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These words from President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address are relevant to the heart and soul of the United States of America, which is being tested on this day. They also have a larger resonance, inspiring us who have dedicated our lives to bringing spiritual regeneration to the world.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—

this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Lincoln reached a point during the Civil War when he was carrying the future of the country on his own back, with little support from anyone around him. He was thought to have melancholia—today we'd call it depression. Who wouldn't have

had a measure of melancholia in the position he was in? But he endured.

At Sunrise Ranch, where I live, we are not only about the patriotism of the country in which we live. We are here because we share a vision of heaven on earth, a vision of living from a heavenly place and embodying that in form in the living of life. That can seem sensational. The very word *heaven* is somewhat sensational. But whether you call it heaven or nirvana or anything else, spirituality is profoundly practical. Truly, it is the basis for a creative life.

We have a vision at Sunrise Ranch. We have a cemetery on this property with the ashes of people who committed their lives to this vision. We ourselves who live at Sunrise Ranch, along with those who visit here, and those who are associated with us around the world, are laying our lives on the altar of life itself, which is our response to that vision.

Sometimes in scripture the spiritual journey is pictured as a battle. The *Bhagavad-Gita* portrays Arjuna as resisting the battle before him. I'm not here to fight a battle in any kind of usual sense. But there is a creative victory to win. Ultimately, we fulfill our life commission simply because we *are*—simply because we express and embody who we are as accurately as we know how to on earth, without concern for what anyone else

may do or not do. It is the all-powerful act of being oneself and expressing oneself, no matter what. That is the victory. I say “all-powerful” because you and I have all the power we need to perform that act, and no circumstance, no person, no event can stop us from doing that. We are all-powerful in that sense. And then we have the rest to figure out: what we do in light of events, circumstances, other people, and what we have to do together.

I wish that for you, dear reader, the privilege of not only knowing what I just described but also the privilege of close association with somebody else who knows the same empowerment. When you know that all-powerful place in yourself and I know it in myself, we have something to share and something to do that cannot and will not be stopped, no matter what. Life itself is of that nature. The life in us is of that nature.

Jesus discovered for himself exactly this: that there was something all-powerful and unstoppable in him. In an outer sense, you might say it didn't go too well for him; it didn't seem so, anyway. Apparently that wasn't really his concern. There is no record of him complaining about what happened to him or worrying about himself. His concern was for the world that he came to do something about. And if you read everything he said in all those red letters, it was all about

that—not about himself. When it came right down to it, things became impossible for him in the political situation in which he found himself, with the lack of understanding by the people right around him. And still that didn't stop him. There was a tidal wave of Love from him that is still cresting around the world today.

What he knew was that the message he was bringing and the vibration of it had to be truly heard and understood, and that that was impossible without understanding him and who he was. It was pretty hard to detach the message of Love that he brought from the person he was—a Being of Love. What he taught was: *Love one another.*

If we as human beings don't learn to lift each other up, we'll all go down together. It pretty much comes down to that.

We could have all kinds of words for the spiritual and emotional immaturity of a person that stops them from doing that. The world *narcissism* is one of them. But whatever it is in the human heart and mind that decides to tear down the people around you, instead of lifting them up, the human race won't thrive that way.

Jesus brought it to issue relative to himself.

How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Jesus came in the name of the Sovereign Being who he was. In doing that, he was coming in the name of all of Sovereign Being. He was coming in the name of Love, which is the core reality of Sovereign Being. Of course, that's true for all people, whether they know it or not. How else would it be? We all are actually coming on earth in the name of Love, that all-powerful source within us, and we are all coming in the name of the Sovereign Being that we are. But there is a distinction, because while that's true for all people in terms of the original spiritual intention of the Being, it's not true in terms of the actual life expression of every person on the face of the earth.

Where it is true that a person is coming in the name of Sovereign Being, that can't be seen unless it is revered and lifted up by the people around. It was true for Jesus. It is true for you and it's true for me, and it's true for anybody.

There is a beautiful chorus from *The Messiah* that says this:

Every valley shall be exalted.

It is easy to pick on the valleys in human experience. That Gettysburg battlefield was such a valley. What an absolutely desperate time! And yet, in those few simple words, Abraham Lincoln exalted that valley. There are those who exalt the mountains, and the mountains are beautiful. But that's the easy part. We are here to exalt the low places in life, and even the low places in one another; to lift up the places that show lack of understanding, lack of Love, lack of maturity, when we find them. We live in a world that wants to find a low place in another person and then crush them like a bug. Our future as humanity lies in lifting each other up.

Sunrise Ranch is about that. Speaking for myself, my life is about that. You do wonder, if we set ourselves to that, what might happen. But we can't afford to wait for everyone else. From the beginning, Sunrise Ranch has not been a *Hey, let's all do this together* kind of place. *Okay, on the count of three—one, two, three—we'll just all do it together.* I don't think that's how it works for us as human beings. It's much more individual than that. What is of true and enduring value starts here and now with me. I will begin and I won't stop. That's the all-powerful ability that is unleashed when an individual simply says *Yes*.

Recently, we have witnessed the terror in the Bahamas. I don't know another word

for it. It was just terrorizing for those people, and how could our hearts not go out to them? Somehow, it made me put myself in the position of what it would be like to be in such a place at such a time. And here is the thought that came to me: that hard circumstances—the valleys—can make a weak person stop loving. They can make a weak person go to self-centeredness, overwhelmed by self-concern. And who wouldn't have compassion if that happened for people in the Bahamas? And I'm not saying it did. So, we have compassion in desperate situations for people who go there. But what occurred to me is that the real pain would be to stop being myself and to stop loving in such a situation—that is the real desperation. That is when a person *really* loses their life. Whatever is happening to the physical body, if you stop being yourself and stop giving what you have to give, that is the end of a life worth living.

Jesus never gave way to that kind of desperation. In fact, something else happened. Who he was and the Love that he was bringing prevailed. The Romans didn't think so—they thought they'd removed him from the scene. But still the tidal wave of Love continued and continues to this day.

Shortly after he had left the scene, there was Pentecost. The story of Pentecost is the story of the coming forth of glory, and glory is the expression of the

vibration of Love in the world. It's depicted with certain symbology—cloven tongues of fire and a sound that was like a wind. What was being experienced was his victory. His victory was there. It was in the air. The heaven that he brought to earth was reverberating through a body of people, and that was victory, even though it didn't last very long because the people involved didn't know how to hold that glory.

In our Bible, that emanation of Love in the world is spoken of as glory. In Persia they used another word—*farr*. The word

spread through the culture of the Middle East, sometimes associated with a regal presence. And when royalty was depicted, sometimes they were depicted with the *farr* surrounding them, like a halo. That is the emanation of someone who has found the all-powerful source within themselves and has simply chosen to let it be embodied and expressed in their life.

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