

The Boundaries of the Cup

A sermon preached at Niles Discovery Church
in Fremont, California,
on Sunday, April 29, 2018, by the Rev. Brenda Loreman.
Scripture: Psalm 85:8-13 and Matthew 14:22-27
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Moving into Triads

If you're not already sitting in a group of three, please move so you are. If you didn't bring a cup, please pick one up from the cart.

Homily

I have heard it said that Martin Luther, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, spent an hour each day in prayer. If he knew he was going to have an especially busy or hectic day, he would spend two hours in prayer. The fact that I have also heard this exact same story applied to the life of Mahatma Gandhi does not mean that it's not a true story. It may not be historically *factual*—but it does point to a great truth: in order to deepen our relationship with God and have the strength to stay on our spiritual path, we have to put some boundaries around our prayer life.

The cup speaks to us about boundaries:

If the cup did not have the boundaries of sides and a bottom, it could not hold anything in it. The cup has an opening—it is able to give and receive—but the boundaries keep what it contains from being spilled everywhere. Likewise, we must have boundaries around the time we need to connect with our deeper selves. Otherwise, all sorts of situations, interferences, interruptions, and schedule pressures will cause this time to fall apart and be in great disarray. Everyone else cannot always come first. We need to value ourselves enough to [...] [give ourselves the time to] receive God's spiritual energy. Even Jesus put himself first at those times when he prayed alone or went apart from his ministry so that he could renew his inner resources.¹

As I flew to and from Southern California last weekend, I was reminded—as I always am on commercial air flight—of the need for spiritual boundaries: “In the unlikely event of cabin depressurization, put your own oxygen mask on first.” Setting aside regular time for prayer is the spiritual oxygen mask we need to give ourselves, so that we can then be a vessel of loving energy, or a container of God's presence, or a love song for others.

Breath Prayer

Hold your cup in your hands and shut your eyes. Breathing in, pray: Guide me ... Breathing out, pray: ... guard me

¹ Joyce Rupp, *The Cup of Our Life* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1997), 22.

Guided Reflection

As you hold the cup, touch the sides and bottom of the cup. Trace the outside of the cup with your fingers. Run your fingers around the inside of the cup.

Imagine your spiritual boundaries.

Let yourself lean on God for a while. Ask for whatever boundaries are needed in your spiritual life.

Listen to God speak to you about these boundaries

A Time of Sharing

You're invited to move to a time of sharing. This will be six minutes long. You can divide the time up so each person gets two minutes (I'll ring a bell every two minutes) or you can just share as the Spirit moves you. You can begin your sharing with one of these prompts, or by sharing anything that came up for you during the guided reflection:

- What keeps me from having enough time to resource my inner life?
- What might Jesus's prayer have been when he left his busy life to be alone?

Scriptural Affirmation

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.

Prayer of Affirmation

Help me to value and protect my relationship with you, God. Grant me the vision to see what may need to be changed and the courage to take a stand for my own time and space. May my quiet time with you enrich and enhance the rest of my day so that I am able to find you in every part of it. Amen.