

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES
OF DIVINE LIGHT

I CELEBRATE MYSELF

12 JANUARY 2009

Our theme today has to do with identity and the creative process. And our premise is that the creative process is centered in identity, and it's held in identity. Or, to put it in other words, it's held in selfhood, it's held in who we are.

The most pivotal question in our life and the most pivotal question on Planet Earth is not, first of all, what we're doing or how we're doing it, but *who* is doing it.

I'd like to read a parable of Jesus that I think contains a very powerful lesson about selfhood. It goes like this:

"For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

"Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

"When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

"Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (*Matthew 25:35-40*)

Here is a powerful message about how we know and serve the divine. A person on a spiritual path may well have the idea that they will somehow ascend to heaven. In many religions there is the belief that a person will be raised up at some point, perhaps after they die, perhaps to be greeted by St. Peter at the Pearly Gates. However it configures in a person's consciousness, they're going to

rise up to meet God. Perhaps they will attain Nirvana. For a person embarking on a spiritual path, it looks like that path leads higher and higher and higher.

That approach works for a while for a person, until a person faces the necessity which Jesus was pointing to here, which is to know the divine in our service to humanity, particularly the aspects of humanity which are not whole. That includes our own humanity, as well as the humanity of others. When that time comes, the message we hear, if we are open to it, is this: “You will find the divine in your humanity and the humanity of others—and at least for now, in no other place. And if you will not find it there, you will not have the experience of the divine.” It will be unavailable to you if you do not find a way to fully incarnate into your humanity.”

That strikes me as being fair. I think if I were God I might want to set it up that way. It would be too cheap and easy to let human beings simply say, “Oh God, I love You,” and then have the experience of salvation and the divine.

I have some other words from Jesus here. They’re from what’s often referred to as the Prayer of Intercession, in the Book of John. This is a prayer to his Father, as he put it:

“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” (*John 17:4*)

I see this as being the same message. I have come not only to my own humanity; I have come to the humanity of the world. I have finished my work in coming to that humanity.

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (*John 17:5*)

“...glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” (*John 17:1*)

I see this passage as being all about selfhood. Glorify thou me with thine own self...that thy Son may glorify thee.” How do we glorify divine being? I have an awful and terrifying answer for you on that question. Ultimately, the only way to glorify God is through oneself, through your own selfhood. There is no other way to do it. Through your own selfhood and the selfhood of the people around you.

And why is that a terrifying answer? Because there is so much in our humanity that seems to have betrayed us so badly. Certainly that’s true if you think about what you see on the evening news. We could probably reel off those betrayals without thinking about them. And how about in the people around you? Is there anybody in this room here this morning in the Dome, or on the phone today, who has not in some way been betrayed by another person? But those two ranges are the least of it, because I think it is likely that we have all not only been betrayed by others. We have been betrayed by our own humanity. We don’t make New Year’s resolutions for nothing! We make them because we know that in some way we have been betrayed by our humanity. So here is

the terrifying thing: that you have to come to your humanity and, through your humanity, know the divine. You have to have union with the divine through your humanity and the humanity around you to know the divine. How else would you do it?

This is what is being portrayed through the verses that describe the Sixth Day of Creation: “Let us make man...” (*Genesis 1:26*) What is the significance of that? Is it just that there was some kind of furless animal that was being made? What does it mean to say that man was to be made in the image and likeness of God? I do believe it’s about selfhood. “Let us make a human self...” We may have thought that the spiritual path was going to be one of transparency—“I am going to be an open channel for the divine, and my personality will just fall away; I will just become something like an open tube and the divine will just shower down on earth through me, and all my difficult qualities will disappear, and the divine will be present.”

We find that there is much more to the spiritual path, and we are not going to fulfill our journey simply by being transparent. That approach may work well for a while. When it stops working, it is time to move on to what is next for a person. You are called to something greater, something more, and we might even say that you are called to something more perilous. It is to be a self. We find that we glorify the divine because we glorify the selfhood that we are, not as something separate from the wholeness of being—but it can sure seem that way sometimes.

Walt Whitman wrote a wonderful volume of poetry, *LEAVES OF GRASS*, and there’s a portion of it that he entitled “Song of Myself.” He says this: “I celebrate myself, and sing myself.” As I do that, I know something about the divine. I am celebrating the divine in celebrating myself, and in fact I have no other way to do it. I have to be myself to celebrate the divine.

We find out that while we might have had the idea that the spiritual path was one of ascension, it is also a path of descension. It is the path of penetrating our human capacities, and learning to celebrate all of who and what we are.

We learn something about what divine love is through our human love, through our ability to sustain spiritual intimacy with other people. We have the opportunity to discover that the creative process is held in intimacy, which is a touching of the selfhood of another.

The creative process is a process that is a celebration of self, and it is by being more fully ourselves that we hold all that’s transpiring. By finding our capacity to be in touch with one another through whatever happens, we hold whatever is happening. If we cannot stay together with the people with whom we are holding the creative process—in touch, in spiritual intimacy, through whatever is happening—we cannot hold the creative process.

So if you are taking on a large project of any kind with other people, you might check your own capacity for spiritual intimacy. If you are working with people and you notice that there is an inability to sustain intimacy, a fear of being closer and closer to other people and knowing other people better and better, you may realize that there is something that will have to be faced. Because

you may not be able to complete the project if you do not find a way to be spiritually intimate, to stay in contact.

In coming to our imprisoned humanity, we have to penetrate our feelings—perhaps the ultimate betrayers. If we have been betrayed by our feelings, it may seem like a crazy idea to look to our feelings to know the divine. But it is through our feelings that we have the opportunity of perceiving and knowing the divine. We don't touch the divine because we do a scientific experiment and figure out that it exists. We touch and know the divine because something happens in our feeling realm, and through our feeling realm we get to know something more. We get to know in a way that is not just by observation.

The Master said that the kingdom of heaven isn't found by observation. It's within you—you have to feel it. You have the opportunity of feeling it and knowing it with a powerful depth of assurance that tells you, "This is real." How could it be more real than to feel it? It is through your feelings that you have the opportunity to know and to glorify the divine.

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4 January 2009*

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