

Good morning everybody. The first thing I want to say is that I'm grateful to God that in His great wisdom He brought us together this morning at the 1st Unitarian Church of Louisville. I want to thank Carol Edelen and Steve who hosted me last night.

I want to take you on a time travel trip today. We will travel to the Principality of Transylvania and we will land there at the end of the 1500s. The Unitarian (then called Arian) religion was officially accepted in 1568 in Transylvania, but ever since 1571, the death of the Unitarian king, Catholic Princes working diligently to eradicate Unitarians and their beliefs.

Enyedi Gyorgy was born in the town of Nagyenyed, your partnerchurch, in 1555, and later became the most famous son of that town. By the time he started working as church superintendent from 1587, and as bishop from 1592-1597 he is in an environment hostile to Unitarianism.

In response, Enyedi Gyorgy wrote voluminous works to fight for the tolerance of the Unitarian faith, including over 200 long sermons. We will see today that in addition to explanations and interpretations of Bible verses he employed opinions, illustrations, teachings about issues of daily life, and he earned the Unitarian Plato name among Unitarians.

Let's sample some of these wisdoms from his sermons.

The translations for today's service were done by me. You can find the full length translations of some of the sermons on my website unitariantorch.com.

So, picture yourselves inside the Main Square church in Kolozsvar, it seats several hundreds of people, so make yourself comfortable.

1. Having to put up with unfair treatment in Transylvania, no wonder Enyedi Gyorgy, as a teacher, wrote about examples of fairness, justice in the courts. In the 21st century some people observe that there is a separate type of justice for celebrities vs average citizens:

He writes in Sermon 67: A truly fair judge ought not only disregard the opinions of influential people, but the judge must refuse the bribes. When the Egyptian city of Thebes illustrated the ideal court, they pictured their ruler as blind, and their law makers with hands missing. The blindness of the ruler expressed the desire that the judge ought not to see whether the plaintiff is dressed in expensive, heavy pomegranate velvet, or in a rough

sack cloth. The lawmakers are pictured with hands missing to express the desire that they ought not accept bribes.

2. Enyedi Gyorgy also looked for fairness and civility in the public sphere. The social media of his time was public disputations, debates among scholars. In the century of Twitter, Facebook, Youtube his words still ring true.

He writes in sermon 87: Teachers, scholars of religious matters must contend for the truth, but they ought not force their views on the audience by swearing, cursing, using vengeful threatening words, or taunt opponents who may have received a lesser gift of making an argument. Serenity and peacefulness befits Christians the best. Teachers, scholars ought to be able to explain matters clearly using organized and quiet speech, always serving the edification of others.

3. Enyedi Gyorgy experienced the detrimental effects of gossip, and verbal abuse. In the 21st century in social media we have similar abuses that we call defriending, canceling, deplatforming.

He writes this about the tongue in sermon 73.

When a person use their eyes, he uses them for seeing, and another person also uses them for seeing, and not for walking on it. However, when one person use their tongue he may use it for blessing, but another person may use it to curse. This suggests that the tongue is imperfect. Once a wise man was asked which is the meanest of the animals. He replied this way: Among the wild animals it is the slanderer, among the tamed animals it is the cajoler. The difference between these two is that the slanderer condemns the good, and the cajoler praises the wicked. Even the pagan sages noticed this. Plutarch described that the King of Amasia sent a sacrificial animal to Bias asking him to send back the best and the worst part of the animal. Bias cut out the tongue of the animal and sent it back to represent both the best and the worst. God has given us control over the tongue similarly to the control of other body parts, thus we ought to be able to control the tongue if we are serious about it.

4. Enyedi Gyorgy also taught about the consequences of an uncaring life.

He writes in sermon 173. We can see that pursuing the pleasures and happiness of our bodies, living a prodigal, recklessly extravagant life brings about the inevitable end of poverty and peril. The person who once commanded others

becomes a servant, the person who rubbed elbows with the rich and famous now live together with pigs. Even the pagan wise man write that the road of seeking pleasures at first smooth, easy to take, and pleasing, but the end of that road is rough, rock-strewn and steep, threatening with fall. The devout man starts out on a road full of difficulties, but the end of the road is filled with kindness, gratification, and receiving that beautiful crown.

