

# THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES  
OF DIVINE LIGHT

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## SPIRITUAL FOCUS

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4 FEBRUARY 2008

What a journey we're on! We're on a journey here together this morning, and we're on a journey in our lives.

I'd like to talk this morning about creative thinking and creative action. Clearly, there has to be something larger than our thinking and acting that holds these activities in a creative range. For instance, thinking doesn't exist all by itself. It happens in the context of an interior climate. Without a favorable internal climate, a person's thinking is likely to drive them crazy. There are a lot of other things that need to be in place for a person to think well and in a healthy way. And we know that out of thinking comes acting, creating and building.

There are a lot of ways we could name what comes before creative thinking. I'd like to speak of the most primary matter as spiritual focus. There are at least two ways to talk about spiritual focus. We could ask ourselves, what is it in which I am focused spiritually? What do I look to? What does my compass point to? What is true north for me? So we can talk about spiritual focus as something outside and above us, in which we orient.

But ultimately, what we're focused in has meaning only as it takes on another quality, so that the principle of spiritual focus isn't just about something outside myself that I'm orienting to, but it becomes something that I myself am embodying and living, so that whatever that point of orientation is, whatever that focus point is, it's not just something out there. It's something in here that I'm offering in my living to my world. It is true north that's internal, not just external.

Remarkable things happen for a person as spiritual focus takes on that kind of meaning in their life. That person themselves becomes a focus of creative activity. They become an initiating point for creative activity. All kinds of wonderful things can be born out of that, including creative thinking and creative acting and building. When spiritual focus has become an internal matter, a person's thinking and acting and building can be born out of their spiritual focus.

Another word for spiritual focus is "identity." Our lives are rightly born out of the integrity of who we are as a being, so that we are being ourselves. There are all kinds of aphorisms about that: "To thine own self be true." But the experience of true spiritual focus is the true experience of selfhood, which is the right starting point for human life and for anything a person might do. That's the positive way to

put it, that the right starting point for our thinking and our acting is who we are, and, you might say, a refusal to be anything other than who we are. I won't be untrue to myself.

There is a negative way to put all this: Thinking that *isn't* grounded in who we are leads to disaster. For instance, the human mind without spiritual focus can very easily go to unbridled criticism, so that the wonderful capacity to see the unvarnished facts of what is happening goes to the dark side and becomes some kind of predatory energy in a person, that gnaws away at everything—gnaws away at other people and, most sadly, gnaws away at the person's own heart and the person's own being. That is a good description for how the human mind can get. We probably all know something of how our own thinking can go round and round and eat away at things in a way that just goes no place.

There's a story of that in the Bible that is very familiar, the story of Noah and the ark. Usually when we think of Noah and the ark, we think of the animals and the flood and the rainbow. But there was something that preceded the flood that relates to the process of thought.

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)

The imagination and the thoughts of his heart—there's that wonderful capacity of consciousness and for imagination, which is one way to describe creative thinking. The ability to imagine is fabulous. It is a great capacity we have to bring into consciousness ways of understanding what's going on that clothe it in new clothing. But where that capacity in a person is detached from a healthy sense of who they are, it goes to all kinds of things, and there is no compass, there is no true point of origin, and therefore in the end nothing good comes of it.

So the story of Noah is a story about what happens when creative imagination doesn't come out of one's integrity, spiritually speaking. Of course, the way the story is told, the results were all put on God.

“It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

“And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth...” (Genesis 6:6,7)

So that is the experience when our thinking is not born out of spiritual focus.

There's another story very shortly after this one that looks at ungrounded building—building or acting in the world that is not grounded in who we are. This is the story of the tower of Babel, another story that's probably quite familiar. The story goes that they were building a tower to the sky. There's something very revealing about it, which I'll get to in a minute, but we know that it's the story of how language got split into many pieces. Before this point, everybody could understand each other and spoke the same language.

Here is what they were saying to themselves as they were looking to build this tower. You can see this in the light of a depiction of trying to build without being focused spiritually.

“Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:4)

“Let us make us a name.” I think “name” relates to identity and to spiritual focus. A name relates to who we are. Let us make something of ourselves, let’s *be* somebody because we build something. And what happens? The building topples. It doesn’t work to try to make something of yourself by building. You have to *start* with yourself and *then* build. You have to know who you are and then build out of that in a way that’s an extension of who you are, so that you see who you are in what you build.

