



LESSONS IN LIVING

“Three Things I Know”

A St. Andrew's Sermon
Delivered by Rev. Babs Miller
July 12, 2026

Scripture Reading: from Romans 8 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

In hope we were saved, but hope is not hope if its object is seen. Why does one hope for what one sees? And hoping for what we cannot see means awaiting it with patient endurance. What will separate us from the love of Christ? Trouble, calamity, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, violence. As Scripture says, for your sake we're being killed all day long. We're looked upon as sheep to be slaughtered. Yet in this we are more than conquerors because of God who has loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither heights nor depths, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus our Savior.

Continuing from the 9th chapter:

Imagine that the Almighty is ready to show wrath and display divine power, yet patiently endures those people who test the divine mercy. However much those lumps of clay deserve to be destroyed, the Most High puts up with them, all for the sake of those to whom God wants to mercifully reveal the wealth of divine glory.

Sermon

There are a few truths I know that have always remained truths in my life. I think, if you really look, you may have them too. Here are the truths I think we all share.

- The love we receive from the Source of our being is unconditional-always was, always is, always will be. (And I have stories to try and support this truth, I think we all do.)
- Everything we need to be more completely us already resides in us.. We have all the gifts we need..... Now, I am still a work in progress at discovering fully what that means-but every gift I need is there to be discovered and developed by me. (I have stories to try and show this too-maybe we all do.)
- Because of these truths in our lives, hope is never far away. In fact, it is there just waiting for us to connect with it again.

First let's look at the unconditional Love from our Source! I am here to tell you it is real! I have tested it so many times in my 83 years and I continue to test it from time to time still. I fact, I may be testing it with this sermon.

But unconditional love is just that. It places no conditions on the love it offers. All we have to do is recognize it and accept it. We often offer this kind of love to the children placed in our lives, whether they are our own, or part of our church family, or part of our greater world. But often we struggle to try to offer unconditional love to grown-ups. Every one of those grown-ups has already been given unconditional love from their Source whether they know it or not. All our one human family is loved unconditionally. Sometimes our jobs are just to help each other discover that love and claim it for ourselves.

But I think we sometimes struggle to claim it ourselves. It is very crucial that we all recognize how loved we are. It's one of those realities that are true for everyone, everywhere, all the time. This is the reality of unconditional love. It is there no matter the circumstances of our lives. Whether in sickness or health, drunk or sober, rich or poor in money or spirit. No matter the condition of our lives at any given moment, unconditional love is still there for the accepting.

Now, I struggle with all this from time to time because there are people that I sometimes find to be unlovable or unable to express love. They don't seem to be able to love themselves or others or I just don't find anything loveable about them some days. But all that is my problem, not theirs. It is all about my perception of them, which isn't real. It's just what I think I see and observe about them. But is it really them? I certainly hope not. If all the things others may perceive about me are truly me then I'm even a bigger mess than I thought I was. But once again I underscore my first truth-Unconditional Love always was, always is and always will be for everyone.

For my first example: I decided to get mad at that Source of Light and Love back in 1970. And for 10 years I did not set foot in a church, I did not seek out that Source, I did not pray. And my life was a mess.... But then circumstances in my life changed with a geographical move and I was forced to reconsider my displaced anger at my Source and to once again seek out that love and guidance. I eventually agreed to finally truly deeply listen to my calling that I had been fighting with God about since I was 17. Unconditional Love is always present and there for us.

I can even give you a second example of that unconditional love. I grew up in a household that knew how to express anger and how to withdraw but never seemed to learn how to express love. So, when I, as a teenager, finally began to recognize the unconditional love I had been surrounded with for a very long time in the church I grew up in, my life changed forever. Unconditional love was a difficult concept for me to embrace But when I did, I just wanted to tell the whole world that they are loved, just exactly as they are. And I know many of you have heard me say these very words before.

This brings us to my second truth. Another way of stating that truth is that all the wonders that we seek are already within us. I have spent my life admiring traits in other people and wishing I could do those things only ultimately to find that I had my own version of those traits already in me. All I had to do was to claim them and begin to develop them in my own way. They may not look like the other person's traits but my version of it was there for my discovery, claiming and using.

Now this does not mean that my admiring someone who is tall and thin is going to make me tall and thin. I think that would definitely be classified as a "pipe dream". These are not the kind of traits or wonders that I am talking about here.

