

The Sufi poet Rumi wrote “Make peace with the universe. Take joy in it. It will turn to gold. Resurrection will be now. Every moment, a new beauty. When you feel a peaceful joy, that's when you are near truth.”

First hymn is Green hymnal #236 “Joy is Like the Rain”

Our first reading is a short poem by Mary Oliver:

“If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don’t hesitate.

Give in to it.

There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be.

We are not wise, and not very often kind.

And much can never be redeemed.

Still, life has some possibility left.

Perhaps this is its way of fighting back,

that sometimes something happens better than all the riches or power in the world.

It could be anything,

but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins.

Anyway, that’s often the case.

Anyway, whatever it is, don’t be afraid of its plenty.

Joy is not made to be a crumb.”

Our second reading is from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 15:

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost

sheep.’⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

⁸“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins^[a] and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Our last reading is also from Jalaluddin Rumi:

“This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they’re a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.”

Let us share our Concerns and Joys carried in our hearts this morning, voicing them into this community of loving Friends.
(Friends share)

Let us hold these expressions from Friends together with those joys and concerns left unsaid in our hearts, and for the many near and far, in Light and love. (Musical Interlude)

Dear Friends—Let us all experience the resurrection of joy, the overflowing river of joy, the unexpected and peaceful joy. We hope to be filled and to savor the joy that comes to us at any and all times. In that instant when love begins, help us recognize the love of place and of time, the love of Spirit, the depth and breadth of love that may be sudden, but is not ephemeral. When that one piece of love is missing, that completeness eludes us, help us to be diligent finders and to rejoice with those who find themselves again as not flawed, but whole, not only wounded, but healing, not alone, but in and with us all. Amen.

Second hymn Green #124 “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say”

Message: Dear Friends—I wanted to take a moment to just remind us all of the importance of listening in tongues—of translating what may be spoken, said, or sung into yourself. The readings and hymns, the music and spirit we offer or share each week have their particulars and it is up to each of us to see how to absorb them into our own souls and understanding. They only become any sort of truth in our hearts, when tested in the Light, or when found to be in some way illuminating. Try not to be distracted by the actual words, the actual notes of the music—including the music played without words, but let these things lead you on your path to your Truth and your Light, to your actual joy. That is where the profoundness of the filled silence kicks in. This is where the beautiful opening words of the Sufi poet Rumi that I shared fit “Make peace with the universe. Take joy in it. It will turn to gold. Resurrection will be now. Every moment, a new beauty. When you feel a peaceful joy, that's when you are near truth.” I realize that our last hymn repeated the metaphor of Jesus over and over, but did so with a mystical tune that I hope can open a way for all to

move beyond the metaphor to the personal experience and source of Light that is meaningful for you. Jesus is not only recorded or presented as a source of parables, but can be and is a parable himself, and can be shared among those with all and no beliefs when we translate and reframe, take the prophet of Love and keep eyes on the love itself, the indicator or the sign that points to the profound.

The two parables shared in the reading from Luke today are about some part of a whole, of a flock or a fund, being lost, and given the disdain of the law teachers and pharisees, of being tainted. When we are missing a piece, it is not just a distraction, but a dissatisfaction. When some element keeps us from being truly centered, we need to get it back from the wilderness, we need to sweep out the dirt and get to the joy of wholeness. The shepherd and the woman are not just happy in themselves, but rejoice with their friends. Getting back to the inner Light, to the settled and profound Truth in our hearts, in our knowing, in the world, in the rain and the river, in the deep ways that music can touch us, all those places without words, is something to share. As Rumi points out in his poem, the disruption, the pain and grief, the search, all are part of being the human guest house for the divine. Be inhabited.

Mary Oliver's poem that joy is not made to be a crumb reminds us to feast and be filled spiritually even in the most fleeting joy. Hers is not a 'don't worry, be happy' poem. She states that these are difficult times. The atrocities in Gaza continue, with war in Ukraine, Sudan, Myanmar, and so many other places. Our earth's climate is still reeling, and political rhetoric remains out of control. And yet, we still have hearts. We enjoy human achievement in the Paris Olympics, the earth of our beautiful falls and glens, the quiet horse, the single song. When all the pieces come together, when the depth of the sense of being alive and being together and being one is there, let it drench you, let it fill you, let it cover you. One

of the reasons I love poetry and write poetry, like many in this meeting, is that unlike prose descriptions of feelings and events, that tell you about something, poetry tries to actually evoke the feeling or event. Like the silence of the meeting, it seeks to fill with a shared experience of meaning beyond the words. Music makes a similar attempt to go directly to feeling and common experience, to evoke the shared and the complete. I like that some recent studies seem to indicate that for those animals that have music, that sing, they also go beyond particular communication of discreet messages and sometimes sing just for the pleasure of the song. I like thinking about the birds or the whales or the elephants that are just singing as music. La, la, la. Dum-de-dum-de-dum. I know that some of the scientists among us may think this is a bit too much anthro-morphizing on my part, but listening in tongues, translating for and towards my own understanding is both truth and metaphor.

In all of our texts today, there is a link to joy, to a deep happiness that can come from a sense of completeness, from a well-rounded wholeness, a time when love prevails, a time when we come back to the Divine or when we see and experience our purpose. Recently, in my work, we have all been asked to take a short course and make use of generative AI. One of the problems with generative artificial intelligence is that it is only the words, the extraordinary and comprehensive, and therefore incredibly energy intensive analysis of how words have been used to work together, but it operates irrespective of meaning. Our constantly interpreting and translating minds can seek to make meaning from what ChatGPT proposes, but ultimately it is not itself trying to find meaning. It only seeks to find convincing language—to catch us on the words, like the pharisees. As true seekers, and Truth seekers, we are looking beyond language to Love, what only the software of the heart can find. Mining all the words that have been written simply to locate the most convincing words is a fools' errand. Taking the words and the world at hand, what we have in

front of us, around us, and in us to get to the deeply ineffable is a mission, is where our joy is found. Let us weave a world from these threads and wrap ourselves in the meaning of love, of pure joy, in the very lightness of Light. It is not a heavy task. It is deeply meaningful. Light. In all the tragedy and pain of time, it is not a crumb, but a feast. Provision for the journey.

Closing hymn Green #237 “When In Our Music God is Glorified”

The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting book of *Faith and Practice* from 1955 states, “Simplicity clears the springs of life and permits wholesome mirth and gladness to bubble up; it cleans the windows of life and lets joy radiate.”