

Wisdoms from the Journey

(Volume VIII ... Jan thru Oct 2014)



*...a few of the in-Sight-full sayings
& inspirational images that
I have been blessed to gently gather
while wandering along my Way*

via Scaughdt
an (i)am publication

NOTE: This work is Purpose-fully non-copyrighted, and may therefore be copied, reprinted, forwarded &/or gifted onward in whatever ways any of its readers deem fit. That having been said, the author would also like to remind anyone so doing that, just as these Truths have been given to all for free, so too should they be freely given onward to others – fully profitless to the giver; without any additional costs or conditions attached for the recipients thereof.

Cynicism masquerades as wisdom, but it is the farthest thing from it ... and that is because cynicism is actually a self-imposed blindness; a rejection of the world because we are afraid it will hurt us or betray us or disappoint us.

Cynics tend to say “no”, and yet it is saying “yes” that begins all things. Saying “Yes” leads to growth -- Saying “yes” leads to understanding -- Saying “yes” leads to Love ... Saying “Yes” is for the young and the young at heart. So for as long as you have the strength to mean it, say “Yes”.

~ inspired by Stephen Colbert

“The Soul becomes hued with the color of its deeds.”

~ inspired by Marcus Aurelius

“I'm grateful to intelligent people, and by that I don't mean educated people or intellectual people. I mean truly intelligent people; what old black people used to call those with 'mother wit' – the pure intelligence that we all have while in our mother's womb. That's the intelligence we all need to rely on ... We already know what's Right to do.”
~ inspired by Maya Angelou



An Introduction to what Follows

Everyone ends up collecting something as they journey through Life ... For me, I simply ended up being drawn – while searching for “the truth” – to collect Truths.

Now, ideological “truth” is a funny thing; slippery according to circumstance and very hard to pin down once captured ... As such, it is very unlike Wisdom, which is constant -- obvious and tangible and plain and unchanging.

Indeed (in-deed), even though we have been taught that Truth and Wisdom are “kissing cousins”, in actuality they couldn’t be more different. “Truth” is conceptual, while Wisdom is verifiable ... “Truth” is knowledge – a noun, while Wisdom is the setting that knowledge into harmonious motion – a verb ... “Truth” ponders & theorizes & hypothesizes, while Wisdom simply identifies what functions ... “Truth” might delineate our choices, and yet it is Wisdom that guides us towards making good ones ... “Truth” is intellectual; accumulating information and defining meanings. Wisdom is practical; making “facts” (and therefore Life itself) Meaning-full ... “Truth” changes over time – contracting as old information is found lacking & expanding as new information is found to bear “Good Fruit”, while Wisdom remains the constant bellwether through which those evolutions ensue ... “Truth” is a powerful tool – one that is utterly useless (and even drastically dangerous) unless skillfully used in harmony with acquired Wisdom ... In essence, as one scholar once put it: “Truth is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is knowing not to put tomatoes into fruit salad.”

As such, it is the former – “Truth” – that I have gently abandoned as “false”, and it is the latter – “Wisdom” – that I have repeatedly rediscovered to be True. And so it is that while I do most humbly and most publicly now declare that I most certainly do *not* have access to anything resembling “*the Truth*”, I most certainly *have* acquired access to a set of principles & values that – to the degree that they are courageously applied & enlivened – always prove to be Wise. And it is these same principles & values that are represented by the words & images contained in the pages that follow ...

May you each receive much Peace while reading them &/or gazing upon them, and may at least a few of them inspire you to go forth and know the Bliss that only comes to those who choose to put their Goodness into motion.

Amen ... Let it be so.

Scaughdt

December 8, 2014



Great Gratitude ...
(01/09/2013)

No matter what is happening in our lives, it is possible to pause for a moment and remember that we are literally surrounded by immense & stunning Beauty in every single instant of our everyday existence ... Children have yet to forget this Truth, and yet we adults who have are allowed to remember it.

And once you do so -- once you take just a few seconds to soak deeply in the innate & majestic interconnection that always exists between Nature & Humanity & your own individual consciousness, you just can't help but be so incredibly grateful to be alive ...

