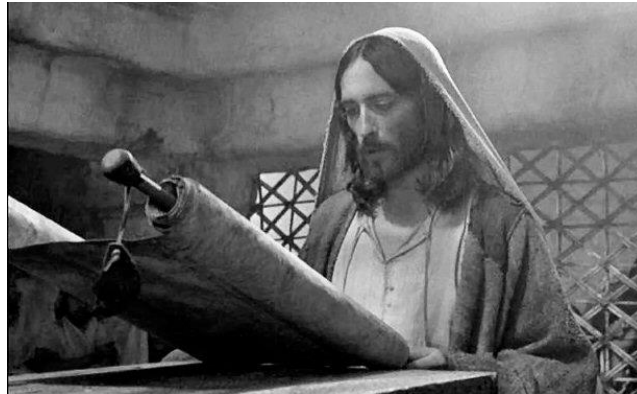


## WHERE IS THE MESSIAH NOW?



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 19**

<sup>1</sup>The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. <sup>2</sup>Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. <sup>3</sup>There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; <sup>4</sup>yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, <sup>5</sup>which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. <sup>6</sup>Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple; <sup>8</sup>the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes; <sup>9</sup>the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. <sup>10</sup>More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup>Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. <sup>12</sup>But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. <sup>13</sup>Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup>Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

### **Luke 4:14-21**

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

<sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, <sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

**Holy Wisdom, Holy Word. Thanks be to God!**



## FAITH IN A PERSONAL GOD

Novelist Franz Kafka once said, “*Man cannot live without a permanent trust in something indestructible in himself, though both the indestructible element and the trust may remain permanently hidden from him. One of the ways in which this hiddenness can express itself is through faith in a personal god.*”

What if you were the Messiah? How differently would you act today if the indestructible element in you was no longer hidden, and you realized your faith in God gave you amazing power? How would you feel about yourself? Would you love and respect yourself more than you do now? What if Jesus was talking about each one of us when he said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

If we believe we carry the divine within us, and the love of God dwells in our souls, then can we be the Messiah in different forms?

## THE ART OF POSSIBILITY

The Presbytery Leadership Cohort that meets here with me once a month is reading the book *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*.

The authors are a married couple. One is the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic orchestra and the other is a psychotherapist. In the book they encourage leaders to open wide the universe of possibilities.

**They say we should think outside the box, be creative and unlimited in our thoughts and feelings about our future and life can flow much more productively from there.**

**They recommend rather than striving for goals in life, one should provide a foundational context of love, happiness, wholeness, openness, and authenticity, and they predict the doors of opportunity will swing wide open.**

They encourage things like thinking of yourself and others as an “A” which is connected to the ability to live fully and positively while viewing mistakes as fantastic opportunities for learning and growth. Thinking of others as an A means to think

of those around you as worthy and doing the best they can with the resources they have.

When your world and those around you are reframed in a positive way, it changes and becomes a world where others want to join you in it.

## THE MONKS AND THE RABBI

The authors of the book *The Art of Possibility* tell this story about some monks who learned a positive lesson from a rabbi.

A monastery had fallen on hard times. It was once part of a great order which, as a result of religious persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lost all its branches. It was decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left: the abbot and four others, all of whom were over seventy. Clearly it was a dying order.

Deep in the woods surrounding the monastery was a little hut that the rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. One day, it occurred to the abbot to visit the hermitage to see if the rabbi could offer any advice that might save the monastery. The rabbi welcomed the abbot and commiserated. “I know how hard it is,” he said. “The spirit has gone out of people. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore.” So the old rabbi and the abbot wept together and read parts of the Torah and spoke quietly of deep things.

The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced. “It has been wonderful being with you,” said the abbot, “but I have failed in my purpose for coming. Have you no piece of advice that might save the monastery?” “No. I am sorry,” the rabbi responded. “I have no advice to give. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you.”

When the other monks heard the rabbi’s words, they wondered what possible significance they might have. “The Messiah is one of us? One of us, here, at the monastery? Do you suppose he meant the abbot? Of course, it must be the abbot, who has been our leader for so long. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas, who is such a holy man. Or could he have meant Brother Elrod, who is so crotchety? But then Elrod is so very wise. Surely, he could not have meant Brother Phillip, he’s so passive. But then, magically, he’s always there when you need him. Of course he didn’t mean me; yet supposing he did?”

He said to himself, “Oh, Lord, not me! I couldn’t mean that much to you, could I?”

As they contemplated in this matter, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect, on the off chance that one of them might be the Messiah. And on the off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest where the monastery was situated was beautiful, people occasionally came to visit, to picnic or to wander along the old paths, most of which lead to the dilapidated chapel. These visitors sensed the aura, permeating the atmosphere. The visitors began to come more frequently, bringing friends, and their friends brought friends. Some of the younger men who came to the forest began to engage in conversation with the monks. After a while, one asked of he could join, then another and another. Within a few years, the monastery became once again a thriving order, and, thanks to the rabbi’s gift, the vibrant, authentic community of light and love for each other and others had blossomed.

