WHAT IS WHOLENESS
AND WHY DO YOU NEED IT?

REV. JOHN RILEY
SENIOR MINISTER
UNITY PALO ALTO SPIRITUAL CENTER
Change. Confusion. Conflict. Whatever storms are on your horizon or in your life right now, know that you have everything you need right now, in this very moment, to find wholeness and express peace in your life.

We’re going on a spiritual adventure this week and in the next few weeks where we are finding wholeness.

So, what is wholeness? What is this idea? You know, we talk about it a lot here at Unity, this idea of being whole. And I want to make sure that I tell you right up front, it’s about our spiritual wholeness because there’s a lot that happens in our lives when we may not feel at home, we may not feel whole. We may feel that sense of confusion, that sense of conflict, that sense of change that’s happening in our lives.

And so, when I speak of wholeness, the wholeness that we’re looking for is a spiritual wholeness where we know that Allness that is within us. As Rusty [Gaillard] said this morning, each of us has that spark of divinity within us, that knowing our oneness is our purpose here in life, that we’re moving through life to understand it better and to express that wholeness in everything we do.

And that’s really what wholeness is about. It’s knowing that true center within you, that place within you that is untouched, that place within you that is pure, that is good, that place within you from which springs all life, the harmonizing energy of love, that springs forth our abilities, our ability of faith to shape substance and to create our world as we see it.

And so, as we go through this journey understanding that what we’re doing is looking to find that greater expression of what’s already within us. You have that within you, everything that you need to bring that out into our world and to make that a part of our lives and everything we do, whether it's a mid-term that you're taking, or whether it's a crazy livestream that's going haywire. Whatever it is in your life, there's an ability for us that we have to sync back into that wholeness and then to bring that wholeness to whatever chaos, whatever storm is going on in our world.

It's very interesting. The way I look at it is, it's kind of like our life is like a puzzle piece. So, let's take a look at our puzzle here. There's our beautiful picture. The picture was taken by a friend of mine, Brian Krippendorph. This is an amazing picture. This is like life, this is how we're looking at life.

And when we look at our life, there are some pieces missing. Sometimes we don't see the full picture, sometimes we don't get to experience life to the fullest because something's missing. So, there are three pieces missing here. One is the corner piece, and we'll talk about that. One is the piece kind of down at the bottom there that's, “well, you're not really missing anything there, so that's okay”. But then there's one right in the main focal point of the image that we're missing. How much of life, how much of your life is like this puzzle piece?

Here's the idea. Our life is like this big puzzle. We have amazing beautiful things in our experience of life, beautiful things. And I don't know if you noticed, but on the left-hand side there was a pelican, a bird just being very peaceful in the midst of that storm, in the midst of the oncoming lightning, just chilling. And the water was nice and smooth, but when we look at our life, where's our focus? If you're like most human beings, our focus is on the missing pieces. And so, when we look at that missing piece, we then kind of zoom into that and that becomes our focal point, not the rest of the beauty that's around us, not all the good in our life, but that focal point.

So, let's take a look at those pieces. First there was the piece on the side, the edge piece. Now, if you were like me when you were a kid,
I was taught “well, the easiest way is to begin with the edges” on a puzzle. Did you ever put together a puzzle? Well, I always started with the edges. And when you’re missing an edge piece, it’s kind of like “ugh, I don’t know what to do now”.

Those edge pieces are like our society, they’re like our culture, they’re like it’s how we were raised. It’s the foundation of our belief system. You know, that BS that we hold onto. It’s the foundation of our belief system, that which we grew up with, those things that we learned from our parents, from our teachers, from our neighbors, from our friends, that we taught each other. As we grew up through life, those were the foundational things that we assumed to be true because that’s what we were taught. And so, when one of those pieces goes missing, our belief system kind of falls apart.

Then there’s the piece down below, that piece that, “Well, it wasn’t really obscuring anything, there wasn’t really anything important there. It was just part of the scenery”. That’s like our subconscious. Our subconscious has these holes within us as well, this missing knowing of our peace, this missing knowing of our joy, this missing knowing of our wholeness. And it’s all unconscious, it’s all unconscious, and yet it bubbles up in our life and that creates our automatic behavior pattern, and that creates how we move through life in general. We’re just unaware of it until someone says, “Hey, you know you might be missing a piece here” and then it’s like “Oh! I never saw that before.”

And then there’s the piece missing that’s right in the juicy spot of the picture, that piece where our focal point wants to be. And that’s where most of us spend our time.

So, if you think about your life and all of the missing pieces that you might consider being there, just think about a few. And what are the few big ones that you’re really looking at? What do you think is missing in your life?

What do you see as, “This what I need to do before I can achieve great success? This is what I need to learn before I can embark on this great journey of writing, or embark on this great journey of a new career, or embark on this great journey of a new relationship. This is what I need to focus on.” And what happens when we focus on what’s missing? Of course, it becomes like a black hole; it just sucks us right in, and that’s all we can see, that emptiness.

