

Where there is love, there is Justice.

by Rabbi Denise L. Eger

This was the sermon I delivered at the Multi-Faith Prayer Service in Washington, DC on Sunday, April 26 for Unite for Marriage. It was delivered at the National City Christian Church.

Where there is love there is Justice. We gather here in this sacred place for seeking many things. We seek strength from one another as our lives are under scrutiny once again by the nation's highest court. We fill our hearts with love for one another. We prayerfully seek God's holy presence by our side. You, O Holy one, did not you make us also in your image? Everyday our humanity is questioned. Our humanity is daily threatened by so much pain and violence, an assault on personhood. Our dignity is daily threatened by words and deeds across this nation as LGBT people seek to live and love in peace. This night, before our case is presented in the earthly court, we appeal to Divine Justice in Your Heavenly Court, God. We know that love and justice flows from You. You taught us with your words and deeds. You advised us to pursue justice vociferously. Tzedek Tzedek tirdof, Justice justice you shall pursue. And we have lived your words. This LGBTQ movement for equality has been on the move. State by state. Conversation by conversation, lawsuit by lawsuit, wins and losses at the ballot box. But we have kept moving forward. Pursue justice You told us and that what we all have done and worked for activist, lawyers, and the everyday people who just wanted to marry their partner whether they were together 5 months, 5 years or 50 years Tuesday the Supreme Court can bring about a full measure of Your justice God by extending marriage equality throughout this land. The time for love is now. The time for justice is now. For where there is love, there is justice.

A teacher took a group of high school seniors on a nature hike. They walked along the winding trail of a steep hillside until they reached an area that looked out over a lush valley. The rocky hill behind them stood in stark contrast to the terraced slopes before them on which olive trees and grapevines were planted.

"Isn't it remarkable," said the teacher, "that right on the other side of this hill is a rocky slope that leads down to a muddy river. But on this side is a fertile valley where things are blossoming

"The same sun shines on both sides of this hill and the same clouds bring rain to this whole area. Yet, most of the growth is happening over here," the teacher said, pointing to the valley before them.

The students looked about and nodded silent.

"I want you to think about this," the teacher continued. "At one time the valley wasn't so lush and green. It was rocky and the landscape looked the same as the hill behind us.

"But with vision and hard work, the rocks were removed, the ground terraced, the soil prepared, trees and vines were planted. Lovingly the ground was nurtured. And after a while things took root and began to grow. For where there is love, there is growth.

"This valley is what your life can become," the teacher said. "Until now, everything you've learned and experienced has brought you to the place where the rocks have been cleared away. You will grow more."

"In a few weeks you will graduate," the teacher told the seniors, "and then it will be up to you to build the terraces and plant the seeds that will develop throughout your lives. You will have the responsibility to love the land, to nurture it and help it grow."

"No work, no planting", the teacher commented as he pointed to the rocky hillside behind them, "you'll end up with a lot of obstacles to negotiate around."

"A plan and hard work will yield a fruitful growth, the teacher said pointing to the valley below. "It will take even more hard work to maintain this kind of growth, but which would you rather your life resemble?" (Bits and Pieces, Ragan Communications).

No matter the decision of the court win or lose, we will as a community need to maintain the growth and justice that we have sought. In either case we must love more-for where there is love there is justice. Even if we have a successful outcome in June and marriage bells ring across the land, our work to bring justice and equality will not be over. There are still rocky cliffs in our way. We need full employment protection and protections in housing and education. We need to adopt our children without hurdles and have access to health care.

Our work for justice will continue no matter the outcome in June.

Through prophet Micah, We were instructed: What does God require of you? Only Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with Your God. This is what we have done in the courts and at the ballot box and in our daily lives. We have sought to uplift equality and liberty for LGBT people. And tonight we seek, God, Your Loving Presence. Walk with us! Share Your bounty and abundant love with all those who seek to create a world where human dignity is lifted on high. For where there Your love is, there is justice. Teach us to do as You have instructed us despite our neighbors' objections. To love them as ourselves. Spreading Your message of unending love. Ahavat Olam. Eternal love for Your creations We gather here tonight to inspire each other and to send a message loud and clear to everyone in this nation. That people of faith stand with the LGBT community. This is not religion against queer people but rather a revolution has occurred and I am proud to be a part of this. At the core of my religious faith is the eternal promise of justice for all. Not for some but a vision that one day all people of good will and good faith and no faith shall sing in one voice an anthem of peace and liberty. And we cannot gather tonight only 35 miles from Baltimore when there are others who lack equality and justice. Our community has known police brutality. After all the Stonewall riots were a response in 1969 to continued police harassment. And there will be no justice and equality until all are at the table. In Jewish tradition we teach that the Sabbath is a foretaste of the world to Come. A messianic time of peace for all people. It is not limited to just some folks but is available to everyone. The Sabbath is a model of how the world might be. A world where we aren't rushed or preoccupied with work. A world where poverty and violence are gone. A world where someone always has your back. A world where children go to bed at night with warm full bellies, safe and secure knowing they are loved. The Sabbath is the taste of the ideal where we can rest from our labors and enjoy the true gift of freedom and taste God's abundance bounty and give thanks for that bounty. Our gathering tonight is a similar taste of that world. To help us imagine a world where LGBT people are always safe from violence. A world where we can taste the bounty of our love and equality. A world where there is no poverty of the body or the spirit. A world where whether you pray to Jesus or Allah, Krishna or meditate on the energy of life, you can join in peaceful communion. A world where

everyone's got your back. A world where police protect the innocent rather than murder them. A world where the Supreme Court avoids politics and truly seeks justice and equality for all of America's citizens including extending civil marriage equality throughout this nation. For where there is love, there is justice.