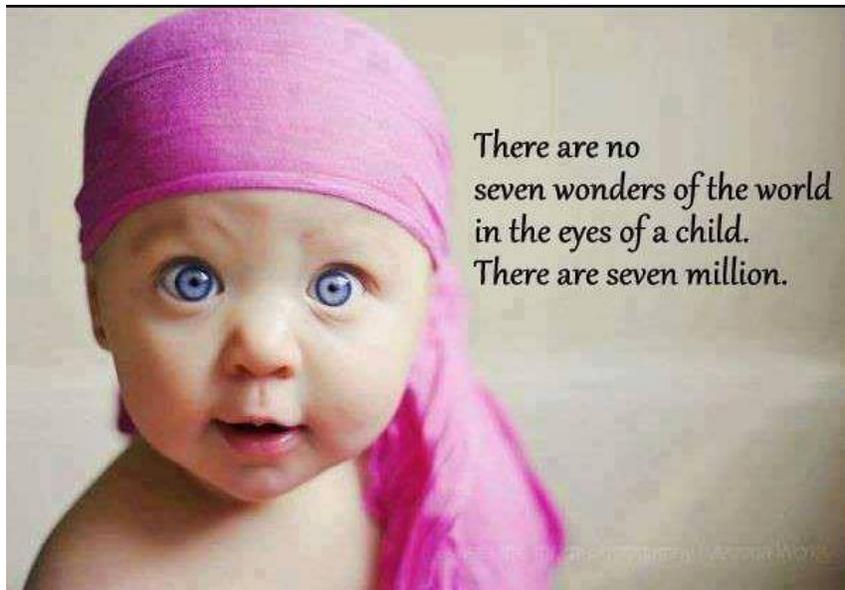
And if you do so sincerely enough, if you do so humbly and with a focused intensity, you just can't help but feel tears of thankfulness well up in your eyes; and you just can't help but feel the warmth of Love well up in your Heart ...

... and you just can't help but then go forth to act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"In the hopes of reaching the moon, we fail to see the flowers that blossom at our feet." ~ inspired by Albert Schweitzer

"Our job is to witness to the Beauty ... Our métier is to be the notary of the Divine amongst us." ~ inspired by Peace Artist





The Wisest Teacher ...

(01/13/14)

It has been said that wisest teacher shows others where to look, without telling them what to see ... In that vein, I offer you the following:

If you are looking for lasting Peace & deep-seated Contentment in your life -- if you are looking for real Happiness & true Joy -- if you are looking to "max-out" your days; to get the most out of these few & priceless moments we have been given, then I will tell you where to look ...

You must look into the Heart of your enemy. You must look there and find what you are most afraid to See ...

... and then you must act accordingly.

(inspired by Alexandra Trenfor)



namasté

(nah-mas-tay)

My soul honors your soul.
I honor the place in you where
the entire universe resides.
I honor the light, love, truth,
beauty & peace within you,
because it is also within me.
In sharing these things
we are united, we are the same,
we are one.



Life, too, in the Desert ...
(01/24/2014)

From afar, the desert seems reserved & dry & foreboding, and yet if you have the courage to draw closer, it has a great and wonderful story to tell ... one full of life, & one full of Love.

The same is true for every stranger you will meet today.

(inspired by Bruce Feiler)



Calling all Trolls ... (01/22/2014)

“To truly live is to war with trolls.” ~ Henrik Ibsen

Yesterday, during a rather intense online chat about the myths meat-eaters use to justify treating animals as mere commodities vs. the merits of living as a vegan (i.e. seeing animals as equally worthy sentient beings), it finally happened: I was called -- among other names too surly to mention here -- a "Troll".

Now, when it first happened, I was more than a bit taken aback. After all, I had learned that a "Troll" was a negative label, describing someone who makes comments in chat-rooms & blog-threads & Facebook posts that are purposefully designed to annoy or insult or offend. Of course, I knew that I wasn't doing this at all; I knew that I was simply trying my best to calmly illuminate the oft-ignored facts surrounding an oft-ignored modern-day tragedy ... And shortly after exiting the conversation, I realized the delicious irony of the situation: that a meat-eater calling a vegan a "Troll" for standing up for the rights of enslaved and tortured animals is kind of like a white bigot calling Martin Luther King a racist for telling others to treat blacks with Respect & Dignity ... In summation, the insults that were thrown at me by my necrovorian comrade were nothing short of ridiculous, and I went to bed with a smile on my face -- with heartfelt Empathy & Compassion for his pain and his confusion, of course, and yet with a gentle smile on my face nonetheless.

