

The Gift of Glimmers

July 2, 2023 at First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

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Texts: Psalm 13: 1-6

Matthew 10: 40-42

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you

Oh God, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

During lockdown, I got into the daily practice of making iced lattes almost every morning. My eyes sprung open and the first thought was a one-word prayer of gratitude and then immediate excitement for my daily latte. I joked that some days that's what I had to look forward to. Looking back on that time it sounds pretty bleak. But despite all of that, I think there is something to attending to a simple need or a comforting occurrence- taking the time to make ourselves and others feel nourished, well, and at home in our experience of this life. This daily latte that I would often drink on facetime connected me with a practice I picked up long ago while I was living in Brighton with a couple of roommates, one of whom shared this deep curiosity I had about Jesus, how communities of faith are sites of social change, healing, and justice in the world. She lent me her worn copy of the book *all about love* by bell hooks when I had my heart broken, we turned over our fears of the uncertainties of being in our early 20's as she taught me how to fold and pinch the dough of her grandmother's dumplings recipe, we sat on our kitchen floor in the dark after we blew a fuse by running too many appliances at once in a heat wave talking about liberation and about moments we knew we were whole or thought we never would be. In the midst of all these simple points of connection, talking about where the divine peeked through the ordinary of our lives, we formed a practice together.

Every day one of us would get home first, put on the electric kettle, and offer the other a cup of tea. Tea was required for a full rundown of the day, the little frustrations and amusements of riding the T or taking on a second job as a coat check person at a local concert venue. It was such a simple gesture that it could almost be overlooked. But in the pouring of the water and the choosing of the tea there was an important act of care and attention, a spiritual practice of hospitality even in our own home. This practice of tea parties for two kept popping up in my formation for ministry, through friendships and mentors, and in my supervision with Karen Case when I first arrived here with all of you. This simple act of care, of putting gentleness and tenderness first in the midst of harsh realities opens up a way for us into hope for what the future holds for us all.

What can offering just a cup of water begin? With the news that has been flashing across our devices lately, from wildfires to malaria found domestically in the south, to the decisions being made by the supreme court, to an overarching sense that peace in our society feels very much out of our reach, it can be hard to feel festive as we walk through this holiday weekend at the beginning of the summer season. It certainly feels as if our problems today in our country and around the world require more than filling up a cup from the shelf with something as basic as water. These words from Jesus' commissioning of his disciples out into the world to carry out his ministry are describing the spiritual and physical practices of hospitality, of welcoming the other into our midst and saying yes to relationship with them.

This practice of welcome can often seem like too simple of a practice to change anything around us. It might feel like the problems that surround us are too big for individual actions to make a difference. But what seems like the smallest gesture, offering a cup of water, is also offering a traveler the very substance that keeps our bodies alive. This ordinary action and gift is what might make the difference between life and death of a disciple seeking the hospitality of a stranger as they follow their call to continue Jesus' ministry here on earth.

What are the ordinary actions and gifts that we offer or encounter every day that are making the difference between life and death for us and for our neighbor? Where are the places that we are able to find a moment of peace or beauty in our experience of this life? The word trigger has been so commonly used in our day to day language with one another and there sure are an abundance of them. One woman, Deb Dana, a licensed clinical social worker, writes about the opposite of triggers in her 2018 book *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*. She calls them Glimmers. Glimmers are “tiny, positive moments that bring you a mini spike of joy, like when you meet a cute dog in a park, step out into the sun, or take that first perfect sip of iced coffee....Glimmers are those small, easy-to-miss moments in your daily life that bring about a moment of peace or joy.”¹ What are these small, easy to miss, but fundamentally vital moments in our lives that are carrying us through these days? Is it hearing your kids laugh on the first day of summer vacation? Or hearing a new kind of bird song outside your window or talking out something with a trusted person that you’ve been holding in for too long? Maybe it’s when you can roll down the windows as you head to the grocery store and someone waves you through a difficult left hand turn in a busy intersection. Or maybe you felt a glimmer if you were one of about 50 folks including the overflow room from First Church who attended the action for the GBIO housing justice campaign last Monday night. Did your heart rise in your chest with a glimmer of peace and hope as one of the speakers declared something to the effect of “this is what I imagine heaven to look like- all different kinds of people coming together to advocate for their neighbor.”

These glimmers are spurred not by big, monumental events or by news of there being no problems in our lives, but are rooted in the small actions of ordinary individuals, highlighting our connections to local community and creation. Ultimately, glimmers are grounded in our own hospitality towards one another and our neighbors. They are spurred by what good we allow ourselves to see. Noticing these glimmers, welcoming them into

¹ <https://www.bustle.com/wellness/what-are-glimmers>

our lives and being people who are glimmers for others, creates a ripple effect. It has a collective impact on the world, drawing attention to joy found alongside despair and in doing so sustaining us for the journey ahead. The simple acts of regular people like you and me, seeing the value in what we can do through our hospitality, attention, and gratitude gives us an opportunity to live every day with intention and connection to the goodness in being human, to trust in God's unfailing love as the psalmist proclaims in Psalm 13. As a mercy on the road, these simple actions of hospitality and service bring us closer to a glimpse of the kin-dom of God already here among us now. Thanks be to God. Amen.

