

Love Lies in Service: Charitable Generosity
Sermon for Summer School
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Hazrat Inayat Khan tells us:

Love lies in service; only that which is done not for fame or name, not for the appreciation or thanks of those for whom it is done, is love's service.

In the New Testament, Matthew 22:37-40 – Jesus says, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second [is], Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

What does it mean to “Love thy Neighbor as thyself?” It means that we grow and mature in our understanding that self, other, and God are not separate. That these three form a “trinity” that is intrinsically and intricately interrelated. By loving, understanding, and serving one another and others we are also bringing about great benefit in this world for we are also loving, growing in understanding and goodness, and serving God.

It is when we see only with our outer eyes that we become fooled because this body – our appearance of separateness is an illusion. In truth although the flesh is different, and you and I are may appear to be separate – we are of one spirit.

One of the great scientific thinkers of the 20th Century, Albert Einstein, said it this way:

“A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us.

Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

Widening our “circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty”. These ever widening circle certainly include our families, our friends, our local communities, our nations, and ultimately these circles widen to also include those who we consider to be our enemies. This is the greatest gift of compassion and the lesson from which we have the most to learn– and that is to love and serve all without preference and without discrimination – including our enemies.

This point is highlighted by the words of Jesus as He hung from the cross, “Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.” What a charitable, loving, compassionate attitude Jesus possessed even in the great suffering of his martyrdom.

I have included this profound moment in history to remind us that loving, compassionate service is not exclusive to only those who treat us with mutual respect, love, and kindness, perhaps it is even more important to learn to love and serve those who we feel indifferent towards, and yes, even our enemies.

Hazrat Inayat Khan says us:

Love for God is the expansion of the heart, and all actions that come from the lover of God are virtues; they cannot be otherwise. Murshid goes on to say, “Jesus Christ not only told us to love our friends, but also, he went as far as to say we should love our enemies; and the Sufi treads the same path. He considers his charity of heart towards his fellow man to be love for God; and in showing love to every one, he feels he is giving his love to God.”

In our Buddhist scripture we are given a prayer of aspiration attributed to the great India Saint Shantideva, I would like to emphasize a few lines from that prayer, and hope you can feel within your heart the depth of these words:

May I become food and drink in the eons of famine for those poverty-stricken sufferers.
May I be a doctor, medicine and nurse for all sick beings in the world until everyone is cured.

May I be a guide for those who do not have a guide, a leader for those who journey, a boat for those who want to cross over, and all sorts of ships, bridges, beautiful parks for those who desire them, and light for those who need light.

And may I become beds for those who need a rest, and a servant to all who need servants.
May I always be the living conditions for all sentient beings until all sentient beings are enlightened."

Our Master, Hazrat Inayat Khan is a great example of a life dedicated toward this level of aspiration for all of us. Think of it, He gave up his life in India, his fame, his music, and through much personal sacrifice gave birth to the Message that has brought us here together today. Our Beloved Murshid is our example of that "Love [that] Lies in Service", and that love lies charity, and that love lies self-sacrifice.

Another living example of this prayer is Mother Teresa. She is one of one of the great humanitarians of our lifetime. If you will permit me, I would like to tell you a little of her story that highlights our theme, "Love Lies in Service". Did you know that Mother Teresa was given the assignment to go to India as a teacher?

In 1944 while holding the position of Principal at St. Mary's High School in India, she contracted tuberculosis, she was unable to continue teaching, and was sent to Darjeeling for rest and recuperation.

Mother Teresa recalls, "It was on the train to Darjeeling that I received the second call -- "the call within the call". I was to leave the convent and work with the poor, living among them. It was an order. I knew where I belonged but I did not know how to get there."

Four years later in 1948 the Vatican granted Mother Teresa permission to leave the Sisters of Loretto and pursue her calling under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Calcutta. Mother Teresa started with a school in the slums to teach the children of the poor. She also learned basic medicine and went into the homes of the sick to treat them.

Later some of her former students joined her. They found men, women, and children dying on the streets who were rejected by local hospitals. The group rented a room so they could care for helpless people otherwise condemned to die in the gutter.

In 1990 I had the blessing of working for a short time with Mother Teresa at her mission in Calcutta, and I was able to witness with my own eyes what can be accomplished by one person with the burning desire to love and serve. The Mission of Charities in Calcutta is a bright light, an oasis of salvation, love, and service in an otherwise very difficult city in India.

It was there that I deeply realized and experienced that “Love Lies in Service”, and what is more that those who are in need of love and aid can invoke in us a compassionate call to service.

I can remember one day working at the orphanage. When I first walked in the children rushed towards me with their arms outstretched wanting to be held and loved. My heart was melted. On another day, at the Mission’s Home for the Dying, I learned that charity includes sharing a smile, a touch, and the time to be present to another human being so that they do not have to die alone.

Working there with the Sisters of Charity, my heart was torn wide open, and it was there that I learned many lessons that “Love Lies in Service”. It was also there that I found these guiding words engraved on the wall at the Mission of Charities Home for Children. I would like to share these words with you as words of encouragement in your service.

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered;

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, People may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives;

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and, some true enemies;

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you;

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight;

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous;

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow;

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough;

Give the world the best you've got anyway.

You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God;

It was never between you and them anyway.

So in final analysis, it is between you and God – between us and God. It is up to each and everyone of us to deeply realize that God is in the presence of everything and everyone.

For it is all God, and when we offer ourselves in service to each other – we are serving God.

Hazrat Inayat Khan instructs us: Love Lies in Service

And Mother Teresa elaborates Murshid's words in this way, she says, "A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, must empty ourselves. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace.

May we continue to grow in our love and service towards one another and others, May we continue to grow in our capacity to offer charitable compassionate generosity in all its many manifestations, and in that way may each and every one of us find a true and everlasting peace.