

“The Road Back to You: The Mystical, Magical, Marriage Within!”

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Rev. Dr. R. Scott Colglazier
Senior Minister
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First Congregational Church
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It's so good to be with you this morning and to share together in this service. Last weekend I had a chance to see my new grandson – Charlie Colglazier! He is doing well, and perhaps, the most beautiful baby born so far in the 21st century!

His big sister, Caroline, who is now six years old is trying to adjust, or as she said to me in the car last Saturday, “You know, Charlie has ruined everything!” I tried to talk to her about how change is good and exciting and a part of life . . . but even though I was selling it . . . she wasn't buying it! So say a little prayer for big sister . . .

I want to begin by stating the obvious, and it's that the more we understand ourselves, the more we understand God; and the more we understand God, the more we are moved to understand ourselves. That's really what this summer sermon series is about. And I want to take it a few steps further this morning by talking about one of the most important dimensions to the spiritual life, namely, learning to open up the mystical marriage of opposites.

I know that some of you are familiar with the work of the psychologist Carl Jung. Jung was a therapist who lived in Zurich, Switzerland, and he was a contemporary of Sigmund Freud. I'm much more of a fan of Jung rather than Freud, because Jung's work taps into the spirituality of our human experience, and frankly, I don't think you can really have much psychological growth, without also having some spiritual growth. (This of course makes me Jung at Heart!)

But one of the things that Jung focused on is what might be called the marriage of opposites or the royal marriage or the mystical marriage that needs to take place inside each person. The idea is this: Within every human being there are certain characteristics, and we all favor one characteristic more than another, and we all undervalue other characteristics. Often these characteristics might seem to be completely opposite of one another, and in some cases they create tension within us.

Let me give you some examples . . . we know that some people tend to be extroverts, while others are much more introverted. These are basic characteristics. It's not that one is good or one is bad. It's not that one is better than the other. Most of us tend to favor one or the other. Even though I am a public person and I'm a public speaker and I meet people all the time, fundamentally I am an introvert.

Some people walk into a room, and it doesn't matter what the occasion, they are bigger than life! They can tell jokes and stories, and everyone they meet is their new best friend. I prefer to come into a room through the side door. Unless of course I'm supposed to be the center of attention, and then shamelessly, I must say I admit that I love coming in the front door!

But if I am not supposed to be the center of attention, I become a complete and utter introvert. I usually find one person I can talk to for a long time at a party. And then I look at my watch and

wonder when I can go home and read a book. Extroverts leave a party and they are fired up and ready to go! I leave a party and I'm exhausted and need to take a nap. These are opposites.

What Jung argued is that it's okay to be who you are, and in fact we must be who we are, but to become a whole person, a healthier and more balanced person, we have to find a way to marry these opposites in a creative way.

Jung also put a great deal of emphasis on the opposites of masculine and feminine energies. This is important, because Jung argued that every man has feminine energy inside him and every woman has masculine energy inside her. Now, it's certainly harder and harder to talk about these things, because the roles and traits for women and men are changing so much in our society.

But Jung wasn't talking about gender roles, as much as he was talking about tapping into masculine and / or feminine energy. Jung called it the anima (female) and the animus (male). Every human being has an anima and every human being has an animus; these are the opposites that are baked into our human experience.

So the energy of loving, sweet, tender, motherly nurture is feminine energy. That's anima. Now, can men nurture? Of course they can! But for a man to nurture, he must tap into his feminine energy, and thus create a union of masculine psychology and feminine psychology; this lends itself to a remarkable orientation of wholeness.

And in the case of a woman, for example, and I know this is true because we have several women in our congregation who are working on their doctorates, and let me tell you, you don't complete your doctoral work on sweet, loving, tender energy. Women have to tap into another side of their energy.

You don't complete your doctorate degree without finding your inner Wonder Woman! It's essential. Sometimes a woman needs to live out of her feminine energy and sometimes a woman needs to get in touch with her masculine energy. And the same for a man.

A man might build and accomplish and succeed with a certain kind of masculine energy, but if a man is going to have any chance at succeeding with a relationship, he better be in touch with his creative / flowing / juicy feminine energy. Again, it's not that one is better than the other. What we're looking for is a mystical marriage that brings together life's opposites in a creative way.