And then this morning I awoke with a different thought -- a thought that started to make last night's encounter more profound than profane ... Essentially I awoke to the realization that what we might need more than anything else at this time of teetering -- that what we might need more than anything else at this time when everything beautiful and everything ultimately worthwhile hangs in the balance; when humanity's very long-term existence hangs by a thread -- that what we actually need these days ... is MORE TROLLS! ... Not the "trolls" that exist merely to antagonize and manipulate and insult and lambast, mind you. We most certainly already have far more than enough of those denizens of discord in our lives. No, what we truly need now are people with the integrity to reflect another trait of Trolls -- namely, the courage to speak out about things that matter; the courage to not only discuss matters of injury & injustice with friends & family, but to do so openly and overtly with those actually doing the perpetrating; the courage to meet the enemy on his or her own turf and ... respectfully-yet-resolutely ... stand up for what is Right.

*We need Trolls to publicly stand up for soldiers sent to fight unjust wars to fill the pockets of politicians and power-brokers ...

*We need Trolls to publicly stand up for the homeless and the poor who still fill our city streets ...

*We need Trolls to publicly stand up for members of other religions who are damned or condemned or ridiculed by members of our own ...

*We need Trolls to publicly stand up for the tens of thousands of innocent men & women who have been wrongfully accused of "crimes" that are not really crimes, or who have been wrongfully convicted of crimes they did not commit ...

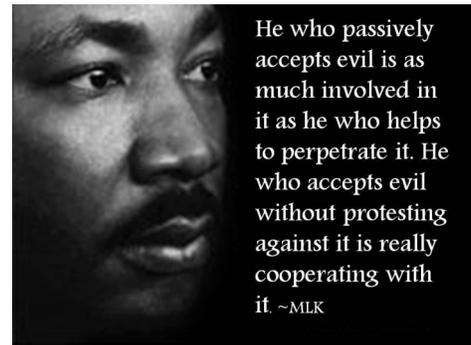
*And we need more Trolls to publicly stand up for the animals -- those that are cruelly enslaved in circuses, those that are callously imprisoned in zoos, those that are brutally hunted on the high seas, those that are repulsively abused in dairy farms, and those that are coldly murdered every minute of every day in our slaughterhouses.

There are literally hundreds of tragedies of injustice & insults of immorality happening all around you every day, my Friends -- and what the victims of these tragedies do *NOT* need is your pity or your sympathy or your "informed interest" or your "emotional allegiance" ... No, what the oppressed and the abused and the manipulated and the downtrodden of your very own community need more than anything else is your *ACTION* ...

What they need is a champion ...

What they need a hero ...

What they need ... is a **TROLL**.



To Die to Peace ...
(01/23/2014)

*“In the first stage, man & sword become one and each other.
Here even a blade of grass can be used as a lethal weapon.*

*In the next stage, the sword resides not in the hand but in the heart.
Even without a weapon, the warrior can slay his enemy from a hundred paces.*

*But the ultimate ideal is when the sword disappears altogether.
The warrior embraces all around him ... Only peace remains.”*

~ Zhang Yimou

(from the ethical genius that is the movie “Hero”)

It is our fear that is the source of all our anger ... It is our fear and our fear alone that stokes the subtle-yet-raging blaze within us that is so very hard to quench; an inferno of "self-defense" & "constructive criticism" & "healthy boundaries" & "deserved gossip" & "justice" -- all those justified & "reasonable" forms of hatred & condemnation & judgment that have us teetering on the brink of our collective extinction ... And it is this very fear that might indeed succeed in extinguishing us completely; that might very well succeed in having our species crumble and collapse in a smoldering heap of violence & callousness & savagery.

