

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES
OF DIVINE LIGHT

THE PLEASURE OF CREATING

31 DECEMBER 2007

The song Joyce Karchere just sang speaks of the spices and the pleasant fruit of the garden. This is the natural state of being alive. It's not hard work to achieve; it is the outflow of the beauty of the garden.

David Karchere previously spoke about the experience of pleasure and used the quote from CHARIOTS OF FIRE: "I feel His pleasure when I run." It made me ponder the experience of knowing pleasure, the Lord's pleasure simultaneously as your own. The quote isn't "I feel His pleasure when I run, even though my legs are aching and I really don't want to be doing this." I felt certain, in the quote, that it was the runner's pleasure in communion with the One, mutually having pleasure.

There's a quote in Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust...him." (Job 13:15) If you think about that, in some ways it feels like a contradiction, as if the Lord was interested in slaying you, as if the Lord was interested in your suffering. "Let's see how much you'll trust Me. Let's see if you can know pleasure now." Many different religions talk about the experience of sacrifice, that you can only know God's love if you sacrifice. So the idea of being slain and sacrificing as penance, or tuition, to get in the God-loves-me club is just not the way I'm thinking these days.

We know that thanksgiving is a key to the kingdom. Well another one is praise. Praise and thanksgiving are the keys to the kingdom. I realized that one of the greatest ways to give praise is by enjoying my life. If I want to give praise to the Creator, I'll enjoy the creation, and I happen to be part of the creation, as is my world. I will enjoy life, which will mean that I will be praising life. It's not very effective to just say, "You're doing a great job"—to praise God from an external experience, as if you have nothing to do with it. "You did a great job on the snowfall this morning!" There are many ways in which people use words of praise: Hosanna, alleluia. There are all kinds of songs written, which express love of God.

I've become aware that I sing the name of God in praise through my laughter; I sing the name of God in praise through the joy of being in your company; I sing the song of praise when I am enjoying the food on my plate. Not long ago, Sara Puharich was talking about nutritional value in food being related to the enjoyment of the food, taking the time to taste it and enjoy it. What sense that makes; the food itself will be utilized by your body only if you will enjoy it. I can hear the molecules of broccoli saying, "You can't use me unless you like me." There is a more intimate communion with the food as a result of the pleasure that occurs.

I looked up some of the antonyms of the word "praise." They are "blame," "censure," "reprobate," "criticize," "reprove," "admonish," "chide." Those are the things most people do on a regular basis. A good way to get out of the kingdom is by judgment. Any of these others will also do. Blame, rebuking, castigating, reproaching—

that's not praising; that's the opposite of praising. So if praise gets you in, these things get you out. So every time you decide to be critical or blame, you get the opportunity of being out of the kingdom—which is your home, so you're kicking yourself out. We slay ourselves by doing these things. I'll blame you for my miserable circumstances and take myself right into hell.

Yesterday and this morning I had the privilege of being with the Leadership Development Class. The participants had a chance to speak about what their longing is for this class: What do you long for? What are you yearning to have happen in this time? Cliff Penwell mentioned there's the easy answer, such as "I really want to praise God and be a much more holy person by the time the class is over." And then he said there's the hard one, which is "I want to never think evil thoughts or blame anybody ever again, and I never want to sin for the rest of my life," making it impossible to achieve. And then he said, there's the right thing, which is the specific thing you want to do while in the class. So how are you going to do that? What part of you have you not been bringing into your world that you really want to pour into this class? This morning, in a small group, I had the privilege of taking a number of the class members through that experience of asking to speak to the part of them that feels the risk or is unsure about going for what they want. Often what comes out of the part that feels the risk is "I don't want to do that because I might fail. I don't want to do that because people will think I don't know what I'm doing. I don't want to look bad. I don't want to get hurt." Those are pretty common. I think most of you can relate to one or two of those. "I don't want to expose myself more. I don't want to try something that in the past maybe didn't go so well."

So I asked the question: "Has not going for what you want prevented you from having the experience you fear?" And of course most people say, "Well no—I still feel like I don't look very good, I still sometimes feel like I don't know what I'm doing, I still make mistakes." So I offer them an opportunity to take advantage of the safe container they are entering, take care of themselves and go for what they want. I inquire, might they actually know pleasure if they tried doing something differently?

