

# Centre Street Congregational Church, UCC

December 5, 2021

## *Fetters*

Rev. Susie Maxwell

*Let us pray . . .*

Susie:

Hey God, I need to talk to you. It's been almost 2,000 years since Paul wrote his love letter to the church in Phillipi, reassuring them of the "Day of Christ"—you know, when everything would be made whole? What are you waiting for? If there is going to be a "Day of Christ" shouldn't it arrive sooner rather than later? I mean look around, your Kingdom is a mess and your people divided and

broken. Don't even get me started on the horrors of unchecked suffering, not only to humanity but to mother earth herself.

So what, Advent comes around and we hit a fake pause button so that we can pretend something is coming that will turn everything around? I feel no peace. Christmas decorations and presents won't make me feel better. I feel fettered — chained — to my distress, my angst and my lack of a brighter vision. I can't wait for our annual "Blue Christmas Service"!

God:

Mmmmmmm. Your distress is understandable. There are some God-awful things in motion on earth. Lamenting is always a good idea — never run from your feelings for they'll help you find the answers.

Susie:

So if you know all this, then where is this “Day of Christ”? Why don’t you intervene and stop the madness?

God:

I intervene all the time. But I’m often drowned out by louder voices — voices that give way to the horrors and unchecked suffering you speak of.

Susie:

Since you’re God, surely you could step in and change everything. How can you watch so much suffering in the very things you created? Your silence is disturbing.

God:

Oh, I don't know that I'm that silent. You and others seemed to have found plenty to say on my behalf.

Susie:

Humph

God:

I remember you like to think of Christ as the spiritual bond between this earthly realm and the Divine. That's a good start, Susie, but you must remember that this earthly realm is also Divine, also sacred. There is no separation. That's the point of Christ.

Susie:

Well that's rich because all Christianity does is focus on separation. We're separated from you. We separate others if they don't believe

what we believe. Some even separate by claiming that Christianity is the only way. Gimme a break! You created the cosmos and all its diversity and then some are gonna tell the many how to believe? That doesn't even make sense.

God:

Well, I do tend to be misunderstood.

Susie:

So in this week of peace, how on earth am I supposed to help others feel peace when there is so much chaos and division? Heck, we can't even easily meet here in this church!

God:

Agreed. It's rough. I wonder if part of the difficulty is because my love story with each and all of you is kept fettered in archaic words

and located somewhere long ago in a language and a time that is mostly unrelatable. And yet, my Spirit cannot be bound.

Susie:

Hmmmmmm.

God:

Your denomination likes to claim that I'm Still Speaking but sometimes it's hard to get a word in edgewise. Look, I know you are not feeling my Spirit this season but you mustn't get discouraged. I mean you can be discouraged if you want but I wouldn't spend too much time feeling doom and gloom. What will that get you?

Susie:

Well, I'm mad at you God. You get us all set up for this hopeful time of year and we're often left confused and brokenhearted.

God:

Listen, to quote Lynne Anderson, “I beg your pardon but I never promised you a rose garden.”

And as I’ve heard you say before, “Being a believer ain’t for the faint of heart!”

Each and every one of you is how I get around. I need you to be my hands and feet and mouth and eyes and ears — but mostly? I need you to be my heart.

Maybe what you’re really fettered to is a fear of helping me break loose in the world. I know the Bible is considered “closed” and therefore not to be added to but does that even make sense? Our story — that is mine with yours — is actively being written with every breath. That’s in part why Advent. Advent helps you to remember the mystifying idea of my presence as something that has

been, still is, and has yet to be. Together, we're an unfolding work of hope, joy, love and yes, Susie, even peace.

Maybe think of "Day of Christ" as those moments when you realize that there is no separation. It's an always-has-been, is and will-be event, as long as any one of you chooses love. And lest you forget, love is a verb, an action word. So you can manifest Sacred unity whenever you act out of love.

So take heart.

And don't ever be afraid to crash into me with your despair and questions. I'm not much of a Creator if I can't handle any and everything you bring to me.

Susie:

You know I've never been shy about questioning you, God.

God:

No, Susie you haven't. It's one of your more spicy qualities.

However, I need to remind you to have a little faith in me. I know you struggle with that. This work is not easy but it is faithful.

That means you can count on me. I will always listen. I will always respond. It may not be in ways you hoped or imagined but that's because you can't see the complete picture. But I can.

I'm a creator made up of love and because of that, so is every other thing in creation. The point is love. No separation.

It's an ever-evolving, unfolding process of love. Have faith in the process. I know it's not easy at times but it is true.

As this week unfolds, may your and all restless hearts find some peace in my truth.