

Taking A Leap of Faith

Sermon by Rev. Montclair

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In order to take a Leap of faith we must have faith in something. Something that will meet us halfway – if we just do our part: If we decide to be all-in on whatever direction we choose, or let our hearts choose.

Decades ago, I attended a workshop on human potential in the Texas desert. As part of this workshop, we were going skydiving – in tandem, meaning we didn't have to learn much other than keeping our mouths shut during the freefall, because we were each to be strapped to a skydiving instructor. The instructor would make sure the parachute released at the right time. We just had to trust.

As I recall, we were flown, individually with our instructor in a small high wing Cessna 182 with no door, to an elevation of 10,000 feet. Yes, I said no door. This fact did not scare me, I had many times flown in a small plane, both of my parents were licensed pilots of a Cessna. I had never been in one without a door, but no matter. I had never jumped out of one either. I was determined. I had made the decision to do this. I was all-in.

I was hooked to my instructor where not a piece of paper could slip between us, and a meter was strapped to my chest. I was in front, he behind me. We wore helmets and a white zip up suit. We looked like astronauts.

The plan was after freefalling for 2000 feet we were to release the parachute at 8000 feet. I could give the signal if I was paying attention to the meter. If.

Just before jumping my instructor asked me, over the roar of the engine, if I wanted to do a back flip or just jump out laterally. The latter would prolong our feeling of freefall, the first shorten it. Either way when we jumped, we were to wave at the plane as it flew away. I chose a back flip. I was only going to do this once and it sounded like fun.

We gingerly reached through the open door of the plane flying at 10,000 feet, placed our hands on the wing support and our feet on the small sandpaper covered step. "1,2,3 – Jump!" We did the back flip and when we came right side up again I had the presence of mind to wave, as requested, to the perfectly good

airplane I now saw flying away from us. And I thought, “What the HELL did I just do!” And then, recognizing this irrevocable action I had just taken, my next thought was, “Well, if I am going to die, I may as well enjoy the view.”

How many times do we begin to take a leap of faith only to allow our fears to change our minds mid-leap?

How many times do we intend to take a leap of faith only to stop dead in our tracks and refuse to go any further potentially hurting ourselves and others?

And how many times have we been lucky or wise enough to have one with more knowledge and experience at our side to guide us when we leap? One to make sure we land on our feet running rather than landing on our faces, maybe not dead, but perhaps wishing we were?

Yes, my instructor told me to hit the ground running. If we didn't we may fall and get hurt.

As we prepare to, or contemplate, taking a leap of faith into 2024 – a not entirely post pandemic world, a world more at war it seems than at peace, a world unpredictably changing and transforming in physical and social forms...we have significant choices before us:

- 1) are we all in, no looking back except to wave goodbye?
- 2) are we determined to enjoy the view?
- 3) do we have someone we trust that has our back?
- 4) will we commit to hit the ground running?
- 5) will we do our best, and not self-sabotage, choosing to move forward through our fears?

I am not saying this leap of faith thing is easy. Or comfortable. Far from it.

After my instructor released the parachute, the immediate deacceleration felt as though we were thrust upwards in the sky. What followed was a nauseating limbo of hot Texas air currents wafting us up and down and sideways and up and down...I felt motion sickness coming on...and we were not yet close to the ground.

Have you ever leapt into something propelled forward by adrenalin or enthusiasm without a moment to think about what you are doing or what you have done until a moment of calm – and then reflecting on it is - unsettling? It is often in these moments that we bail. Call it quits. Get cold feet. Run in the opposite direction – back into our comfort zone. Away from growth. Away from the new. Anywhere but the new – even if the old was painful – at least it was familiar. To achieve this we may get nauseous, pass out, run away, create a disturbance to justify fleeing, get angry, make accusations, play the victim, give up, dive into addictive behavior, or get really, really ill or some other self-harm preventing us from growth, from intimacy from facing our fears. How do you deal with your avoidance? Do you give in to it? Or challenge it? And exactly when where and how does it rise up?