I have a certain passion about both these topics—about thinking in a way that’s not spiritually oriented or spiritually grounded, or acting in a way that’s not spiritually based—because what I see is that both of those attempts come to nothing. When I look around at my world, and I see what’s happening, and I reflect on my own experience, I see that happening all over.

The story of Noah talks about “only evil continually.” Here is how I hear that statement: “They keep doing it!” They don’t get it! In other words, that approach is not working, and yet they don’t change. If you look around at the world, I think that’s what you see. They keep doing it. People keep trying to invent a world that isn’t based in the integrity of self.

This issue is coming up in our elections in the U.S. If you hear some of the speeches that are given, you can hear some of the candidates trying to get into a territory that starts with wholeness. Have you noticed that? And it’s hard for them because they try to go there, and that predatory habit of the mind to criticize and pick things apart steps in, and seemingly they have to defend themselves. Pretty soon, down it all goes. The whole dialogue degenerates into an approach to thinking and building that isn’t based on spiritual character. But I suspect, for most of us, we don’t have to look to presidential campaigns to see this kind of thing going on.

So these questions are up for individuals, and these dynamics play out in groups of people, maybe even us. Do you have an experience of towers in your life falling down, whatever kind of tower you may be thinking of, personally or with others? Towers of your creative imagination that you thought would be fulfilled, only to find they’re not happening? Well, maybe they didn’t need to happen—and maybe there wasn’t altogether the right starting point.

I consider myself to be, in some ways, a fairly ambitious person. So I would love to be building all kinds of things. It makes me happy to be building. And I’ve been reflecting on how much I love to think creatively, whether it’s writing music or doing financial analysis, or even speaking on a Sunday morning. There’s something wonderful about all that. Maybe you feel the same way in your own life.

But I recognize that the most important thing, and in fact the most important gift I have to give to my

world, is the right starting point. If we in fact live in the place of the right starting point and really present that to the world, and propose to the world that “You could start from here,” that would be a great gift to give. And I don’t mean “here” only in the sense of a point of spiritual orientation outside the person, although initially it’s probably going to look that way. But “You could start here” in the sense of starting from that place in yourself that’s a worthy starting point. That spiritual character, that spiritual identity in yourself, that reality of God that lives in you—you could start from there and you could build your world from that place. And if you do that, and I do that, we might find that it is indeed the same starting place—that in fact there’s only one right starting place, because that place in you and that place in me is the same.

Finding that place and living in it, what is found is not only that it’s one world that we live in, which is a nice dream, but it’s one point of origin, one reality that is at the core of each of us. This story of the tower of Babel is saying you can’t start from being separate from other people, seeing yourself as separate, experiencing yourself as separate, and then hope to create a world that is whole. You can have wonderful rhetoric about it—speaking of the presidential campaign, you’ll probably hear people talking about that. And it is appealing to people to be one Democratic Party, and one nation. There’s something appealing about that. And why? It’s because, somewhere inside, we know that that is the reality.

As I think about it, it’s just like the Garden of Eden. It is the reality that it’s one world. The reality of this world *is* the Garden of Eden. But humanity can’t know it in the state that it is in. We get ourselves outside the gates of that reality because of a loss of spiritual focus, which would make the experience possible. Because we can’t know the oneness of our world without knowing our wholeness as people—first of all, our wholeness as an individual, and therefore our wholeness with all other people.

Sometimes I think you have to marvel at divine justice. Isn’t it amazing that here is this wonderful reality that we can touch, that we can sense is present, the reality of one world living in peace and harmony, and thriving—humanity living harmoniously with the earth? So we touch one world, not just for human beings but for all the creatures of the earth and for all of the earth. We can sense that potential present. But the working of divine justice says no, you can’t have it unless and until you come into your own wholeness as a person and as a body of humanity. You can’t have it. And if you think about what you see on the news today, what you see happening in the world, and maybe what you see happening in your own life, you may be hearing some of that divine justice that says, “No, you can’t have it—not this way.”

There is a way to know the fulfillment of the promise of paradise, the promise of oneness. There is a way—and there is only one way. I don’t think it matters very much how a person comes to that one way. So I’m not saying this one way is my, or our, religion or philosophy. But divine justice says there is only one way that you know fulfillment in this world, and that is by being it and bringing it.

So let’s be it, individually and together, and let’s bring it. Let’s be that point of origin and show it to

the world. It will take some creative thinking and some creative building to show it. It isn't just going to happen. But it takes coming from the place of true origin to do that thinking and that building which would let it come.

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27 January 2008

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