

## “DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME”

When I became a Deacon some years ago, I immediately said I would do what I could to be a dedicated Deacon. Due to having dealt with anxiety about public speaking for much of my life, I felt that I would be unable to do a sermon if the opportunity arose. Like many of you, I have been emotionally affected by horrifying events around the world: the senseless Russian invasion of Ukraine, mass shootings in school, terrifying behavior and attitudes towards immigrants. I have been moved by the resilience and courage people have shown in overcoming these events. In fact, they have inspired me to overcome today my anxiety about public speaking to share what I hope to be a meaningful message you can leave here with. As the title of my sermon states, **“don't you think it's time?”**

There are certain songs which I gravitate to due to their message of compassion and kindness. Music is the universal language with which we can express our common humanity. One such song that sticks out in my mind is *Love Can Build A Bridge* by the Judds; Mother & Daughter Duo. I will just read you the lyrics as you wouldn't want me to sing!!

I'd gladly walk across the desert with no shoes upon my feet  
To share with you the last bite of bread I had to eat  
I would swim out to save you in your sea of broken dreams  
When all your hopes are sinking, let me show you what loves means  
Love can build a bridge  
Between your heart and mine  
Love can build a bridge  
Don't you think it's time?

Don't you think it's time?

I would whisper love so loudly  
Every heart could understand  
That love and only love  
Can join the tribes of man  
I would give my heart's desire  
So that you might see  
The first step is to realize  
That it all begins with you and me

When we stand together

It's our finest hour

We can do anything

Keep believin in the power.

Just as a side note this song was co-written by Naomi Judd.

I think *Love Can Build A Bridge* beautifully encourages us to engage in acts of love that will inspire hope over despair and promote justice and compassion. I think it also demonstrates that it takes courage to uphold, defend, and spread these deeply sacred themes. It takes courage to "walk across the desert with no shoes" and "to share that last bite of bread." We should never take these values and qualities for granted: like maintaining a garden, it takes constant devotion and reflection to consistently depict them. And, it takes actually **believin in** these very sacred values to meaningfully demonstrate them each and every day.

Love of self is crucial to understanding what we can give to others and how to give it. People must believe their existence in a specific place is important. To achieve this mindset, we must adopt a common understanding that every person has something worthy of giving. I feel, however, at times what is lacking in this country and the whole world is that some people do not have respect or love for themselves, so how can they love and respect their neighbors and community? Where barriers exist such as poverty, lack of healthcare, and racism an individual cannot and will not be able to love thyself or contribute to their community. Thus, we need to individually charge ourselves with eliminating injustice, and doing the work to overcome hostilities which drive hate and disrespect. As the song lyrics would remind us, "the first step is to realize that it all begins with you and me."

I would like to share a few personal examples that I think show just how far a sense of compassion, respect, and justice can go to making a difference in the way we treat one another. I first want to start by telling you about a special person in my life some years ago who attended this church many of you may also remember. Her name was Geneva Brown, I would go and visit her and Paul with Paul's health declining he soon passed away. I continued to visit Geneva and we formed a special friendship. One day we were speaking and she said to me "I don't know what I would do without you"" and I said back to her "I don't know what I would do without you." Now that is what love is all about. I still think of her often and feel so blessed to have had her in my life.

Another story of love that moved me was one that was reported by WBZ 4 News. It concerned author and artist Peter Reynolds from Dedham, MA. The story aired concerned his desire to make a difference in the lives of the Ukrainian people immediately after Russia's invasion in February. He was being praised for a piece of art he did: He had drawn a picture of a young Ukrainian girl holding a sunflower with a peace sign. He was committing 100% of the proceeds of the prints to UNICEF. This simple act of compassion was helping to feed and take care of the health of people in war-torn Ukraine.

On September 11, 2001, an unthinkable tragedy happened. My son at the time was 12 years old, but even at that young age knew he wanted to do something special to honor the people that perished. So with the help of his Nana, he made beaded flags and sold them, donating the proceeds to the September 11th Fund.

Looking back in history I think about when President Reagan and President Gorbachev worked together to sign a Missile Treaty, vowing to work for greater reductions in nuclear arms. Though their political views were polar opposite, they were able to put their differences aside and work for the greater good of the whole world. They seemed to be able to build a bridge of friendship and respect for one another.

In these examples, I hoped to share how people from different walks of life challenged themselves to do something for the greater good. No matter what obstacles and stakes laid before Reagan and Gorbachev, they willed themselves to find common interests and aspirations to set hostilities

between the two nations on a path towards peace and security. While that quote I read to you which Geneva and I shared happened years ago, I still hear those words and seek to apply them to my relationships and interactions with people in my life now. There is so much potential for peace, prosperity, and kindness in this world if people are quicker to reflect on the things which are in their control and how they can employ these things in their communities. **Don't you think it's time, I do!**

Amen.