

sister who's perspective

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Overview

Well, last month's newsletter was obviously not the last one I would ever write, although one could not know that. Hopefully the coming months will make clear where the next television shows will be recorded and what the scope of ministry will be within the immediate future. What is essential throughout all of this, of course, is remaining truthful and willing to stand against lies as much as one is able.

Liminal Space

I had never heard of the word, "liminal," until the time of my graduate-level studies that culminated in a masters degree in theological studies, but it has been a most valuable word to me ever since. The word is essentially a name for that in-between, often tense, and mostly formless place between what was and what will be, within which choices, discoveries, and pivotal shifts have their greatest opportunity to move from imagination to reality. Personified, this suggests the present moment between what I have been and what I am becoming.

Usually bewildering to me, are those who seem to fear this space and shrink from it into forms and methods of the past, even if the results were objectionable within all previous instances. I sometimes feel a sort of holy discontent, longing to be genuinely whole and somehow knowing that I won't be unless I am willing to embrace whatever unpleasantness opposes my own unique process of becoming. It is difficult for me to accept that not everyone feels this.

Perhaps it is not so much that some do not feel this, as that fear of the unknown drives them to repress awareness of any and all such feelings. Nonetheless, it would seem that the Divine has encircled all of us with liminal space--not to imprison us, but

rather to provide continuous opportunity. It may be that the most basic purpose of one's freedom of choice, is to provide invitation and opportunity to enter liminal space.

Yet hesitation is logical, specifically because of how overwhelming the infinite quantity of possibilities within liminal space is. Time and time again, that which is beyond us must be approached with very small individual steps, phrased in terms that are somehow accessible to our very small and limited perception and understanding. If I have learned anything throughout my life, it is to appreciate and respect any need to move through life one day at a time.

Having such an understanding, however, has completely failed to equip me with greater patience and self control during times of struggle. "Can't we just fast-forward beyond this?" I lament, as if life were nothing more than a video recording. Yet experience has shown that skipping over struggles generally leaves one every bit as small and shallow once the struggle has passed.

To emerge from liminal space greater than one entered it, one must fully embrace all the joys and sorrows such spaces include, yet not as ends in themselves but rather as components of a metaphorical day of life.

In finding the courage to fully live each day of our visible lives, the invisible components become obvious as well and the very idea of doing anything without greater awareness becomes unthinkable.

I try to keep this in mind, as I move through the perplexing juxtapositions of my current season of life, so that I will somehow continue to find the strength to endure the night and greet both the new rising sun and all the blessings that the day which follows will include. It is within all of this that I am able to assign sufficient purpose to my struggles to allow rather than run from them.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

A Pregnant Pause

This is not an easy thing to create, specifically because it is such a study in contrasts: a moment of silence saturated with a feeling that words will follow; a moment of stillness that, like a coiled spring, promises sudden and dramatic action; or a moment of contemplation within which life-altering insights internally leap into view.

The very word is also inseparable from questions of faith--whether one believes in any sort of goodness inherent within the life or the new way of being that is forming. It is only if I believe in the desirability and/or inherent goodness of what is being formed, that I am able to persist and come to terms with the unavoidable struggle and perhaps even hardship encompassed by the journey to completion. It is equally essential, however, that I recognize obstacles which genuinely possess the ability to sabotage the journey and modify the form and route of the path ahead in whatever ways are necessary.

All pregnancies must be nurtured; given whatever sustains and empowers them to reach their best possible form. Among such needs is time--a pause from more usual routines. Rushing the completion of any pregnancy nearly always guarantees loss of varying degrees and forms.

Allowing a pause may in fact be a most rebellious choice to make, if one's world is stuck within constantly frenetic multi-tasked forms. Like flying from coast to coast in an airplane, a vast surrounding landscape is hardly seen at all. Choosing to drive instead, to at least glimpse the myriad of towns and fields along the way, may make little sense to the majority of one's social companions.

It is within such extended pregnant pauses, however, that a deepening of life is magically accomplished. Disregarding the people who live within those otherwise ignored spaces becomes much more difficult once they have been seen and thereby been made just a little more real. The first time a pregnant woman feels her baby's small kick, is the last time she doubts the reality of what is growing within her. The first time one notices how an idea or a plan will reshape

life, is the last time one is able to honestly insist that what is to come is unimportant.

A daughter of a concentration camp survivor speaking about the ways her elders had been changed by all that they had endured, reported that when she asked "what are you doing?" the answer was "trying to matter." Very little is more hurtful than insisting someone's work and personal sacrifices don't matter; that everything suffered is somehow irrelevant and failed to accomplish anything good. If I am to endure a pregnant pause of whatever dimension or form, I do not want that life to ultimately be "still-born"; I do not want life itself to fail.

Inviting a pause filled with potentiality, is a strong step in a better direction. It is also often a high-stress moment, analogous in some ways to the compression a rubber ball experiences when it is thrown against a concrete sidewalk. If the ball breaks, nothing good follows. If, on the other hand, the ball bounces that much higher, specifically because of the extreme pressure it endured, it is a triumph of life and of all that the sphere both contained and symbolized.

A pregnant pause is, however, precisely that: a pause. It is not a place to remain any longer than necessary. It is a place from which to move when the time is finally right.

