

- I. Last Sunday we looked at how worship is not so much what we do here on Sunday mornings, but it's what we do in our everyday lives to make God happy.
  - A. That's not to say that leaning about God, increasing God's worth in **our** lives and taking time to speak with and especially listening to God, doesn't make God happy.
  - B. But more to the point, it is what we do on Sunday mornings that fits into -- doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God;  
that makes God happy and truly is worship. These are the things that bring harmony into the world and it is that harmony that makes God happy and fulfills God's creative aim.
- II. As I have mentioned on numerous occasions, love is not the feeling of attraction, or affection or lust;  
but rather, love is what we do that increases the value of another.  
Following from that, the best kind of love is the love that enhances the value of the other and yourself and your

relationship with one another.

The product of such a loving relationship is called “harmony.”

III. Harmony of course has a musical definition and I think the musical application may help us to better understand the application of “harmony” in social and spiritual terms.

A. So what is harmony in musical terms?

B. Harmony happens when two or more notes are played together and the relationship of those two or more notes create a pleasing additional musical reality.

C. So, when you have two notes that are harmonious, you can hear each note separately but you also hear something that is like a third note or a third musical presence.

So 1 note plus 1 note is not just 2 notes, it's 2 notes and harmony.

D. Even more than that, when the two notes are in harmony **each individual note gains a greater richness.**

IV. Now, just as in music you can have a combination of notes that are rough or displeasing, that is, not in harmony; there are forms of love that truly are loving, but that don't result in harmony.

- A. For the best of my attempts, I have a very difficult time trying to improvise a harmony when I'm singing.  
Some of you may have noticed this.
- B. For some people this comes very naturally, but for me despite my best intentions at singing harmony, more often than not it comes out sounding horrible.
- C. Well, for some people, despite their best attempts at love they end up creating a very unharmonious mess.
- D. These attempts are loving, because they think that what they are doing will somehow lead to the enhancement of one or more of **the engaged individuals**, and sometimes it does do that, but what their actions fail to do is **enhance the relationship**; they fail to create harmony and as such they miss what God was really encouraging them to aim at.

## E. Let's look at some examples.

1. The first example is the easiest to see, and that is when a person, or a community, or a corporation or a nation acts with interest only in enhancing one party in the relationship and that would be themselves; and that we would call selfishness, but the intent is to love -- the self.  
And love of self may occur, but most often at the detriment of the others and the relationships involved.
2. So that one's easy to see, but what about the mirror image of this, what about when the individual is willing to sacrifice them self in order to love the other? Ah – martyrdom.
  - a) Now this is not to be confused with the martyrdom of the saints or with the kind of sacrifice that was exemplified by Jesus.
  - b) The difference between the two kinds of martyrdom is this:
    - (1) The kind of sacrifice exemplified by Jesus did increase his value, the value of those to whom his gift was given and the relationship of those involved resulting in an increase of harmony.
    - (2) The martyrdom that does not bring harmony is the kind that brings no kind of enhancement to the sufferer

and thus cannot bring enhancement to the relationship and, more often than not, actually ends up hurting others involved by instilling guilt or pity or embarrassment.

c) I'm sure everyone has experienced someone that has used the martyr technique to express love; most of us have probably on occasion even used it ourselves.

3. Another form of the martyr is the one who pretends to be acting out of love in their martyrdom but who is really using it selfishly just as a tool to manipulate another person; something that may bring some enhancement to the martyr, but usually is destructive to all parties involved and the relationships.

V. If harmony is the goal then the best way to achieve it is not to focus on self love, or even loving the other person, but rather -- focus on the relationship.

A. Quite fortunately, there was a movie that came out this past year that exemplifies this perfectly.

The movie starring Matt Damon and Emily Blunt is called – “The Adjustment Bureau” So here's the spoiler alert, cause I'm going to tell you what happens.