Let me give you one more example . . . it used to be that the measure of intelligence was done with an IQ test. The higher the IQ score, so we thought, the greater the intelligence. But now psychologists understand that there is another kind of intelligence. It's what is called EQ or Emotional Intelligence. (In fact there are many kinds of emotional intelligence.)

It takes one kind of intelligence to build a satellite at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory at Cal Tech. It takes another kind of intelligence to write a play or compose an opera or direct a movie at Cal Arts, only a few miles away.

Intellectual intelligence is about knowing a bunch a stuff, and I have to tell you, I'm nuts for people who know a bunch of stuff! But I also love to be with people who have a deeply curated emotional

life, and to be with those people is to taste the honey of inner feeling and experience. These may seem like opposites, but the opportunity is to be who we are, while finding ways to marry within our personal experience these opposites.

Now think about this as it applies to realm of religion . . . I know some people for whom religion is a pure emotional experience. They might belong to a Pentecostal church, and the services are wild and emotional and ecstatic. On the other hand, some of us, and yes, I said US, some of us are part of God's chosen frozen, and we would freak-out in a service that was wild and emotional and ecstatic.

We want our religion to make sense. We want to be cerebral and appeal to our rational side. But here's what I would love to see happen . . . if I could do a little acupuncture on American Christianity . . . I would like for some parts of the Christian faith to lean a little more toward the intelligible / intelligent / cerebral side.

And there are other parts of the Christian community . . . including here at First Church . . . where it wouldn't hurt us to lean a little more toward our personal / emotional / feeling side with God. These are opposites. But as Parker Palmer likes to point out, opposites are not trying to tear us apart; they are trying to open us up to something even better.

Now, why is any of this important? Well, it's first of all important to our personal lives. The greater our capacity to marry opposites, the more whole we become as human beings. But there's another reason, and it's pressing upon this morning. When we fail to make room for opposites inside our psychology, we then project negativity and judgment and evil upon others.

If I only think extroverts are good people, then I denigrate introverts. If I only think masculine is good, I then demonize the feminine. If I only think one kind of religion is acceptable, I then deem unacceptable everyone else in the name of God. In other words, what we cannot marry within, we divorce without. And by marry I mean we hold in tension the truth of opposites.

Look what happened yesterday in Charlottesville, Virginia. White Supremacists. Neo-Nazis. KKK members. They all gathered yesterday in Charlottesville. They gathered to display their message of hate and exclusion and demonization of other human beings. And by the way, was anyone really surprised?

When the national dialogue in America becomes one of hate and bullying and denigration of the other, then anything is possible. Where is the moral leadership? Where is the moral citizenship of respect and compassion for the other? Speech should be free in our country. I agree with that. But the hateful inciting of violence should not be free!

Three people were killed yesterday. Many were injured. What a waste of the human spirit. I think yesterday was a watershed moment for our country, because unless the national dialogue changes, it is only going to get worse. We're on the front edges of this and this last year has only thrown gasoline on the fire!

People in the KKK demonize what they cannot marry within their own consciousness. Neo-Nazis demonize people, not because they are confident and courageous, but because they are afraid of

anyone different from them. We demonize the immigrant, because we cannot embrace the orphan / outsider / marginalized part of our own souls. And we demonize the person who views the world differently from us, not because we're so right, but because we're so insecure. That's why moving toward a practice that makes room for the mystical marriage of opposites is so important for us.

This parable of the ten bridesmaids is an interesting parable of Jesus, because the idea is that they are waiting for their grooms to appear, and some keep their lamps burning, but unfortunately they run out of oil, and thus light, while others conserve their oil, and when the grooms appear, there is still light to celebrate the marriage.

The point is that we always need to be ready for when God draws near to us. But I want to stretch that out this morning and suggest that this parable is really a parable about all of us getting ready for a sacred marriage . . . the marriage of opposites that is presented to us every single day. Instead of running from it. Instead of ignoring it. Instead of just leading with the same old trump card again and again and again, we need to open ourselves up to a deeper understanding.

When that happens, however small or insignificant, it is a royal wedding, and I think the only thing that will save our soul, and save our nation, is that we find the courage to create the conjunction of opposites.

And so, friends, I urge you, even as I urge myself, to move through life with greater and greater awareness. We're not going to have any social transformation, unless we're willing to risk a little spiritual transformation. I love you all. Let's love one another. And before we diminish someone else, let's try to understand that part of us that has been diminished. That's always the beginning we need.

Amen!