in your immediate sphere...then those ripples of peace can emanate outwards, like the ripples of a pebble thrown in a pond. Peacemaking demands that we continually build peace. It doesn't just happen—not in human relationships. What can you do, right now, to create peace around you. It seems like such a cliché, because we've heard it so much, but its truth shouldn't diminish because of that...You must be the change you wish to see in the world! It truly starts with you.

AMEN

Please rise as you are able and sing our closing benediction.

RESOURCES USED:

Jackson, Paul E. "A PETULANT PROPHET AND A GOD OF *HESED*: AN EXEGESIS OF JONAH 4:1-5".

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the MDiv requirements of Phillips University, Interpretation Matters Course, Spring of 2015. Lisa Davison and Nancy Pittman, professors.

<https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-9>