Here's just one example of what I am trying to convey today:

I always admired folks who could stand up in front of a group of people and give an original sermon or a presentation or even a less informal task of leading a discussion before a large group. And I assumed I could never do those things. Slowly because I became willing to take some risks, I discovered that I could do all those things in my own way. I had all the wonders that I sought already in me. I just had to be willing to step out of my comfort zone and try some of them. I had to be willing to take that leap of faith and try doing these new things.

William Sloane Coffin put it this way:

It is terribly important to realize that the leap of faith is not so much a leap of thought as of action. For while in many matters it is first we must see then we will act; in matters of faith it is first we must do then we will know, first we will be and then we will see. One must, in short, dare to act wholeheartedly without absolute certainty.

I think life right now especially is calling us to dare to act wholeheartedly without absolute certainty. We must wholeheartedly reject Christian Nationalism without absolute certainty of how that might play itself out. The future of many more people depends on our willingness to act wholeheartedly in this situation. The reality we must embrace and pass on is that Christian Nationalism is heresy. You cannot worship two Godheads and call yourself Christian. That Spirit of Love that is unconditional is the only Spirit we need. Again, our friend Dr. Coffin reminds us:

Nationalism at the expense of another nation, is just as wicked as racism at the expense of another race. In other word(s), good patriots are not nationalists. A nationalist is a bad patriot.

That may be a hard message for some on the heels of our recent July 4th festivities, but I feel it still remains true. I think the people of this nation are being called to act against the spirit of our times or maybe to anticipate a spirit that has yet to evolve. We are being called to challenge the current state of affairs as they negatively impact ourselves and/or others. The future life of the teachings of Jesus depends on us! We must kindle a hope that inspires all of us towards greater unconditional, universal love for everyone, everywhere, all the time.

And this connects us to my third point about never losing site of the hope that abounds, if we but look for it. Hope is not an emotion. It transcends the physical. I think it is invisible. It is spiritual. It is a deep inner knowing, built on a foundation of unconditional love. Because we are loved we can have hope. Hope for better times. Hope for economic justice. Hope for power to again find the voice of the people. Hope that no matter the current circumstances, love wins and therefore hope wins. Maybe not entirely in my lifetime or yours but that does not diminish its desirability.

Hope is a choice we make and can make over and over again. When we truly connect to that "hope that springs eternal" we root ourselves in the deepest, most authentic places in our lives. Then we can truly live love more fully and it will compound beyond our wildest dreams. We are at such a time in our world where hope can leap forward and overtake the current attempts of power over people, of creating a fear-based world rather than love-based one and choosing greater injustices over greater courage. It is a time when we must stand for all people, we must stand for a grace-filled love and we must stand with even greater courage as we seek to create a place where all the people are free, fed, and safe, everywhere, all the time. I believe this can happen!

Let's look again at that first scripture reading from today:

(22) Imagine that the Almighty is ready to show wrath and display divine power yet patiently endures those people who test the divine mercy, however much those lumps of clay deserve to be destroyed. (23) The Most High puts up with them, all for the sake of those to whom God wants to mercifully reveal the wealth of divine glory—they are vessels prepared for this glory. (24) Well, we are those vessels. Whether we are Jews or Gentiles, we are the ones God has called.

To say this a different way “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for we can’t hold back anymore”. I think this scripture is talking to everyone of us-no exceptions!

The love for all of us is unconditional. Always was, still is, and always will be.

We each have all the gifts we need already within us.

And Hope is just waiting to call us to action to begin the hard work of making our world a better place for everyone, everywhere, all the time. I leave you with these two poems. The first by Langston Hughes titled :I Dream a World”.

*I dream a world where one
No other one will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every human is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all humankind-
Of such I dream, my world!*

My second poem comes from one of my favorite mystics, Howard Thurman.

*Listen to the long stillness
New life is stirring
New dreams are on the wing
New hopes are being readied:
Humankind is fashioning a new heart
Humankind is forging a new mind
God is at work.
This is the season of promise.*

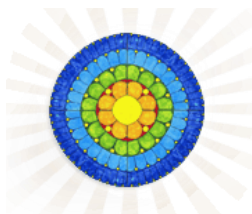
I invite you now to your own reflections on these words.

Benediction

Well, as if you hadn't heard enough about love yet, I want to tell you that each of you is a child of that wonderful source of love. That some folks call God. And that source knows when you skin your knee or your heart. That source knows when you cry at night or admire a butterfly.

Go out into this wonderful creation and tell the whole world that they are loved just exactly as they are. Go and kiss the hurts of this world. Go and laugh and play in the fields of grace and love. Go in peace. Amen.

Transcribed and edited by a member of the St. Andrew's Sermon Transcription Project.



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