

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT



EMISSARIES
OF DIVINE LIGHT

JESUS AND HIS RADICAL, EMPOWERING MESSAGE

27 DECEMBER 2010

The common human experience tends to be one that is characterized by a sense that there are things happening to a person over which they have no control. The great spiritual leaders through the ages have brought an experience of empowerment. They sought to make us aware of the power we have to create our experience and to bring a profound gift to the world. Whoever you look to, from the East or from the West, if there was something of spiritual import it was because there was a radical message of empowerment. All too often, after an enlightened leader has come and gone, that message of empowerment fades in people's understanding and somehow degenerates back into a belief in helplessness, a belief that there's not too much that you or I could do but that someone or something else is going to save us—that any real fulfillment and pleasure is reserved for some time other than this one and will be at the hand of somebody else.

Certainly, what Jesus brought has had that done to it. In his case, as is usually so when something of spiritual revelation is brought, it didn't take years, decades or centuries for his message to be misunderstood—it was very misunderstood at the time. Today there are people who embrace what they think of as Christianity. All too often it is a religion of helplessness, a religion of waiting for Jesus to do something. Or a religion that espouses the belief that Jesus has already done all of what needs to be done. All too often it is a religion based on how others interpreted the significance of Jesus' message, not on the message itself.

There are many who embrace a religion that ignores the central message that Jesus brought. And there are many others who reject Christianity based on other people's interpretations of his message, without having heard what Jesus himself brought.

People who are interested in the evolution of human consciousness today have the opportunity to hear what Jesus brought on its own terms. Because, despite all the problems that there have been with the record of his ministry in the New Testament, and the translation from Aramaic to Greek and to English, the profound relevance of his message shines forth through those words. To enable ourselves to see it for what it is, let us begin to peel back some of the beliefs around this man, so that we get to the heart of what it was that he said and what he stood for in his life. And then, if we like, we could measure other people's interpretations against the message that Jesus himself brought.

We could begin with Christmas itself. It seems likely that Jesus was born sometime in the spring. Several centuries after his birth, the "powers that be" decided that it would be more advantageous to celebrate the birthday at the solstice time. There was a desire to co-opt what were seen as the pagan religions of the day, taking the attitude "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." These days we take the time of Jesus' birth for granted.

It is interesting also that the Roman Empire presented itself as the chief proponent of the teachings of the man that they had crucified. I think if I were around at the time, I would have had a measure of suspicion about the veracity of that claim. The position that Rome found itself in relative to Jesus—having crucified him and persecuted the early Christians—certainly has been a factor in the portrayal of what Jesus' life and message was all about.

At the same time, if you read the Gospels of the New Testament, it is clear that those who were with Jesus had, at best, a mixed understanding of what he was talking about. Towards the end of the story, one of his disciples asked, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." (*John 14:8*) So after all of his teachings and after all he went through and all he demonstrated in his life, a disciple asked that he somehow show something of the divine to them. If you can, for a moment, put yourself in Jesus' shoes and imagine what it must have been like, teaching and revealing the divine for three and a half years to the people around him, and to be asked that question. It is not hard to appreciate the lack of understanding in those around him. He gave a graceful answer, which was "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (*John 14:9*)

Much of the teaching of Christianity has relied on Peter, who, according to the story, denied his association with Jesus; and Paul, who never met Jesus. And if you read the story in the Book of

Acts, it carries forward from the Gospels—which are a depiction of spiritual clarity—to a picture of something close to total chaos, with Peter and Paul going hither and yon in the known world, getting themselves into all kinds of trouble, and with disputes among those who were associated with the early Christian Church. And yet so much of Christianity has relied on what Peter and Paul said and did.

So to peel back the beliefs and teachings of others and connect with the radical, empowering message Jesus brought, I believe we have to see anyone else’s words and teachings about Jesus, and measure them in the light of what he actually brought. It should be an easy thing to do, and in fact it *is* an easy thing to do, because whatever distortion there may be in the Gospels and whatever problems there may be in the translation, there still remains a crystal-clear empowering message that has relevance to anybody. In that light, we could see whatever it was that Peter and Paul and anybody else has said about Jesus’ message, and see how it measures up to the original teaching.

So what was his message? The most relevant place to look is toward what he said—not to what others imply about his life, not to imagination or to things made up out of the beliefs of others, but to what he said and what he lived out. The truth that he brought is hidden in plain sight in his words for those who are open to them for what they are and who accept them on their own terms.

