

CRIBB<S>NOTE – January 10, 2009

This morning we welcome back to the pulpit our brother, the Reverend Gene Boutilier. It is always our delight to have Gene serve our congregation. He brings such joy and laughter as he delivers a Word from God to inspire our hearts and excite our souls. We welcome his encouragement and challenge to commit our lives to Christ's mission. As a long time member of San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, it is an especially good to share Gene's vision for a more just society and more peaceful world. We are grateful for his presence. Together, let us pray for Divine guidance to lead Gene's message, and for our hearts, minds, and ears to be opened to receive this man of God. Thank you, Gene, for coming and boldly sharing your gifts of music and Word with our congregation.

My daily mantra is, "No matter what happens today, I am going to practice gratitude and joy because God is the Source of my life." Those 21 words have changed the way I live and they have directly affected my attitude.

Nearly 12 years ago, that sentence entered my mind while I was waiting in my car for a street light to change from red to green. There was sufficient time for me to experience a 'meditative moment' in rush hour traffic. That prayerful phrase formed quietly and has become a ritual for daily living. Since then I have shared it with others. Some people have copied it and use it as their prayer. It has made a very positive difference in my life.

There is almost nothing we can control. Even when we feel highly confident and competent about events in which we participate, the truth remains that most things are beyond our control. The very air we breathe to survive cannot be adjusted by us. Of course, we can strive to have policies enacted to force industry leaders to actively engage in practices that will improve the quality of air; but, ultimately, air is an element that is governed by natural laws.

The behavior of other people is beyond our control. While we might wish for consistently good conduct to be exercised by others around us, the fact is people determine their own actions regardless of our desires. Occasionally, we may be fortunate to encounter people who have a highly evolved sense of humanity and strive to live compatibly with the rest of us. But, we really can't control what other people do.

Even our health is beyond our control. We can exercise, eat right, and do all the prescribed and recommended activities to stay healthy, but an accident or unexpected event can alter our life forever. Stuff happens!

Our children can bring us joy or great disappointment. Storms do occur. The Earth can quake. Bad things happen to good people and, conversely, good things happen to bad people. Life is a series of intended and unintended situations and circumstances. Most of them are beyond our control.

Once my daily mantra became a part of my life, an expression of gratitude and joy immediately occupied my mind. I felt a shift in my attitude. Of course, disappointments continue to occur. Storms still past through my life. Stuff still happens around me. The most important gift was the transformation within me. The recognition and affirmation of God's amazing grace and love help me to weather the turbulence. When times get tough, those 21 words become a balm that heals and soothes my soul.

They do not mask reality or create an illusion about what is going on. Instead, there is greater clarity about what is taking place and an awareness that the God of Creation is in charge of everything, including my life.

The other outcome from reciting my daily mantra is a reminder that most things happen in a precise moment and dissipate with time. When I look back or remember certain things that seemed so important at the time they happened, I realize they are reduced to a blur or vague memory. It makes forgiveness possible and hope is a viable option.

My life is surrendered to God who loves every person with an immeasurable capacity. “No matter what happens today, I am going to practice gratitude and joy because God is the Source of my life.”