

April 17, 2016  
The Fourth Sunday of Easter  
The Rev. Tom E. King

### ***Some Thoughts about the Spiritual Journey***

The spiritual journey often begins or takes a new direction as the result of a crisis. Upheaval, either developmental or sudden, is often an invitation to a deeper, more meaningful, and more authentic life – an invitation to be more deeply grounded and centered, to be more mindful and intentional about our relationship to God.

A spiritual upheaval or impasse is an invitation to become conscious, to accept deliberate responsibility for our lives, and to risk the largeness of life to which we are called: a summons to move from a provisional life to authentic adulthood.

Thomas Keating: “The spiritual journey is a gradual process of enlarging our emotional, mental, and physical relationship with the divine reality that is in us, but not ordinarily accessible to our emotions or rationalizations.”

God is present at all times, but often seems inaccessible because we look solely to our preconceived ideas and reject new images and questions that come to us.

Richard Niebuhr: “Pilgrims are persons in motion, passing through territories not their own, seeking completion or clarity.”

Richard Rohr: “Faith always invites us to a new place we are not quite familiar with.”

The spiritual journey helps us see what we need to add to our lives in order to become what we are meant to be, AND what we need to eliminate from our lives to become what we are meant to be.

The spiritual journey is more about following than leading; more about listening than giving orders.

On the spiritual journey we discover that we are not as much in charge of our lives as we have assumed. We discover that there is great wisdom in letting go of the illusion of control, and following where life leads us.

On the spiritual journey we learn that the human ego must surrender to something more powerful than itself. Discovering our deeper dimensions may be frightening at first, but the value of such discoveries is immeasurable.

The spiritual journey brings into clear perspective the close connection between knowing ourselves and knowing God. To know our souls, our deeper selves, is vital: this self-knowledge helps us identify those idols that distract us from God, as well as

those icons that serve as windows to the divine.

The spiritual journey is ever-growing, urging us to face risk and change. As our faith grows, some of our icons may become idols: if we cling to them they will get in the way of experiencing God in new and deeper ways.

The spiritual journey invites us to become attentive to the neglected aspects of ourselves, the neglected aspects of our personality.

The spiritual journey is a movement toward simplicity. As we embrace simplicity we discover generosity.

James Hollis: “The paradox is that only through relinquishing all that we have sought do we transcend the delusory guarantees of security and identity . . . Then, most strangely, surplus of existence floods our hearts.”

On the spiritual journey we discover the gap between what we think we believe and what we really believe: the discrepancy between what we claim to believe and what really orders our lives.

On the spiritual journey we discover that the purpose of life is not to maintain personal comfort – the purpose of life is to grow the soul.

Spiritual journey comes all mixed up with the regular things of daily life.

On the spiritual journey we discover that the ego cannot carry us all the way. Eventually we must encounter some sense of the larger, some sense of the greater identity that dwells within us and calls us forward.

The spiritual journey involves not letting our ego get in the way of what is emerging from the soul.

As we undergo spiritual transformation we discover how important it is to quit ignoring our own inner wisdom. Experiencing our own inner thoughts and feelings without judgment is part of developing spiritual maturity.

Dag Hammarskjöld: “The more faithfully you listen to the voice within, the better you will hear what is sounding outside.”

The farther we go on our quest, the more spiritual power is available to us, and the more we become available to be used by spiritual power.

On the spiritual journey, struggle and challenge bring us to a new plateau where we discover new struggle and new challenge, leading us to a new plateau where we discover new struggle and new challenge.

The spiritual journey is filled with surprises. Surprisingly, these surprises serve us well.

Much spiritual seeking is driven by the desire to manifest our unique individual gifts in the world. We all want to create and contribute in a way that gives satisfaction.

The spiritual journey helps us see that much of what we are seeking on the outside is actually residing within us.

On the spiritual journey we discover that something seeks us, something pulls us toward itself. We discover that the unseen world is real and influential. We discover that something remarkable, something divine, wants to reside in us.

The spiritual journey is never made alone. It is made in the communion of the saints and in the company of our community of faith.

*Material for this outline comes from a critical study of scripture, and from the writings of Ann Belford Ulanov, James Hollis, Robert Johnson, Parker Palmer, Gerald May, and others.*

*Unfortunately, the notes have been distilled and redacted too many times over too many years to give proper credit in most cases*