Now, most of us, as we go through life and we look for ways in which we can fill that hole up. And there are times when we look outside of ourselves. There are times when it’s like, “You know, I want a new car”. A good friend of mine came by and showed me his brand-new car. It’s a beautiful car. And he’s like, “You know, I know it’s kind of filling something that’s missing, and I know this Unity stuff. I should be looking somewhere else and this is wrong, but I really wanted a new car.”

And my point is “Look, that’s okay. It’s okay to have a new car. It’s okay to allow it to fill you up. It’s okay to allow our experiences out there to fill us up.” When I go on vacation — I love going on vacation because we get to see beautiful things, and I let it fill me up. But I also know it’s not the object, it’s not the sole source of my joy. My joy is really the reaction to those things that I’m experiencing. My joy is the reaction to the things that I own.

So, he had a very healthy mentality about it. He understood that it’s filling a need. That’s fantastic. Allow it to fill the need. He also recognized that it’s not the only thing that he needs, that it’s just one expression and one experience, and it’ll be here today, it’ll be gone tomorrow. I know when we got our new car, a little electric car, we just absolutely loved it. We got it a couple of years ago and when we first got it, it was so cool. Pushing all the buttons — it doesn’t park itself; that was my other car — because they make it as light as possible. So, there are fewer features and yet
I thought it was the coolest thing ever. I still love it today. I'm just not as enamoured by the little buttons, but it's still fulfilling that need that I'm doing something good for the environment. It's fulfilling the need of getting me from point A to point B. It's fulfilling the need of making me feel good about my car, as long as I am aware and know that it's just simply a reflection of what's happening within me. That feeling of goodness stems from within me and everything out there reflects it back to me.

So, when I'm in the midst of change, when I'm in the midst of conflict and confusion, what I see out there is reflected back to me, that which is inside of me waiting to be healed, waiting to be explored. And that's the beauty of these missing pieces in our life. Our soul naturally gravitates to those points so that we can look at it and we can heal it, we can fill in the gaps, we can put something in there and make it beautiful. Or we can obsess on it. The choice is yours.

But now, what do we do with the puzzle when it's missing some pieces? “Well, this puzzle's broken. Let's throw it away. It's missing five pieces.” Or maybe you give it away. A simple puzzle, when it's missing three pieces, it's like “Okay, I'm not going to do it because it's missing three pieces.” Well, that's like life. And we're not going to throw away our lives. Instead, we're going to use those missing pieces within us to re-focus ourselves.

We have the choice of how we fill it in. There's no piece there? “Hey, I can make it up. I can create in that space whatever I want to create.” if I look at it from that perspective, if I look at it from the perspective of possibility, of being open and receptive. But if I look at my life and the change and the conflict and the confusion and I get sucked into that and that's all I see, then that's all I can create. The rest of the picture is blind to me because I'm so focused on that part.

So, in our journey of finding wholeness we're going to be using the book, the guidebook, The I of the Storm, by Reverend Dr. Gary Simmons. The I of the Storm is a book that's subtitle is Embracing Conflict and Creating Peace. Dr. Simmons talks about the attributes of wholeness.

There are four attributes of wholeness: Communion, Principle, Purpose, and Non-Resistance. And so, for the next four weeks we're going to dive deep into each one of those so we can have a greater understanding and experience of this thing that we're calling spiritual wholeness, so that we can really dig into it. But before we do that, we need to really prepare for this journey. We need to get ready for it. We need to understand that we're about to embark on a spiritual adventure. And the foundation for finding and claiming your wholeness, your worth, as Dr. Simmons says, must be to relate to the person or situation authentically.

Whatever storm is going on in your life, whatever storm is rolling in or that is currently drenching you, we need to relate to that storm differently. “Not from fear, insecurity, or obligation but from a willingness to be the avenue through which God can express. For this to occur, you must do as Jesus instructs” — take a deep breath — “Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” Whew! Another deep breath! That was from Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 44.

The idea here, of course, is to use this on a level of consciousness, to put it into practice in our life so that we're meeting those missing pieces, not from the standpoint of fear, uncertainty and doubt, not from the standpoint of conflict and change and confusion, but from the standpoint of possibility, from the standpoint of “What could I create here? What can I bring to this situation that will create peace in this
What is Wholeness and Why Do You Need It?

Finding Wholeness

Dr. Simmons goes on to say, “To love means to accept, to embrace, and to value.” To accept, embrace, and value. “To bless means to endow something or someone with the capacity to be good in your life. To do good means to do the right thing. To pray means to give your thoughts to God. It's a four-step process toward your center. Love, bless, do good, and pray.”

At this very moment, know that your purpose is to discover that wholeness. Your soul's journey, your consciousness's journey is to seek out those missing pieces and create something, something beautiful, to know your purpose, to know your wholeness. And you have everything you need right now in this very moment to find that wholeness, to find your wholeness, and to express peace in your life.

So, let's take a look at these four components. The first one is love. “Love. To see the conflict as a reflection of what is seeking healing within you.” It's that missing puzzle piece. Whenever we see conflict out there — whenever we're in a relationship or in a situation where there seems to be conflict, we're fighting against a situation, we're fighting against a condition, we're fighting against a person, a society, a culture, a belief, whatever it is that we're at war with.

