

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE: IT'S WHO I AM AND WHAT I DO

THE PULSE OF SPIRIT

APRIL 6, 2015



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I had occasion to ask this of a friend. I believe it's a key question for all of us:

Do you want to know why you're experiencing what you're experiencing?

It seems to me that if a person knew that, they could know how they could shift and change the experience that they're having. Sound logical? If you understood how you are creating the experience you are having, you would be on your way to understanding how you could create it differently.

How do we find out? Most people I know are not-so-blissfully unaware of why they are having the experience that they are. We call that spiritual unconsciousness. What does it mean to be spiritually conscious or spiritually enlightened? I

think there are all kinds of fanciful ideas—nirvana and all the rest. Real spiritual consciousness, real enlightenment, is something very practical, whatever else it is.

It is an understanding of the origins of human experience. It is an understanding of how one's own experience is being created, and the part that you have to play and are having to play in creating it the way it's coming out. And then it is inheriting the power that comes when we do become conscious and we can do something different.

I am speaking in generalities, which is the best I can do when writing on this topic to many people who are each having unique experiences. If you want to understand your own experience more deeply, find an honest person and ask

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them in openness. If they are an honest person, and if they hear a genuine desire to understand, they might help you, and they might not just help you in the general sense but help you in a very specific sense. I say if we want to understand for ourselves, if we truly want to know, and if there is a true openness to know why we're experiencing what we are, we get to the bottom of it. Spiritual consciousness and enlightened awareness is not being withheld from any of us. But we have got to want it and ask for it to receive it.

Here's what I know about the common human experience. This is an insight that is relevant to all the difficulties that people experience around the globe. The great mass of humanity has been hoodwinked into believing that, all together and then individually, we are victims. It pretty much adds up to that—the belief that we are victims of an angry God, victims of a cruel world, victims of the survival of the fittest, of mean people who dominate the world, big-money interests, government, churches... We could keep going; the people we live with, families, lovers, bosses, children, parents, employees...

In ancient times, that sense of victimhood became very real. Civilizations felt victimized by the gods that they worshiped; and then, to satisfy that cruel

and angry pantheon of gods, or even the monotheistic god, the belief was that there had to be more victimhood. "Maybe if we sacrifice somebody, it'll all get better." More victimhood—"Let's just really go into this, and if we really become victims and victimize somebody, it will get better." And quite literally, people were thrown down the temple steps, burned at the stake, or what-have-you—sacrificed in one way or another. These days we do it in other ways—we send people off to war, to make victims of them.

Does any of this have anything to do with Easter, which Christians around the globe celebrate at this time of year? Easter is a funny holiday. The Romans played a part in mixing together elements from many of the peoples whom they conquered. They had this wonderful penchant for co-opting culture and the holidays of peoples they conquered. From the beginning, the holiday was linked to Judaism because the events of Jesus' crucifixion revolved around the Passover. In fact, the Romans used the Aramaic name for Passover, which became *Pascha*, a name for Easter in many parts of the world.

Over centuries, other cultures have played a part in mixing together the various traditions of Easter. Some credit the name *Easter* to an Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, Eostre, who had a hare

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as her companion. (Can you say “fertility”?) Others attribute the name *Easter* to the Babylon goddess of fertility and the divine embodiment of the planet Venus, Ishtar.

So we have to sort our way through the Easter bunny, the basket of candies, Easter eggs, and wonder what all that has to do with the story of Jesus. Over the centuries, people seem to have done a good job at overlooking all that.

In the middle of the Easter story and the celebration of the holiday is Jesus and what he did. For many, it is a story of victimhood. We see him portrayed on a crucifix, being sacrificed to save humanity from its own victimhood and its own sin. The mindset of victimhood is so firmly established in the mass subconscious of humanity that we tend to paint almost everything we see with that brush.

Here is another take on who Jesus was and what he did. He conquered victimhood in his own experience. He certainly lived in a culture that was quite prepared to victimize him. They finally crucified him. So it wasn't that he was not in that culture and didn't, in some practical, real way, become victimized. The significance of his life is that he never accepted the experience of being a victim. That is not who he was. As it is said, he was the Son of God. He was a living

embodiment of the Creator. Through it all, he didn't accept the attitude of a victim. And, as the story goes, life prevailed.

It seems fantastic to us. When you actually look at the facts of the story, it's not as fantastic as it might seem. What we call three days wasn't really three days when you begin to add up the hours. Conceivably, it wasn't that many hours. And it's very easy, under the conditions that he was in, for heart rates to slow way down to a point of being imperceptible and result in a coma. So it's not altogether as fantastic as it has seemed.

But here was a man who, no matter what happened, didn't consider himself a victim. You can read the text of the story, and that's what shines out so brilliantly. He was a man of unconditional love. That is a rare man and it's a rare woman who, no matter what happens, brings the creative power of the universe, which is love, into their world. It's a rare person, and he was that man.

Interestingly enough, the story that was told about him was a story of victimhood. It was a story of human sacrifice. He had to be sacrificed to atone for our sins. I do not care to disparage anyone who believes that (as long as they don't impose that belief on other people). But it sounds like human sacrifice and victimhood to me. Of

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course, the people who told the story and repeated it were from the very empire that crucified him—which ought to raise doubts in anybody's mind, I would think.

