

UU Society of Sacramento

Readings from the Service on November 13.

Facebook post by author Anne LaMott

October 30, 2016

There have been small roving bands of fretful freaked out liberals in my neighborhood all weekend, gathered in agonies of hopelessness. Their dogs, who really have to go, wait patiently at their feet. Then I lumber up, the most tightly-wired person some of us know, and they look at me hoping I will say the exact right thing.

When I am distressed, as I am now, I go to my groups of friends, sober people, church, Twitter, the dog park, hoping someone will say the exact right thing to pull me out of the pinball game in my mind.

The exact right thing would break the swirling trance of catastrophic thought, hit my heart's re-set button and remind me that Love and grace bat last. The pond inside me would settle, and I would see through the water that most of my reactive terror and held breath were the survival tools of childhood. (I know your family was just fine, but some of us, maybe three or four of us, grew up around miserable marriages, alcoholism, mental illness, abuse, etc, and as a result, turned out just a bit more tense and controlling than the average bear.). The tools did not work very well when I was 6, nor do they work well at 62, but I always fish them out first from the battered old tool box. Remembering this means I can now move on to what may help today--a worried mercy, vulnerability, wonder.

Here is the exact right thing I need to hear: The randomness and racism and brutality are just what is; but so are decency, sacrificial love, goodness. Sometimes the scary sickening voices seem louder than truth and beauty, but they aren't really. Democracy, the great good thing, one person one vote, is the loudest voice in the land.

Maybe God (or Goodness or Good Orderly Direction or Gift of Desperation) is in whom we move, live and have our being, but the world is also a chaotic place and humanity is a chaotic place, and I am a chaotic place some days, too. So I take the right action: I get my own emotional acre in order, through radical self-care, serving the poor, sharing my M&M's. Then the insight follows, the one I share with my Sunday school kids every single week, that, all evidence to the contrary, we are loved and chosen and safe. We stick together. We share. We listen.

Wendell Berry tweeted today, Love someone who doesn't deserve it. I am going to begin with my dog Bodhi, who accidentally ate a pound of butter AND the bagels. Then I will work my way up to James Comey, and myself.

It's good to be afraid, when it mobilizes us to fight tooth and nail for what is right, when it pricks the balloon of our complacency, when it gets us back on our feet. A lot of us are both afraid and devoutly faithful at the exact same time, fairly often, for ourselves, our kids, our elderly, our country, but what is true, and the exact right thing I need to hear today is that courage is fear that has said its prayers.