

Sermon: Sink into Now Text: Psalm 29 February 9, 2020
Rideau Park United Church, Ottawa ON Rev. Steve Clifton

Eknath Easwaran, was a teacher of meditation, who brought the practice as he knew it in his native India to the West. Meditation, being in silence with prayerful intent, is a spiritual practice common to many faith traditions and while he was a Hindu, Easwaran`s writings were embraced by Christian meditators too. I was introduced to his writing while staying on retreat at an Anglican convent.

In one of this books Easwaran compares life to water skiing. He suggests that most of us, most of the time, glide over the surface of life. We are going fast, have places to go and things to do...

He suggests that we might slow down, even stop... and let ourselves sink down into life...

He offers an alternative to the water skiing approach to living. Try deep sea diving. Sink down deep into life. And when we do that, he writes, who knows what wonders, what treasures we might find.

Easwaran calls us to live deeply. To take the plunge into the wonder of ordinary, everyday life. He writes "A mind that is fast is distracted, a mind that is slow is sound, and a mind that is still is divine. And then he quotes the Psalms. Psalm 46: "Be still and know that I am God."

From the Psalms today we read:

*The voice of the Lord **is** over the waters/ The voice of the Lord **is** powerful*

*The voice of the Lord **is** majestic/ The Lord **gives** strength to his people*

*The Lord **blesses** his people with peace.*

The psalmist writes not that the voice of God **was** powerful-in some past time that he remembers fondly. He writes that the voice of God **is** powerful – present tense

The psalmist does not say that God **will** give strength to his people, one day, maybe, we hope. He declares that God gives strength and blesses God`s people – now- present tense.

Psalm 29 is written entirely in the present tense. It speaks of God`s presence and activity here and now, not way back when, not one day soon. But here- now – in the present moment there is God.

Philosophers, physicists and mystics will all rightly remind us that the only time we have, the only time that is real, the only moment that is accessible is now, the present moment.

The past is gone. It resides in memory and story.

The future is yet to be. It's a projection, a worry, a hope.

Only the present is real. Only the present is accessible. We can live only in the here and now.

We can learn from the past, we work for the future, but we can only really live in the present.

The Psalmist shares, in what we read today, that where we live, God is there, moving with power, giving strength, blessing with peace. Now in the moment that we live the Holy One resides.

*The Lord **gives** strength to his people*

*The Lord **blesses** his people with peace.*

Its Annual Meeting Sunday. Can we take a moment to stop, to sink into this moment in our shared life as a community of faith?

We look ahead. We are people who like to act. We meet the future with processes and organization and we are really good at all that and it's a good thing.

In the past year we have had three significant processes underway: Congregational Development built a strategy to work with committees; we worked through our Affirming Ministries process over two years; and we have been working on a significant change to our governance. And we are now going to do a new strategic planning *process* and a Congregational Life Profile.

We look ahead and work for the future. And sometimes we look forward with some anxiousness about the years ahead.

And we look back...look back and remember how things were, how things used to be or at least how we remember them being.

But here and now, in our congregation now what do we see? Can we be still? Might we sink in, and become aware of the blessings of this moment?

Do we see each other, beyond our own silos of relationship? Do we see the all the people who are part of our faith community here and now?

Do we recognize where God is present now, where God is moving or leading, where energy resides in our common life? We may have hopes and ideas for the future, but do we pause, sink deeply, to sense where the Spirit is leading...?

Might we look and see in this moment a congregation that in 2019 turned up with enthusiasm to vote to be Affirming Ministry by a 95% margin? Whatever our history in thinking through issues of gender and sexuality and inclusion, here and now -we are passionately Affirming.

We are so incredibly gifted, so remarkably blessed as a community of faith. Challenges are many yes. But if we sink into the present moment might we see ourselves more clearly.

We have a group of 40 to 60 sharing supper on Thursday nights at hearsay, a Pageant that engages more than 80 young people each year, a vibrant Sunday School and children`s music ministry meeting every week, but often speak as if we have no young families.

We have 31 teenagers playing bells together in our sanctuary every week but say we have no youth.

We raise 550,000 dollars for our budget each year...and isn't that a remarkable thing, a sigh of much hard work and of a deep and profound generosity?

In this moment God is here. In this place, with these people gathered, God is present. In this moment we are blessed.

The poet Mary Oliver sinks deeply into a winter's day, a day such as this...

"Snow was falling,
so much like stars
filling the dark trees
that one could easily imagine
its reason for being was nothing more
than prettiness."

So might we slow down? Be still. Sink into the present moment... where the Holy One resides. See the treasures, the wonders the blessedness that surrounds us here and now.

May God bless us, strengthen us, and give us peace here and now... and in every moment to come.

Amen