

## Love one another as I have loved you

Rev Keith King

People are interesting!

There is a huge variety of shapes, sizes, colours – indeed one of the things I enjoy about people is the uniqueness of each individual. No two are exactly the same – although sometimes that is difficult to see in the case of identical twins I have to say!

And it does not just go for the outside – It is the same on the inside too.

Each individual is made up of a complex personality system that has evolved from their genetics, social programming, educational background and who knows what else.

Part of the journey of the soul is to come to terms to some degree with this internal sense of self – who I am; why I do what I do and think what I think; why do I respond to others or situations in the way I do; how and why do I perceive myself and the world in which I live.

This leads me to ask questions about who I am and who is my God; why am I here and why do I even exist at all. What is the purpose of it all?

These are some of the empirical questions of life.

In one of my lives I used to do a fair bit of pastoral counselling. I used to see people on a contractual basis to talk with them about the issues in their lives and about the journey of their soul.

In this role I heard stories that sometimes made my hair curl (I had hair then!) and on numerous occasions when I reflected on what I had heard, I thought to myself, ‘but by the grace of God there go I...’ It was all very sobering.

And on numerous occasions I found that issues I was working on in my own life were reflected and mirrored in the issues people brought to me.

This is a really interesting phenomenon which did not only apply to my clients but to people with whom I shared at some depth my spiritual journey.

I remember one person in particular who used to come and visit. At that stage we used to house 'at risk' youth in our home and a staff member from the justice department would come and talk with me about the charges we had in our care.

He too was on a journey of the soul but was following a very different external pathway from my Christian one.

We would laugh at the different language and images we used, but as we talked we soon came to the realisation that our deeper internal journeys were the same – we just used a different language to describe them.

We would often sit and talk, and talk, and talk... it would get dark and we would simply sit in the dusky light oblivious to the light of day fading around us. These were magical moments...

...but they were also profound moments as I came to realise that people who were quite different from me and were following entirely different religiously pathways, were essentially the same as me. We were asking the same questions; walking the same path and were part of the same divine movement and dance.

Around that time too I was reading books written by an Episcopalian priest, Morton Kelsey.

He spoke of the need to discover what he called the 'Inner Murderer'. This was the potential in each of us to do the most depraved and awful acts. And we need to remember that each of us is capable of doing abhorrent acts.

One only needs to look at some of the dreadful things that are done in times of war. Just a few weeks ago you may remember seeing on the news some American soldiers in a helicopter who were shooting at unarmed civilians as though they were objects in a computer game...

...history is full of examples of individuals and entire nations who abandon their ethical and moral sense of self.

I am only really safe when I KNOW what I am capable of and make a conscious decision to place boundaries to my life, my self and my interaction with others.

I am socially conditioned not to trust Germans or people of Asian origin. My parents constantly drummed into me that ‘the best German is a dead German’ and that ‘the Yellow Peril will rule the world’.

My national and religious history enslaved African people and kept people in their proper place – ‘the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate. God made them high and lowly, he ordered their estate’. These were the words of the hymn I sang as a child.

As a male I have a huge history that sees men as superior to women and children. And let us be realistic, social attitudes in this area still need to be challenged and changed.

There is an ‘inner murderer’ in us all and we cannot truly love until we know ourselves; until we face up to our bigotry, our sexism, our racism, our violence, our sexuality and we make conscious choices to change and grow.

Kelsey also says that although we have the capacity for depraved evil, we also have the capacity for Divine love.

And it is this Divine love which calls us and empowers us. This is what it is to be a people of the Resurrection.

Peter is a product of his history. He saw gentiles as inferior and unacceptable. He is confronted in a vision and he chooses to change. And through this single act of awareness the Love of God was able to spread beyond the confines of Judaism – ‘The holy spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning.’

The only way I can confront my true Self is through the knowledge that I am loved and accepted for who I am.

This is the Good News – the Gospel of the Risen Christ.

May we, each one, know that we are loved; may we confront our own ‘inner murderers’ our own demons; and may we rise to the heights of love, bringing Divine Love into our world and into every soul with whom we connect...

...for Christ himself says, ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.’