We sometimes don't want to take risks for fear we'll look bad, but we also end up not having the pleasure of the new experience. We don't get to have more life moving through us. We don't get to have the experience of creating because it might actually look funny. "I really want to create this, but I don't know exactly how to do it, so I just won't." The greatest thing that a creator-being does, that gives them pleasure, is to create. So stopping your creative impulses immediately lowers the pleasure quotient. It does for anybody I know, whether or not they are conscious that they're a creator.

Last night Cliff referred to an article called "In Praise of the Incomplete Leader." He said leaders often are expected to be totally whole, competent, non-erring, finished in some way. He invited people to think of themselves and others who lead from the standpoint of incompleteness. "I'm incomplete and I'm going to make mistakes, and there are things about me that are unfinished." That's true of all leaders and we can offer praise for that. It will assist the people they're leading to come forward unfinished themselves. My experience from that stance is that I am then more open to the things that other people bring that I need. It assists in fulfilling my destiny.

Have you ever had the experience of longing to do something, and suddenly a certain piece through a

certain person showed up and you could move forward? I have. Sometimes it's the feeling that somebody's got my back. They may not even be doing a specific job but are supporting me being unfinished. They're saying, "Go for it; it's worth it."

When David spoke about pleasure, it occurred to me it's often more risky for people to express their joy and their pleasure than it is to be angry or afraid. I don't know about you, but when people are acting joyful, I find people judge them as being unfocused, superficial, not seriously doing their work—they're just having a good time and being self-indulgent. But if you find someone who's really afraid and being cautious, oh, people surround them, they protect them, they think they're really being wise. The same thing with anger—it's okay to be angry; people get supported: "You have a right to be angry—go for it." Grief is another one that people really support. When someone's crying, lots of other people join in because there must be a good reason to be crying. Something sad is happening. Many times, when people are feeling pleasure and joy, people assume the person has sinned. "You can't be that happy without sinning. You've done something or have come really close, really close to breaking one of those Commandments."

Having deep feeling has felt to human beings like a curse—that if we could just get it all under control, we would actually be in the kingdom. That would be a pretty boring place, wouldn't it, if we had all our feelings totally under control? These are powerful things.

The two great Commandments are: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22: 37-39)

So if we believe deep feeling is inappropriate, how does it go? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, but not too deeply—don't feel it too much. How joyful would that be? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, but not too much feeling. Do you think that's what the First Commandment was about? I want to say, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy feeling." ALL of it is praise to God when one is in thanks and praise. Do we ever see children fighting to hold back their joy? They feel that they can express whatever they want because somehow they're held in a container of safety to express their feelings.

So how do you create a safe place for you to express your joy, to express your feelings, to express your pleasure? Who do you have around you that allows you to move that much passion around? Why not surround yourself with people who are very interested in holding a safe place for new adventure, yours and theirs? They bring their joy and match your joy. They bring their pleasure.

Not long ago people were encouraging each other to "follow your bliss." If you follow your bliss you'll have a wonderful life. There is a lot to be said about finding what it is that brings you joy. You have to in some way follow your bliss to find out how long the joy in it is sustainable. Many things people choose would fill a

short-range hunger, like sleeping, eating or vacationing. But if you get past the easy answers, that's when you find what you would really want to create. Life would increasingly be moving through you and you would know the pleasure of creation, knowing communion with God.

Most things people end up getting addicted to are a result of a search for life, a search for something moving through them, something that satisfies them, or a way to avoid the pain, the things that aren't creative, and life consequently feels painful, or lonely. But when you get to the place of knowing true pleasure, you know the Lord is having pleasure, because YOU are.

When the scent of the spices leaves the garden because you let it, when your precious fruit is precious to you and you share it with your world, not only does the ratio of life current go up, so does the presence of the Creator on earth, because there you are. I heard a quote recently: "Joy is only known when it's shared." We are meant to be about that, sharing the pleasure of being alive because we are life itself. We're not faking it; we're not doing it for somebody else. We praise God by enjoying our life and sharing our life, for His purposes, which is life—to bring it and bring more abundantly His spirit, my spirit, our spirit.

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