It is true that this fear is eons-old ... It is true that this fear is stronger than steel ... And it is true that this fear might indeed be our ultimate demise. And, if we as a species are to succumb to this most insidious of enemies, then at the very least let us choose to *LIVE* while we still can -- and let us thereby choose to die with arms open wide and Hearts filled with *LOVE*.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Being the Light ...
(01/25/2014)

Morning light – just like selfless *LOVE* -- is incredibly generous, and yet also incredibly gentle. When you attend to the way the dawn comes, you learn how the genius of this particular light -- like the power of our pure *LOVE* -- softly coaxes away the darkness.

Every morning, the first finger of light silently caresses the shadowed horizon, and -- like our *LOVE*, especially when given quietly to those "least deserving" -- it ever so smoothly & ever so gradually pulls the mantle of blackness away; allowing the world – just like all "enemies" receiving our Light -- to radiate its Goodness anew.

(inspired by John O'Donohue)



Building the Bridge to Peace ...
(01/26/2014)

Gratitude builds a Bridge
between tragedy & blessing ...

Your next act, if a Kind one,
is the crossing of that Bridge.



On the Road to Now ...
(01/28/2014)

LOVE is always on the Road to Now:
... always just west of the moon; always just east of the sun.

LOVE is always a smooth Journey to Here;
... right to where we already are.

So how about heading there right now? How about pausing just long
enough to look around to see someone in need of a smile ...

... and then taking that Journey's first & only step?



Shattering sadness ...
(01/29/2014)

All a T-Rex has to do to transcend his rough days is simply not eat anybody when he is hungry ... All you have to do to transcend yours is simply be Kind to a stranger when you are sad or angry or afraid.

I know it is tempting to revel in the misfortunes of others -- to feel happy when we see our enemies failing or having trouble or "getting what's coming to them" ... Of course, this is *NOT* the Way to know real Peace. No, my Friends -- the Way to true Happiness is not laughing at T-Rex for struggling with his sheets ... The Way to true Happiness is reaching out to help him with them.

*"May this new day deepen your Connection to all of Creation ...
... and thereby bring you Peace." ~ inspired by Richard Brady*



Our gentle Sun ...
(02/01/2014)

"The morning's sunrise burned bright ... blinding by itself; so bright I could hardly see the traffic lights change color. Then the Sun hid briefly behind the clouds, and behind those mild, uncertain pillows of gray, it took on a milder tone - gently & selflessly giving us all it's light and warmth anyway; its rays reaching out to touch my Heart even through the harsh distractions of frigid air and long lines and angry traffic ... And then I realized that, after falling behind those darker shrouds, the Sun's greater Purpose somehow seemed larger. It was actually far more beautiful because it wasn't so blinding. And the clouds looked more beautiful too, as they were so fully illuminated by the very light they were trying to hide in vain ... Individually, the Sun and the clouds were moderate in their brilliance ... Together, they became the essence of magnificence.

I see this the same way I see my community's rich and poor as we blend together each and every day. I see this the same way I see a family of four reach out to a lonely soul on the street-corner -- when those five transcend "danger" and "busy" and "stranger" to become one. Indeed, I see this the same way I see so many relationships in our lives -- so many possible moments of Peace and so many potential unions of Joy that could all come to Be with just a little more selflessness; if we each had the courage to blend just a little bit more; if we each had the courage to rise -- or even fall if need be, in order to lovingly warm our neighbor with Love's Light." ~ inspired by Vanessa Curley



(*photo by Christopher Martin)

There is a Field ...
(02/01/2014)

Everywhere you look; everywhere you are -- there is only life ... Everywhere, in every moment, there is only the Soul of breathing; only the essence of Breath ... This is what many call "God" (or "Allah", or "Jehovah", or "Yahweh", or "Buddha", or "Prana", or "Chi") ... It is all around you -- all within you -- filling every cell of your body -- filling every inkling of your time. This is the Divine, and It -- by whatever name, is always (and in all Ways) both within & all around you ... It is there -- It is here -- It is the enemy -- It is the friend -- It is me ... & everything that isn't me.

And yet, even though It always *IS*, It is not always poignant. Indeed, many times we forget that It *IS*, and therefore -- as a result, at least in those moments It is not ... For indeed, It is only alive & vibrant when we choose to make it so -- It *IS*, but only when we act accordingly ... In essence, It *IS* -- but only when we *ARE*.