Another wise man puts it this way: If you do something wicked to please yourself the pleasures will fade away, but the disgrace and shame will remain. On the other hand if you labor tirelessly with good intentions and care, the fatigue will fade away, but the fruit of your labor and the honor will remain.

5. In the 21st century we hear that elections have consequences.

Enyedi Gyorgy realized that and explained it in sermon 68.

He writes: Once you elect a Prince or an office holder you better believe that you will have to dance to the tune of the flute the Prince and the office holders are playing. That is why we ought to keep our eyes wide open, and meditate on just who we are going to elect. Let us not just stumble into our vote. Let us consider if they are wise enough and smart enough to guide our country and

the assembly. Election of the office holder is not something to be fooled around with, and if God allowed you to be among the voters then search your conscience, and seriously pray to God to give you direction. In our meditation why should we keep in mind events in other countries? If anyone told you just 20 years ago about Jesuits you wouldn't have known if it's a drink, a bird or a river. At that time most of us have never seen a monk or attended mass. We didn't know what Holy water was, and didn't know about many other components of their idol worship. But nowadays we not only know these, but our youth is receiving and learning them because they hope to gain acceptance, rank, and nobility.

6. In the US the coronavirus-related restrictions accelerated a trend of not going to church. Could church attendance be an issue in the 16th century?

Enyedi Gyorgy writes in sermon 115.

Those who are not listening to God's words in church are acting against God's commands, and also against their own nature; each person has a natural demand for knowledge, and ready to inquire and receive more. There cannot be any more important and more beautiful knowledge of all things than the awe of God. Those who are not hearing God's words in church are not learning, as no one is born into this world with wisdom. Rather

they all learn by listening. Thus, the ones who don't learn in church will not know anything.

There are three groups of people among us who listens to God's words in church with reluctance and trepidation. The first group of people convinced themselves that they are already learned and wise, and they don't need to rely on anyone else's teachings, because they already comprehend everything. However, those people demonstrate their folly and ignorance by their very beliefs, as God's wisdom is different from learning a trade such as a tailor or a blacksmith, that might be learned in a few years. But even those who mastered a craft would agree in that there is always more to learn about things they haven't worked on. A learned man stated about the Scriptures that it is so wide that not only cattle can walk around in it, but even an elephant can swim in it.

The second group of people believe that they will lose out on something if they spend even a half hour listening to God's words in church. Instead, they would rather check their ledgers, file grievances, work in their vineyards, visit their kinfolk, organize and clean their houses, or find similar chores. Now, these folks failed to learn, or they don't believe it, that the true riches don't come from our industriousness, but it comes from the blessings of God.

The third group of people are the condescending, who would rather satisfy the needs of their bodies with sleeping or feasting instead of going to church. They often say “we would go to church, except that we are bored, because the sermons and arguments are always about the same topics”. Now, these folks ought to be reminded that it’s not only the body that needs nourishment, but the soul needs even more nourishing. That nourishment to the soul must be provided, and not in a way that seeks only the satisfaction of the ears through a variety of entertaining sermons. There is more to that, as they ought to contemplate and digest those words, and all that doesn’t happen by a one-time listening, but by frequent meditation about those words.

7. Today the UU churchgoers represent a shrinking minority among Americans.

Enyedi Gyorgy experiences the same condition, and in sermon 94 he lifts the spirit of Transylvanian Unitarians this way:

In Luke 12:32, Jesus says: “Fear not little flock.” If we consider history from the creation of the world to our current time, we can clearly see that at the beginning of the world, there were four people, but only one was innocent, Abel. Cain was wicked, and Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command. After that, we could

only find Noah who was true in the entire world. After the great flood, only Abraham was true on the entire planet. We can easily make an enumeration from the writings of the Evangelists how few were the true Sons of God and the true God-fearing people at the time of our Lord Christ. No wonder Jesus calls His followers “little flock.” Why do Catholics brag about their denomination by calling it *catholica*, meaning it is established and recognized throughout the world? A large number of followers doesn’t make a faith true, and a small number of followers doesn’t make a faith false. Let us conclude from this that it is a false and shameful argument to say that our faith, “God is one,” cannot be true because we are few in number.

Amen.