Whatever audience is present may not even recognize the life which follows, if the transformation is greater than anything they have previously seen. "How could this come from that? No, surely there is more to it than simply enduring a particular hardship."

Yet how could they know, since they have endured no such hardship? Where the empathy and camaraderie is found, is within those who have known the face and form of struggle and persevered. Yet is not a contest between who has suffered and who has not, but rather a recognition that all live within individually unique processes of becoming and some may not yet be ready to hear one's voice and reports.

So I pause, I contemplate, and I do what I can to prepare for whatever comes next.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

Inviting Epiphany

Within institutionalized religious contexts of Christianity, the meaning assigned more or less exclusively to this word is the event of three wise men of perhaps even royal social status, discovering the divine within an infant born within a mostly adversarial context. At a more basic level of interpretation, however, an epiphany is what one might call an "aha!" moment when some aspect of the divine is suddenly perceived with life-changing clarity.

Phrased another way, it is one of those rare moments when the fingertips of the transcendent and the mundane briefly touch and life from that moment onward is in one way or another transformed. Without a mental, emotional, or spiritual receptivity to mystery, however, such moments are very unlikely at best. Those who have ignored the soul's hunger for what lies beyond the self, therefore, rarely experience such things.

Watching from a different and perhaps intentionally distant perspective, are those who have categorized such moments as dangerous. They have learned only the partial truth that every epiphany displaces any and all preceding limited notions of life and see only the loss and not the newness and greater manifestation that follow--some

of which may not be immediately apparent.

So I suppose that from their perspective inviting epiphany is synonymous with embracing risk. Life, however, by its very nature, is finite and human experiences of such are bound by the dimension of time, which makes remaining within any treasured state or moment a scientific impossibility. If so, one's first epiphany may be acceptance of how unavoidable and inescapable our ongoing and individual progressions are.

If one is able by faith to look beyond the first moment, however, inspiration to persist is readily available. The question within this season of giving thus transforms into the question of whether one is willing to receive.

This would seem to be as silly a query as that of whether one should inhale after exhaling, unless one has respect for the symbiotic interdependence of at least the majority of the fundamental components of life. Indeed, this dynamic is so common, it is amazing that it could be overlooked by any human being. Yet the societal expectation of each overcoming all life challenges without any assistance seems to have found its way to every corner of the globe.

Recognizing the fallacy and foolishness of this narcissism may be the most essential epiphany currently needed by humanity--within which what is also discovered is the value and beauty of each other and of the relationships by which all could thrive. At the heart of such a transformation, perhaps obviously, is the task of rediscovering love for each other as well as genuine love for one's self. That is, seeking one's wholeness and complete healing with an awareness that these are best found within each other.

At its simplest, therefore, inviting epiphany is little more than encouraging the best within both ourselves and within the surrounding world. What is truly best may not be what is pretty, convenient, or fun, but there will be no need to wonder whether one has truly found the best, if the world is a larger, freer, and more beautiful place within which all can truly live.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

"It is not inherently bad to have problems, because humans have from the very beginning been--by their very nature--problem solvers. It is only in either choosing not to face them or being denied any ability to overcome them, that problems are transformed into oppressive evils."

-- Sister Who

Imagination

The word itself expresses the forming of an image, but places no restrictions upon how this image is required to be. From one perspective, life is a maze of limitations that guide each person in first one direction and then another, but from an equally real but contrasting perspective, life is also an ongoing exploration of imagination's creative and empowering possibilities.

Sometimes the most empowering thing one can do, however, is to let go. The first moments after doing so may be superficially terrifying, but they are also the moments when pivotal choices can be made that push the future in positive directions. Within the actions of letting go are nonetheless moments of expansive freedom.

I have often encountered pieces of a particular quote attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt, but the more complete citation is actually, "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do." In coming to terms with the often bewildering circumstances of my life, therefore, I find I must often imagine and even push in exactly the opposite direction that everyone else is going.

Indeed, I have found that sometimes it is actually quite rebellious to persist in caring and striving to make a positive difference, just when it would be so much easier and less stressful to do otherwise. Even worse is the non-response of apathy--not caring enough to respond at all. Not responding could thus be easily equated with not truly living, which would suggest that apathy actually equals death.

Considering the over-abundance of apathy throughout the world, the life-purpose of artists, inventors, and people with any and every kind of faith in greater possibilities, is finding ways to raise the dead--which may be improbable but is actually not impossible.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

On a Personal Note

To tell the tale of the last four weeks in any detail within this small column is absolutely impossible even for me, but suffice to say that the boys and I are now living within a friend's spare bedroom in Colorado. My former life partner has graciously volunteered to assume ownership of the house in New Hampshire and contend as necessary with demands made by the oppressive and small-minded municipal administrators there. There is unfortunately, however, no significant amount of funds available for restarting my life in Colorado, so my future seems as uncertain as ever.

Through it all, I have striven to live with integrity according to higher principles, but there are nonetheless a number of concerns that still need to be resolved in relation to the public access television entity here, future appearances and activities, and a number of bureaucratic programs. All that being said, I'm doing my best to recover both from the rigors and consequences of the move and from the psychological and emotional trauma that characterized my eighteen months of home ownership and residency there.

Perhaps someday it will all make sense, but it most certainly does not within my present frame of reference. I can only hope that whatever purpose all of that was supposed to serve, was ultimately served.

May one and all and everything, blessed and loved ever be.

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