



Community of Christ

Daily Bread

Monday, 18 June 2018 – Vickie MacArthur of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Listening....Another Word For Love (Part 1)

The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. —Numbers
6:24–26

A dear elderly sister in my church congregation passed away recently. Lillian was 87 years young, and although fragile physically, still had spunk and a spark of life felt keenly when one was in her presence. She had beautiful eyes that sparkled when she smiled. She had style. Her family said, “She had an unnatural love affair with tams, the kind you wear on your head.”

Asked by her family to preside at her celebration of life service, I met with Lillian’s two daughters a few days before the service. We talked about their mother and how best to both mourn her passing and celebrate her life. There was space for both tears and laughter in our conversation.

I had met Michelle and Lavonne before but did not know them well. They spoke of the minister who had preached a “fire-and-brimstone” sermon at their father’s funeral. He seemed to have no compassion for the family, bent only on using this forum to guilt people into believing. As such, they wanted to keep Lillian’s service “short and sweet.” No sermonizing!

That was a relief. Yet how, I wondered, do I talk about Lillian’s life in a way that will bring healing and closure to a spectrum of family and friends, from the “religious” to the “spiritual” to the “not sure what I believe”? Is there a thread that will connect them all? Could it be love?

What I remember most about Lillian was how well she listened, and how you really felt she was genuinely interested in your life and what you had to say. Whether I was talking about one of my own sons, or about myself, she always gave me her full attention with those beautiful sparkling eyes.

Somehow I imagine that's what it would feel like to be listened to by Christ. I truly believe that Christ lived and breathed through Lillian's ability to simply listen with her heart. As her obituary said, "Lillian had a way of listening to you and making you feel like you were the most important person in the world." If she could make me feel like that, how much more her children and grandchildren must have felt that pure love.

Mark Nepo says, "To listen is to lean in softly, with the intention of being changed by what you hear" (*The Exquisite Risk: Daring to Live an Authentic Life*, Harmony, 2007). I believe Lillian leaned in softly, was changed by what she heard, and also changed other people's lives just by listening.

Prayer Phrase

Wherever I am, God is here.

Spiritual Practice

Breathe deeply and prayerfully consider the story you have just read. What is the Spirit's invitation to you in these words? What does it look like to wake up to God's presence in this moment?

Today's Prayer for Peace

Engage in a daily practice of praying for peace in our world. [Click here](#) to read today's prayer and be part of this practice of peace.

Tuesday, 19 June 2018 – Vickie MacArthur of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Listening....Another word For Love (Part 2)

Collectively and individually, you are loved with an everlasting love that delights in each faithful step taken. God yearns to draw you close so that wounds may be healed, emptiness filled, and hope strengthened. Do not turn away in pride, fear, or guilt from the One who seeks only the best for you and your loved ones. Come before your Eternal Creator with open minds and hearts and discover the blessings of the gospel anew. Be vulnerable to divine grace —Doctrine and Covenants 163:10a, b

Lillian was always interested in travel, so I took my laptop to show her pictures I had taken in France. Most people get a bit bored with other people's travel pictures, but

not Lillian. She leaned in with interest, asking questions about almost every single photo.

After showing her photos of cathedrals like Notre Dame, Chartres, and Sacre Coeur with their stunning architecture and glistening, stained-glass windows, Lillian stopped me. She said, "I want to know what it felt like to sit in those cathedrals."

That was so Lillian! Although widely read, and with an inquiring mind, she wasn't satisfied with just thoughts or beliefs or talk about God or spirituality. She wanted to go deeper, to feel God's presence, to know Spirit's touch, to share Love incarnate. She didn't want to see the finger pointing to the moon; she wanted the moon!

I wasn't sure what to say in answer to Lillian's question about sitting in the cathedrals. How does one convey the feeling of a spiritual experience? And is it really spiritual or just the way we are all wired to experience life when we really listen and pay attention? When I sat in those cathedrals, I felt utter silence and stillness. At the same time I was also in touch with the hopes and prayers and dreams of all the people who sat in those cathedrals over the years, pouring out their hearts to God.

Somehow "grace beyond words" intervened among Lillian, Doug (my husband), and me. The space among us dissolved into a shared space of love where she could feel a small piece of the stillness we felt in those cathedrals. I believe it was Lillian's love and capacity to listen that bridged the gap.

I wonder what would happen if we all, like Lillian, began to listen to every single person as if they were our own child, our own grandchild; as if they were the most important person in the world. Christ, or Spirit, or Love is listening through us, listening people into their own healing, their own wisdom, their own life. Perhaps "listening" is another word for "love."

Prayer Phrase

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