



Home Connection February 2012

Love

Chalice Lightings:

Love cannot remain by itself—it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action and that action is service.
Whatever form we are,
able or disabled,
rich or poor,
it is not how much we do,
but how much love we put into the doing;
a lifelong sharing of love with others.

-- Mother Teresa (#562 in [Singing the Living Tradition](#))

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

-- I Corinthians 13: 4-6

We light this chalice to celebrate the love within us, among us, and all around us.

-- David Herndon

We light our flaming chalice
to illuminate the world we seek.
In the search for truth, may we be just;
in the search for justice, may we be loving;
and, in loving, may we find peace.

-- Elizabeth McMaster

Story:

The Two Brothers

The following story comes out of the Jewish folk tradition. In many places it is credited as a story from the Talmud. The true origins of the story seem to be lost, but one version or another of the story can be found in many books of Jewish folk tales and on several web sites. The details vary, but the essence is the same.

Once long ago there lived two brothers. These brothers inherited a farm from their father. The brothers lived together and worked the land side by side. Eventually, one of the brothers married. They divided the farm in two and each continued to work their own portion of the land. As the years passed, the married brother and his wife had several children.

One night, the unmarried brother began to think of the responsibility his brother had to care for a wife and to feed all his children. He thought about how hard his brother must work to feed all those people and to earn enough money to care for all their needs. He realized that while he had the same size farm, he had only himself to care for. It did not seem fair. He decided that he would give some of his harvest to his brother to help him support his family. But, he really did not want his brother to feel that he owed him anything for his generosity, so he decided to take some of the grain he had in his store house in the middle of the night and secretly put it in his brother's store house. And, so he did.

Now it turned out that on exactly the same night the married brother began thinking that it was not fair that he had a wife and children who would look after him in his old age, and that his brother was all alone. He began to wonder what his brother would do when he was old. How would he be able to care for himself? The brother and his wife talked about it long into the night after everyone had gone to bed, and eventually they agreed that they should secretly take some of their harvest and put it in the other brother's store house so he could sell it for enough money that he could pay to care for himself in his old age. And so very early in the morning before the sun rose, this brother took some of his grain and added it to his brother's stores.

When the brothers went to work the next morning, both were amazed to find that they had exactly the same amount of grain as they had had before they took some to their brother's farm. Confused, they each tried again the next night to enrich their brother by giving him some of their harvest. And again in the morning, they each found they had the same amount as when they began.

The brothers tried a third time to give some of their grain to the other. This time it turned out that they each started out from their own farm at the same time as the other. As they approached the other's farm, they noticed in the distance a figure pulling a cart toward them. As they got closer they recognized each other and came to the sudden realization of what had been happening. They threw their arms around each other and cried at the joy of having such a loving and caring brother.

The story goes on to tell us that King Solomon heard of the story of these loving brothers and decided that the place where such love existed was a holy site. And, that it was on this site that he chose to build his temple.

This is my retelling of the story. I have several folk tale books that include this story including One Hundred and One Jewish Read-Aloud Stories edited by Barbara Diamond Goldin. In searching for the origin of the story I found two web sites of interest: <http://home.earthlink.net/~ddstuhiman/crc2.htm>, and <http://menachemmendel.net/blog/2006/03/30/two-brothers-a-field-and-the-temple/>.

Story Questions:

- What is the most important part of the story to you, and why?
- If this is not your first time hearing this story, how are you hearing it differently this time?
- Why did the brothers each try to take the grain to the other brother secretly?
- What does this story tell you about love?
- Why would a place where love existed be considered a holy place?
- Can you think of similar examples of such love in our world?
- How is this story like some event or experience in your life? Were you giving, receiving, or both?

Possible Activities:

- Think about some time when you received a gift or kindness unexpectedly, or without knowing from whom it came. How did it make you feel? What did it make you want to do?
- Have you heard of the idea of “paying it forward?” In “paying it forward,” instead of repaying a kindness someone has done for you back to the person who did it; you do an act of kindness to another person. For example, if I am in line to buy something to drink at a theater, and I discover after ordering that I am short some of the money I owe, the person behind me might give me the amount I owe. If they do not want me to repay them, I “pay it forward” by doing a similar kindness to someone else. Pay attention to kindnesses done to you and look for opportunities to “pay it forward” to someone else.
- Check out one or more of the following Web sites. They will introduce you to the ways various world religions express the concept we generally call “The Golden Rule.” <http://www.geocities.com/theworldsreligions/goldenrule.html>, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc.htm>, or <http://www.teachingvalues.com/goldenrule.html>. Discuss with your family or friends how the Golden Rule relates to the actions of the brothers in our

story.

- The story gives us an example of unconditional love. Both brothers took their action out of love for the other. Neither brother did it in expectation of being repaid in any way, nor because his brother had done a specific act for him. Spend some time reflecting on ways you have been the recipient of unconditional love. You can take some time to discuss your reflections with family or friends, or you could write about it in a journal.
- How would you change the way you live your life if you were to really treat others as you would like to be treated yourself? Would it make a difference? Try setting a time frame (a day, an afternoon, a meeting or a class) and intentionally try to treat others as you would want them to treat you. Reflect on how it felt to you and if other people noticed. Did it change how they they acted?

Resources:

Books for Children:

The Brothers Promise, Frances Harber, Albert Whitman & Company, 2007

And Tango makes Three, Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, Simon & Schuster, 2006

I'll Always Love You, Hans Wilhelm, Dragonfly books, 1988.

The Gift of Nothing, Patrick McDonnell, Little, Brown Young Readers, 2005

Further Reading for Parents:

The five Love Languages of Children, Gary Chapman and Ross Campbell, Northfield Publishing, 1997

Beyond the Golden Rule: A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice, a Teaching Tolerance handbook that has age-specific sections and offers practical advice about the challenges and rewards of parenting in today's diverse world can be downloaded from the following Web site:

<http://www.tolerance.org/parents/index.jsp>

Parents Golden Rule: <http://www.nospank.net/cyfcec.htm>

Further Reading for Adults:

Explore the following readings in Singing the Living Tradition published by the Unitarian Universalist Association. (Our hymnal)

#562 by Mother Teresa
#564 by Alice Walker
#597 Dhammapada
#598 Buddhist
#601 by Mo-Tse

#610 by Mohammed Iqbal
#638 I Corinthians 13
#639 I John 4
#730 by Kahilil Gibran

The Art of Loving, Erich Fromm, Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006

True Love: A Practice for Awakening the Heart, Thich Nhat Hanh, Shambhala, 2006

The Golden Rule, Jeffrey Wattles, Oxford University Press USA, 1996

First Inviter Love In: 40 time-Tested tools for Creating a More Compassionate Life, Tana Pessa and Penar Rinpoche, wisdom Publications, 2010

Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love, Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt, Paraclete Press, 2005

Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life, Karen Armstrong, Anchor books, 2011

We Pledge Our Hearts: A Treasury of Poems, Quotations, and Readings to Celebrate Love and Marriage, Edward Searl, Skinner House, 2006

Love: Quotes and Passages from the Heart, B. C. Aronson, Random House Reference, 2006