### **ONE WITH THE MESSIAH**

Jesus is saying in this passage for today that he is the Messiah. What if each of us was ONE with the Messiah? How would you operate your life differently if you had the healing power, the ability to free the oppressed, if you could help the blind see, the poor be released from the imprisonment of poverty, and declare the Lord’s favor which is forgiveness of debts.

Besides trying your best to see others through the eyes of Jesus, you can tap into your inner Messiah by increasing your ability to forgive. The type of forgiveness Christ gives us is not easy to give to others until you embrace your own forgiveness. Only then are you able to participate in the Messiah’s type of forgiveness for others. Have you forgiven those who have harmed or neglected you? Have you forgiven yourself?

Look behind those who have treated you destructively and recognize that he or she is just as much a product of that treatment as you are.

### **MENDING THE HEART**

Ann McClure gave me a powerful little book titled *Mending the Heart*, by John Claypool.

**He says, “The truth is that those who have wounded us are most often those who have been wounded themselves. The stream of human brokenness goes so far back that no final condemnation of any single individual is possible.”**

Then he shares about the difficult relationship he had with his own mother. He realized the wounds she inflicted on him had at least in part grown from wounds inflicted on her. With that perception he says, “A log jam of hostility broke free in me that day and I could perceive my mother differently, against the background of her own history.”

Claypool tells a story to demonstrate how to see a person for the “being” they are rather than the “doing” or just their behavior.

While he was the pastor of a church in Tennessee, a teenage member of his parish went on a destructive robbery spree with two friends. They were caught and the judge asked three people who were robbed to testify at their trial. One of the victims was superficial and just said, “Boys will be boys; it’s not the end of the world; let’s forget the whole thing.”

Another victim said, “These are young criminals that should have the book thrown at them! They need to be a taught a lesson!” The third was a retired school teacher who lost the most in the robberies. She had taught the teens in school years earlier. The teacher looked at the teenager who was a member of Claypool’s church and said, “Billy I am really hurt by what you did and I want you to realize how wrong it was to abuse and steal other people’s property. I am really disappointed in you, but I am also convinced there is a finer, stronger Billy inside you.”

Then she turned to the judge and said, “Judge, I wish you would find him guilty, but then give him a suspended sentence and parole him to me. Let me see if I can’t help him be in touch with the better stuff that I know is buried somewhere within him.” And as Pastor Claypool followed the life of this boy, this moment was the redemptive turning point in his life and he believed it saved the boy’s life.

This is how we are to live our days. When you look into the eyes of others you are to see the eyes of Jesus. You are also to look at them and their

situations in life with the compassionate forgiving eyes of Jesus. Everyone and everything is to be viewed in this way.

### **THE MESSIAH WITHIN**

On this topic there is a book entitled *The Messiah Within: A Guide to Embracing Your Inner Divinity*, written by Robin Clare, a Jewish woman who explains that Jesus became her spiritual guide despite being raised Jewish. She writes that “We are in a time where humankind is being enabled to find God within. We no longer need to keep looking for the Messiah from an external source because the Messiah resides within each one of us as we become more aware of a Oneness with the Divine.” If all of us could find the Messiah within she says there would be no conflict in the world because we would know we are all one. This revelation would bring about lasting peace.

This idea of the Messiah within doesn't mean we don't revere Jesus and see him as sacred. But we also embrace the teachings in the Bible that remind us that Christ dwells within us in faith. Ephesians 3:17 has a blessing from Paul that says, “*That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith.*” and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3: 5 states, “Do you not realize about yourselves that Christ is in you?”

And Parish nurses often quote 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:19. “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.”

Do you believe that God's plan is to draw everything and everyone he has made into his love and into his life through his grace? If so, then we have nothing to fear.

We must trust that we are more powerful than we can imagine and can overcome fear and shame and doubt and even death. God tells us often in the Bible, yet we are so slow to truly believe the Divine within.

Marianne Williamson says, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. ....We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not

just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” (Marianne Williamson, “*A Course in Miracles*”)

### **TRUST IN GOD**

You are on a journey in eternity that is still in the beginning stages. There will be no end to you, only transformation. You are to trust in God and let God's love flow through you and out to others so they, too, can be peaceful and not afraid in this life and in the life to come.

When we are no longer afraid and in touch with the Messiah within, then we forgive, we do justice, love kindness and walk humbly so that others feel God's love. May this awareness that the Messiah is here and now be fulfilled today in your hearing. And may you see yourself as the Messiah would want you to be, and respect others as they may also be the Messiah in disguise. Amen

**Benediction: Ponder these words from Marianne Williamson,  
“Love is what we are born with. Fear is what we learn.**

**The spiritual journey is the unlearning of fear and prejudices and the acceptance of love back into our hearts.**

**Love is the essential reality and our purpose on earth.**

**To be consciously aware of it, to experience love in ourselves and others, is the meaning of life.**

**Meaning does not lie in things. Meaning lies in us.”**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



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