Why are we experiencing what we're experiencing? It's one of two things: it's because either we're playing the victim or because we are unconditionally bringing the power of Creation into our world.

Our experience is born from one of these attitudes. That doesn't mean that everybody will like you, or that you are going to live a happy life in the usual sense that all good things come to you. That was not Jesus' experience, apparently. It does mean that we will experience still focus, deep peace, and the ordering power of love that we are bringing into the world. And because we're experiencing those things, we will experience deep joy and great fulfillment. We will be bringing the power of Creation into our life and to other people and to everything that we do. And for us, that is why we're having the experience that we are.

Unhappily, we each, I believe, by our human nature, have a penchant for our own particular brand of victimhood. We all do it a little bit differently when we have our worst moments; and then, for some, it's just how they live their life—how they feel victimized, where they look to for the reason for that victimhood.

A woman who was a spiritual mentor for me in my twenties told me a story about what it is like to be around dogs. She said that a dog doesn't know the difference between fear and threats. So that if you are fearful of the dog, the dog interprets that fear as aggression. I think there's some truth to that. For them, fear and aggression are indistinguishable.

There is a corollary in our human lives. When we feel victimized, we begin to perpetrate victimization on other people. We don't realize that we're doing it. We think we've been treated badly, we've been victimized; and in living in our victimhood, we lash out. We protect ourselves, and we think that's a righteous thing—after all, we've been victimized and we need to protect ourselves. But in protecting ourselves, as we think of it, we are very often being aggressive with other people and dishing out aggression all over the place. Being spiritually unconscious, we may not see what we are doing. We do not know why we are having the experience that we are having, which is of being increasingly victimized by all the people to whom we are showing this aggression. That's spiritual unconsciousness.

Do you want to know why you're experiencing what you're experiencing? It might be painful to have to look at some of those patterns. But like it is said, it

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might “hurt good.” It might be liberating, because the truth of who we are and the truth of what our life is about, the truth of being a creator, *is* freeing. But you can't create if you're not noticing how you are creating and then choosing to make a change. So choose to make a change. Choose to move out of victimhood and move into being a creator.

The mistranslation of Jesus' way of saying that comes across to us today as being religious: “Repent! The kingdom of heaven is at hand!” The word *repent* used in the King James translation is from the Latin word *poena*—the origin of the word *penal*. The word expresses regret and apology. Sounds like victimhood to me!

The origin of the word translated as *repent* is a Greek word, *metanoia*. Here is the definition:

*A transformative change of heart;
especially: a spiritual conversion*

So, the message I receive from Jesus' words is this:

Change! The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

The ordering power of the universe is at hand; it's within you. You could be expressing that into the world. Don't be victimized. Change! The kingdom of heaven is at hand. It's within you. The

kingdom of God is within you—it's at hand, it's right here! With still focus, you come into a deep peace and into position to bring the ordering power of the universe. Jesus' term for it was “the kingdom of heaven.” *Kingdom* has something to do with order and a realm of order.

In essence, this is what the Buddha taught, this is the Hindu teaching, this is what Nelson Mandela lived, this is what Martin Luther King lived and taught. This is the true teaching of any real spirituality. It is a liberation teaching, it is a freedom teaching. It's a teaching of life—life resurrected, in the spirit of this holiday.

The Christian teaching is that Jesus took on himself the sins of the world to atone for those sins to a God of love—if we can figure that out—that wanted him to die for those sins. As problematic as parts of that teaching are, there is a truth behind it: By the mere fact of incarnating into a human form, we are incarnating into a prevalent culture of victimhood. He did the same. In that sense, he did take on the sins of the world, which is the sin of spiritual unconsciousness, and he lived among unconscious people. Unconscious people often do not welcome the shining of the light of truth. That light illuminates the fact that unconscious people are creating their own experience based on their experience of victimhood. But they

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are not only falling prey to that experience in the culture around them; they are perpetrating that reality on the world by recycling that victimhood in their expression and in their behavior in the world.

Spiritually unconscious people don't want to hear that. That's how Jesus evoked the response that he did from the world around him. He entered a world of victimhood, and he stopped it in himself.

I'd like to close this writing with this invitation. Stop buying into victimhood in yourself, if you haven't already. I don't want to assume that you haven't already. But if you haven't stopped your own victimhood, and if you haven't stopped buying into being victimized by others or the world around you, stop it now. You don't stop it by convincing other people to stop victimizing you. That has never worked very well. Has it worked for you? Go around, "Please don't victimize me!"

That usually brings more victimhood. No, I stop it. I refuse to accept that I'm a victim. I refuse to recycle victimhood into my world. I'm going to bring the power of the Creator, the power that comes with a still focus in the Creator that I am, the Wonderful One within, who is not separate from the Creator of everything.

When I am centered in that, there is a still focus in me, and an experience of deep peace; and out of that deep peace is an ordering power, and it's the ordering power of love. I'm not expressing that to other people because I judge that they deserve it. It's because that's who I am and that's what I do. No matter what happens. In that is deep joy, and deep joy in the face of anything, no matter how much it hurts. This is the only way from a world of victimization into a world that's characterized by the truth of loving people.

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April 5, 2015



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