

**THINKING ABOUT SALVATION**

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**OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:**

The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and human responsibility.

-Vaclav Havel

**CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)**

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, for five minutes each, if there is time remaining, additional sharing and responses are welcome.

**FOCUS: THINKING ABOUT SALVATION**

It isn't often that religious liberals talk seriously about "salvation." It may be dismissed as a Christian concept -irrelevant because if we don't believe in a heaven or a hell or a personal God, then salvation (as even in the Universalist notion of all people being reconciled to God) is irrelevant. And, salvation is not to be equated with the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, the product of a process of enlightenment. It has heavier overtones of sin, repentance, and atonement. Yet, there are serious aspects of salvation that need considering. I once tried to liberalize the meaning of "salvation" for discussion purposes by defining it as that which would give me/us a sense of fulfillment, purpose, meaning, or zest in life. That minimized the darker side of ourselves which struggles like the rest of the human race with human failings like greed, lust, anger, envy, pride, lust, and gluttony - the classic seven deadly sins, to which we could add others. One way to begin would be to ask the question: "What must I do to be saved?" But, I once changed that as a sermon topic to: "What must we do to be saved?" Whether we look at "salvation" as a personal or a social reckoning invites very different responses.

**Discussion:**

Be creative: how would you define "salvation?" What isn't working in your life that might make you whole?

Is your focus more working on your own salvation, or with others to work on it together?

Do you tend to identify the sins of society as similar to your own, or is it all their misfortune and none of your own?

Are you still a piece in progress, or a "piece of work?"

Do you have a sense that you have a "true self," call it a Buddha-nature, which your usual self has hidden under a bushel?

Or, to mix the metaphor, how much of your inner light shines through? What diminishes its luminescence?

When you're burning brightly, what's fueling the power within you?

## LIKES AND WISHES

### CLOSING WORDS

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime,

Therefore, we are saved by hope.

Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history;

Therefore, we are saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone.

Therefore, we are saved by love.

No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our own;

Therefore, we are saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.

- Reinhold Niebuhr