1. So it's a story about a David Norris who is destined to become the President of the United States and Ellis Sellas who is destined to become and a great dancer.  
But one of the adjusters (who are like angles) working under orders from the Chairman of the Adjustment Bureau (who is like God) messes up. So because of his mess up David and Ellis fall in love and change the whole course of their intended, pre-ordained, destined, determined, futures.  
If they remain together then David won't become President and Ellis will end up a stay at home mom teaching little girls how to dance.
2. When David is made aware of this, like a good martyr, he sacrifices the relationship, not out of concern for what would happen to him, but because he doesn't want to deny Ellis the wonderful career that she is destined to have.
3. So, they return to their intended destinies, but having tasted true love, their lives now feel very unfulfilling.
4. Ah, but the Force runs strong in the veins of the young Jedi ---OOPs – sorry wrong movie.
5. Ah, but **love** runs strong in the veins of Norris and he returns to Ellis, when he realizes that while, true -- their destinies will be altered in the future;  
the loving relationship itself creates new possibilities.

So now, rather than seeing that their wonderful individual destinies were lost, he sees that the relationship itself creates new destinies that may even be more fulfilling than what had been pre-ordained.

When he focuses on the relationship, rather than on the individual interests, he finds that the result is the enhancement of both individuals and the relationship.

6. This, it turns out, is what the Chairman of the Bureau was really after.

The ultimate goal of the Chairman was not to limit freedom, but to protect humanity until they learned to focus on the relationships and bring harmony to the world.

- B. Well, I hope I didn't ruin the movie for anyone.

You know, it's a fun and insightful movie and I encourage you to see it; but, to be honest you can kinda figure out where its headed at the end anyway, so I don't think I gave away too much.

- C. In any case, it is a good illustration of how focusing on the relationship, rather than on the needs of the individuals, is the only way to bring enhancement to all parties and to the relationship.

It is the only way to achieve harmony; the

harmony that makes God happy and results in true worship.

- D. You've all heard the phrase, usually more expletive, that "dodo happens," well, from the sub-atomic levels of strings and particles to the workings of evolution and biology, to spousal relations, to the relations between nations; harmony happens and it's those engagements that create harmony that are the ones that have the most long lasting results, are fulfilling of Gods purpose, and are inherently worshipful.

VI. The practice of focusing on the relationship rather than on the engaged individuals is really quite different than what most people do.

- A. If you're just focusing on yourself or on the other person then engagements tend to take on a win/lose character. And that's because it is being viewed as somebody gets something and someone loses something.
- B. But if the focus is on the relationship then giving to the relationship has a return to each individual that is greater than what they gave.

Jesus said, "the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you." [Mark 4:24]

C. [EXAMPLE WITH STEPH]

If we each push our own position or sacrifice our position – no harmony results.

But if we focus on the relationship – we find harmony.

D. It is in the relationship that you will find love, which is to say, it is in the relationship that you will find God.

E. Focusing on the relationship is focusing on God and that my friends -- is worship.

VII. Hey, give it a try. You'll find that it is a very different experience.

A. With your spouse, or friend, the clerk at the store, a co-worker or boss; try it out and see how it changes everything.

B. With the guy who cuts you off in traffic and salutes you, think, "How can I improve this relationship."

C. And we won't even try to imagine what would happen if members of Congress tried this, why it might hurt our brains to imagine that miracle of miracles.

VIII. As Isaiah and later John the Baptist proclaimed,

A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

A. Which is to say, "In the midst of discord create harmony."

**"Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain."**

B. And what will happen then? "Then –and only then- the glory of the God shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together..."

IX. The Realm of God that Jesus proclaimed is a Realm of Harmony, but it is up to us to create it.

A. Isaiah didn't say, in the discordant wilderness, God will make the road straight and harmonious.

- B. He said, “In the discordant wilderness  
prepare the way of the Lord.”  
That’s our job.**
- C. God shows us how.**
  - 1. We had Jesus.
  - 2. We have the spirit guiding us now – if we listen.
- D. But it’s up to you and me to worship God  
and make beautiful harmony.**

**AMEN.**