The idea here is to see that conflict and that situation differently. That's what bringing love into the situation is. It's not saying “Oh, okay, I'm rolling over and you can have your way”. No, it's a harmonizing energy that allows me to see it from a new perspective, to look at that conflict from its different facets. “This is uncomfortable, this is pain, this is unfair, this is unjust. And over here we have possibility. If we approach it from this angle, we have possibility.”

Bringing love to the situation means to see the inherent value that's in the missing puzzle piece. Even the one that's down below that didn't have a whole lot going on, there's value there. It was in the middle of this peaceful image, the stillness of the lake, of the pond, as that storm is rolling in and the clouds are blowing around, the water was at peace. And so, there's innate value in all of those missing puzzle pieces. The power of love, the energy of love gets us to a point where we're looking for, we're trying to harmonize with the situation so we can see the value in it.

You must also bring love to yourself. Self-love, to know your own worthiness, to know your own worth, to know that you're important and this is important work and that you're worth it. And the power of love allows us to look within when we're sensing that sense of conflict, of the enemy, of disease, to look within to that still, small place and to find what's missing, to draw upon that inner resource, to bring forth the value, the feeling, the experience that's missing in your life. Maybe it's a sense of self-worth, maybe it's a sense of power, maybe it's a sense of creativity. Maybe the missing link is compassion for myself, maybe the missing link is knowing that sometimes it's out of my hands, from a silly computer to a grand experience in life, to a diagnosis. That's bringing love into the situation.

The second component on our journey is to bless. Now, when we bless something, we are changing the meaning of it. We're giving it some value. We're making a blessing to a person or situation and we're endowing that person with the capacity to be a source for good in our lives.

Now, I think you may have heard it said that all of those knuckleheads out there, those are all my spiritual teachers. You've heard
What is Wholeness and Why Do You Need It?

Finding Wholeness

that said, but this is how we allow them to teach us in their full knuckleheadedness, by blessing them. When we bless ourselves as well, we’re empowering ourselves, we’re endowing ourselves with our ability to uplift us, to uplift you. You can uplift you. When you bless someone else, you’re shifting the scenario. Instead of being your enemy, you’re recognizing “Okay, there’s some value in this person here, so I’m going to look at that person or that situation, that condition from that facet, from that standpoint”. And so, we bless the situation, drawing forth from it our good.

And then the third step is to do good. It’s not enough to know it and to talk about it, but once you receive it, it’s then for you to step forward with that new value that you drew forth, to step forth with that new blessing and to be a blessing to other people, to be that experience of self-compassion so that you can have compassion for someone else. “Do good” is like “do the right thing”.

I think that deep down inside most of us know right and wrong. Most of us know or have a feeling of “If I do this, well, I’m going to get my way” but we know it’s not quite right. So, really look at when we’re about to make a decision, “Am I doing good? Am I doing something that’s authentic? Am I doing something that doesn’t have any hook in the back, any of those passive-aggressive hooks, that doesn’t have any sarcasm sneaking in there, that doesn’t have any self-motivation?”

You know, I love the title of our next Palo Alto Speaker Series, “I Love You. But I’ll Love You Even More if You Do What I Want You to Do”. So instead of being there, let’s come from a standpoint of doing good and doing right.

And the fourth process is prayer. Now, in Unity we talk about prayer as our affirmative prayer, it is affirming our wholeness. We’re recognizing that this is our true nature, and we’re drawing it forth. We’re calling it forth, to be expressed in our lives. Affirmative prayer, when we’re reaching out to someone else, is affirming someone else’s worth, affirming your innate worth, affirming your spark of divinity, affirming your wholeness. And so, when we pray, especially for those people that we are in conflict with, the prayer might be, “Lord, help them see my point of view. Dear God, everything would be fine if that person would just … I’d love you even more.”

So, when we pray, we’re not weaving our conflict into the prayer, we’re not weaving in our passive aggression, we’re not weaving in our sarcasm. We’re just simply holding the space for that wisdom, that innate wisdom that’s within someone else to come forward. We’re holding that space within us for that innate wisdom to come through us, and for us to be accepting of that wisdom. Prayer puts us in tune with Spirit. It creates a vibration, it takes our mental thoughts and puts them in sync with the mental thoughts and the vibration, the energy of Spirit. That’s affirmative prayers, and that’s the prayer that we teach and that we practice.

On this spiritual journey, know that you have everything that you need right now, in this very moment, within you, to find your wholeness and to express and experience peace in your life. And this week, we’ll do it by remembering to love, to bless, to do good, and to pray.

Within me is a place of peace that is never disturbed by outer conditions.

Drawing upon this endless source I accept, embrace, and value my life and I become a blessing to the world.
www.UnityPaloAlto.org

Subscribe to our Youtube Channel
www.youtube.com/UnityPaloAltoSpiritualCenter

New videos released every week!