

Christmas Day Homily 2016  
Give Something of Yourself  
Rev. Hannah Petrie

Sharing Our Gifts of Ourselves

It's true that there are few Unitarian Universalists who think of Jesus as a savior, or a Christ figure. Most of us think of Jesus as a regular human being like you or me, only he was a prophet, whose life's work was to teach us how to live. He taught in parables, which are stories that turn our assumptions upside down. They are meant to challenge our assumptions about, say, what's safe and what's not safe, or about what the real gifts in life are. Jesus taught us, we receive when we give, which is why I opened our service today with the Take Christmas poem – we take and we take for Christmas, right. All the gifts and goodies we receive – we can take all we want, but it's not as meaningful unless we first *give* something of ourselves.

And so, on this special Christmas Day service, I open up the floor for anyone so moved to share: how do you wish to give something of yourself, today, tomorrow, or anytime? It can be specific, or more general. Also, if you like, you may share a story of how someone special in your life gave of themselves to you. I'll begin . . .

HOMILY

So I mentioned that Jesus taught in parables. I want to share a modern parable, a modern story, that illustrates how much we can give, how simple it can be, even if we're afraid. It is the spirituality of the child that shines through in this story, so children, listen up, because this is about you. Before I begin, I want to quote from scripture that appears in Mark, Matthew, and Luke, that encapsulates Jesus' teaching about the wisdom of childlike engagement with the world.

“And they would bring children to him [Jesus], so he could bless them with his hands, but the disciples scolded him. Then Jesus grew indignant when he saw this and said to them, “Let the children come up to me; don't try to stop them. After all, God's kingdom belongs to people like these. Let me tell you, whoever doesn't welcome the kingdom of God the way a child would, will never set foot in his kingdom.”

And now, for the modern story that shows this. Originally appearing in the Christian Herald in 1997, it's called “The Gift” by Nancy Dahlberg.

And so, for our children who teach us adults how to live, for you we are so grateful. And for the adults who give so much of yourselves, may you keep giving with joyful hearts, and have the courage to find even more expansive ways in which to give.

And let us all remember that the real gifts of Christmas, never cost anything, and our hearts can always afford them, *if* we allow for the childlike embrace of the other - the human touch, the hug! Humble yet potent in its transference of peace on earth, and good will to all.

And now let us ponder these things in our hearts as we sing our last hymn, # 253, O Come All Ye Faithful.