Most central to that message was the immediate availability of an uncommon experience: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (*Matthew 3:2,4:17,10:7*) There could be some argument about what “at hand” means. Some might say that “at hand” means coming sometime later. But if something is at hand, it is there with you. Other things he said indicate that he was not talking about something that was just in the future. He was talking about something that is totally available to anyone at any time. He also said, “The kingdom of God is within you.” (*Luke 17:21*) I do believe that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven are the same thing. It is within you, it is with you, it is at hand.

He began his proclamation of the immediate availability of empowered spiritual experience with the word *Repent*. Christianity has shrouded that word with shame. Essentially the word means “change.” Change your orientation, change the way you’re approaching things. Repent, change.

Central to his message was the invitation to dramatically change the two primary relationships in your life. If you look at all of what he said and taught, it had to do with changing those two relationships. The first relationship is your relationship with the world. I think of his teaching of turning the other cheek. He said that if someone smites you on one cheek, turn your other cheek to him. As I heard someone say recently, you run out of cheeks quickly on this basis. But wasn’t he

saying, in more modern parlance, do not react? Don't react to the people around you. Act. Be empowered. Turn the other cheek.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” (*Matthew 5:38*)
That's reaction—doing unto others as they do unto you, which amounts to being controlled by your environment. It amounts to being helpless, not in control of how you're acting, what you're thinking, what you're emoting, what you're emanating.

*But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil....
And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

(Matthew 5:39,41)

He was opening up the opportunity to be an emanation of love in the world.

You and I could decide to be that way with the people in our life, whatever they do. We could decide that whatever someone does, it doesn't matter. That's not what's relevant. What is relevant is the choice to be an emanation of love. A person can make that decision in their life. They can change the way that they are relating to their world and the people in it. A person becomes powerful in their life when they make that change.

The other relationship he talked about was the relationship we have with the Eternal. We could name the Eternal in many ways. He chose a name that conveyed intimacy and connection. He spoke of the eternal as his Father. Not God the rule maker or God the punisher, but a God of love that he spoke of as Father. He spoke about being in relationship with that reality with loving connection. His words and his life taught what it could mean for a person to change their relationship with the Eternal from one of fear and ignorance to one of loving relationship.

Jesus addressed the change in these two relationships—with the Eternal and with other people—in these words:

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)

If there is any doubt as to whether Jesus was speaking about something that would be fulfilled somewhere other than on earth where we live, it was certainly dispelled by what has come to be known as The Lord's Prayer. The prayer speaks of how a person becomes empowered to let spiritual things manifest in and through them and in their world. And it speaks plainly about the two great relationships in our life, and how we become empowered when those relationship change. This is another teaching hidden in plain sight, recited by rote more times than we can imagine in human history. It is remarkable when you look at what's said in that prayer and how totally it's been ignored.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

(Matthew 6:9&10)

What a radical understanding! The kingdom of heaven that is at hand could be fulfilled and embodied in our life on earth. Not after we die, not after we reincarnate, not after we get smarter or more spiritually developed.

And yet, how many Christians who have recited the prayer countless times feel powerless in their life. "No, it's impossible. We have to wait. It can't happen here, it can't happen now, it can't happen in these circumstances, it can't happen with these people doing what they're doing. It can't happen with me." You talk about belief? *Those* beliefs in limitation are so deep and profound in the human psyche, and the belief in what Jesus *actually* brought is paper-thin at best for most Christians.

The significance of Christmas has to do with the birth of what *could* be present in form on earth now. Those who are participating in what is emerging through human consciousness today are in a unique position to bring that understanding with friends around the world, known and unknown. I recently met a man who is a vicar for an Anglican church in Wales. On a recent Sunday morning he gave a sermon to his parishioners, telling them that the evolution of human consciousness *was* the Second Coming of Christ. He said they took it well after he had prepared them for some time to hear that message. He is one person out of many who is choosing to bring the compulsion for evolution in consciousness to the world.

We who live in this day cannot go back to Jesus' time to hear his words. But his radical teaching, seen for what it is, can bring us to the point of taking the step that is ours to take in the evolution of human consciousness now. Let's celebrate the truth known and expressed by anyone in any religion. But like the message of any great spiritual leader, what Jesus brought it too important to

be left solely to the religions of the world. Stripped of religious interpretation, his words carry the spiritual impulse, still present today at the core of humanity, urging us to do our work, to live the change in consciousness that creates a new world.

*Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
in earth,
as it is in heaven.*

David Karchere
dkarchere@emnet.org

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100 Sunrise Ranch Road ♦ Loveland, CO 80538
970.679.4200 phone 970.679.4248 fax