I guess in that moment of motion sickness I challenged it. I was not going to get sick while falling from the sky – if I could help it. And somehow, I did manage to keep it together. The last thing I wanted to do to the man that saved my life – he pulled the cord to the parachute after all – was to get sick all over him. In retrospect maybe opting for exiting the airplane in a back flip was not the best choice for this woman who has always had a tendency for motion sickness. But there was no undoing it. No wishing it away.

Instead of the mixed up feeling in my belly I focused on the horizon - which was steady. We eventually landed on our feet amidst a cheering crowd and we both began to run! How this was even possible as we were still strapped together, I do not recall. I only recall this: We jumped out of an airplane at 10,000 feet. My instructor released the parachute at 8,000, feet and we landed on our feet and did not fall, because we hit the ground running.

As it turns out focusing on where you intend to go, rather than where you find yourself in the process of getting there, is key to successful leaps of faith.

In this new year, are we going to bravely put our best foot forward to live our best life - with a mind and a heart full of faith that The Divine Essence, God, Goddess, The Universe, The Great Spirit, the Angels, our Ancestors, our Higher Self will be there to support us? Or will we just fearfully dip in a toe testing the waters – let cynicism take us over and convince ourselves again that we are not enough? That the time is not right? That our moment of opportunity has passed? Are we going to let go of the old baggage/damage/limiting beliefs – or will we bring all THAT

with us – while still expecting, hoping for something better? And if so, why? Really – why? Why would we do that to ourselves? To others? To the world that right now needs all of us to stand up and be our best? I, unfortunately know why because I have done the avoidance thing in my life – ad nauseum. Because real change – AKA growth – is scary! It takes work, consistent effort, commitment, and a willingness to let go of that which is comfortable – AKA familiar. Sure, we may complain complain complain about our present circumstances pretending to be a victim – the ultimate comfort zone – but the truth of the matter is we are choosing it so we don't have to change, grow, be our best. The unacknowledged fear is: what if our best isn't really that great? I say who cares. There is nothing worse than mediocre effort and lack of clear intention. It is far easier to blame others and circumstances than it is to brave truth and take responsibility for our lives in any context.

Sometimes the truths we deny are the inherent gifts we embody. The power we do have. The knowledge and the wisdom we do have. The unacknowledged fact that we do have value, that we do matter. That the world needs our voice and presence at the table of co-creation. Our lives and our experiences have significance. We are not who we were told we are – we are so much more. It takes effort to hide our light. No wonder we are tired. It takes effort to obsessively focus on that which matters not – at the cost of that which does. And that's the point isn't it? Because then we don't have to transmute our very identity from our current setting whether that is “better than” or “less than” others. “More fortunate” or “less fortunate” than others. “More able” or “less able” than others...from “confused” ...to embrace a new setting: present, open, alive, clear – as in our best selves offering the best we have to offer in the present moment in time with an open heart. That's living. That's how we see the world with new eyes. When we look for the love and appreciate. When we see ourselves and our world through the heart with full acceptance, without nurturing an “argument with reality” as Byron Katie so aptly put, then we can begin to see the world through the eyes of spirit where nothing is broken, all is evolving, transforming and transmuting. Pain turns to peace. That which is hidden is revealed. And that which is perceived as less than can - with a shift in perception paired with action - turn into more than we could ever have imagined – in a good way.

Sometimes all it takes to completely shift the trajectory of our lives – thus all lives we touch - is 30 seconds of courage. That's it. Thirty seconds. We all have 30 seconds of courage left in us right here – right now – I am certain of it. By simply taking that first step forward with the faith that The Divine Essence that inspired you – will meet you halfway. Even if we all are halfway to Hell in a handbasket – it is still worth taking that step to do our part now. That step we thought we couldn't take. That leap of faith into the unknown and unknowable. It is so much easier to be certain even of our own demise – isn't it? Because if all is hopeless – why try? That's fear talking. That's avoidance. That's not us being our best.

By tuning into our hearts and getting out of our heads – our fears – whatever size leap we choose into this new year, we will be met halfway, and the payoff is not just success but self-respect. Let's welcome the new year by deepening our connection to our hearts, our bodies, our planet, our community and our very souls and while we are at it let's be determined to enjoy the view. Happy new year folks – you've earned it.