

String of Beads - June 26, 2016

Key passages

- 1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21 – Elijah is instructed to return to Damascus and anoint Elisha as his successor.
- Psalm 16 – “You will show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy ...”
- Galatians 5:1, 13-25 – Christ sets us free; we are not to misuse our freedom but are exhorted to “Love your neighbor as yourself” and to live and be guided by Spirit.
- Luke 9:51-62 – “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Jesus says he must focus on what we are doing here.

Summary

Allan is wearing a “mala” (Tibetan prayer beads), acquired when he heard the Dalai Lama speak (he is the spiritual head of Tibetan Buddhism). Allan drew lessons and inspiration from his warmth, compassion and playful sense of humor. He also found a video with the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu (retired Anglican Bishop of South Africa and activist opponent of apartheid) in which the two laughed, prayed, and conversed about the essential purpose of life in a world filled with anger and violence. [44:26 & 50:55 in [VIDEO](#)] In the readings and in the words of these deeply spiritual leaders, we find guidance in cultivating compassion for the world and a warm heart for all. In a world filled with tension and violence, we are given the freedom to do our part, to do the hard work of compassion, to do our part to cultivate the good. Even though it’s difficult work, we know we are not alone on this path, and we can still choose life and happiness in its truest sense. We can find rest and peace in God’s grace.

Dalai Lama: (means “compassionate guru”)

- important to focus on cultivating a sense of inner value in both our children & our communities
- the purpose of humanity is to teach and practice compassion
- life and the path of life are often found in joy
- we need to cultivate a certain heart for living in others and in ourselves
- we should not disconnect from the needs of this world and the darkness that exists

Passing the torch:

- 14 kids going to “church camp” at very low cost due to the generosity of our congregation
- Elijah was passing the torch to Elisha, passing on his prophetic love and wisdom
- we are passing the torch to our children, cultivating in them the conditions to foster a warm heart and compassion for the world

The Unfinished Work of Compassion

- 50 people died in Orlando this week; compassion is desperately needed in this darkness
- we've been given freedom to engage in the work of compassion (or not)
- though we take on the work of compassion, there are many contradictory emotions, many tensions, and sometimes we may not be successful
- "foxes have holes, birds have nests" – but Jesus says the work of compassion will not wait
- the work of compassion is not yet done, and we have more to do – but we may not see the completion of this work in our lifetimes

A 3mph God

- how do we go on when we are not successful in creating a compassionate world?
- Desmond Tutu said, sometimes we have to shake our fist at God and be angry
- the Dalai Lama said, we must learn to have a "Light Face" in the midst of the darkness, rest our weary heads on the pillow of self-compassion
- God is still with us, still walking alongside us at our slow pace, helping us brush ourselves off and make a fresh start

Don't forget the Grace

- Tibetan prayer beads are called a mala, meaning "string of beads"
- the mala has 108 beads; 100 beads are used to keep count of the many, many prayers
- the 8 beads are extra, just in case we get lost and need a little "grace" to get back on track
- the work of compassion is hard, but Jesus calls on us – and so we must begin again
- with God's grace and those 8 beads ...

Take-away

We are meant to teach and practice love and compassion, with God's grace.