As for me, the Divine -- by whatever name, is my Beloved. And as I do so adore It and this gloriously, brilliantly conscious life with which It has blessed me -- and as It can only **BE** when I *AM*, then -- at the very least for today, to the Divine's perfect *LOVE*, I will be true.

Out beyond all notions of wrong-doing & right-doing there is indeed a life-laden field; a field of Compassion -- a field of Caring -- a field of Love for Love's sake -- a field of *LOVE* in-Deed ... Maybe just for today, won't you join me there?

Maybe just for today, will you put aside your own yearning for the Light, and choose to be another's lamp? ... Maybe just for today, will you put aside your own fears of drowning, and choose to be another's lifeboat? ... Maybe just for today, will you put aside your own dreams of climbing the Mountain, and choose to be another's ladder? ... Maybe just for today -- maybe just for one extended instant, will you walk out of your house and choose not to be a "success", but rather to be a shepherd? ... Maybe just for today, will you find a wounded Soul nearby -- and be the subtle smile that heals?

Amen ... Let it be so.

(inspired by Jalal ad-Hin Rumi)



Shine LOVE anyway ...
(02/04/2014)

LOVE doesn't care if it is captured or attacked or abused; **LOVE** simply Loves; even when facing the enemy ... even when losing a Friend.

I know that life can be hard, my Friends ... I know that people can be mean & cold & manipulative & ruthless.

... Keep shining your **LOVE** anyway.

“Avoid believing what you eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with your understanding instead. Find out what you already Know, and you will see the way to fly.” ~ Richard Bach



Like Trees ...
(02/05/2014)

In a sense, we are each like a huge tree; where our internal, Heart-felt Compassion for others is our roots, and our external, active Kindness for others forms our branches ... Our empathy acts as roots reaching down into the soil to become one with our surroundings by becoming one with those around us; and our open acts of Caring act as our branches; reaching into the sky to become one with the Light ... allowing our True Self to once again reunite with the All.

Compassion gives us our depth, and Kindness, our height; not separately, but -- like the tree -- as ONE ... And the higher our tree grows, the deeper it grows as well ... The longer our tree's reach extends, the more interwoven & stable its roots become.

And out in the world -- out in our everyday lives, this Truth bears the best of Fruit; for the more we Serve others, the more we Care for them ... and the more we Care for them, the more we Serve.

(inspired by Osho)



Getting off the fence ... (02/06/2014)

Yes, you are indeed free to choose ... *AND* it is even more important for you to remember that you are NOT free from the consequences of your choices.

It's time to get off the fence, my Friends ... It's time to remember our personal values, and then to make a stand for them ... It's time to remember how fleeting life is, and therefore how priceless this very day ...

... And it's time to go forth and act accordingly.

"My life is my message." ~ Mahatma Gandhi



Caring for our Earth ...
(02/09/2014)

"The Earth which bore us and the Earth which sustains us; the only Paradise we ever need know ... Ahhh, but if only we had the eyes to truly see Her; if only we had the Heart to truly Care." ~ inspired by Edward Abbey

While the human wisdom in our minds tells us that we should "Be Gentle with Mother Earth", the Divine Truth within our hearts knows differently ...

Divine Truth knows that, even though the Earth is going to be just fine either way, it is a rare & priceless honor to be Her caretaker as opposed to Her cancer ... Divine Truth knows that it is our pure Purpose to do more than merely appreciate the Earth's innate & wondrous Beauty or respect Her inhabitants ... & Divine Truth knows that it is our hallowed privilege as Human Beings to Care for the Earth so earnestly & so passionately that our each & every step gently wipes away Her tears.

We can all make a positive difference in our world, and we can all make that positive difference today ... My Friends, avoid letting what you cannot do for Her distract you from what you can.

Thank you.



On being Care-full ... (02/10/2014)

"Be careful" ... "Take care" ... "Be safe" ... "Take it easy"

Yeah, right ... These valedictions (and all others like them) might be well-intended, and yet they really don't help us to live longer -- and they certainly don't help us to live more Meaning-fully ... Indeed, there is literally no way we can ever fulfill any of them with any certainty, for no matter how careful, protective, safe or laid-back we choose to be, life has a way of sneaking up on us all.

As P. G. Wodehouse so aptly put it: *"It's always just when a fellow is feeling particularly braced with things in general that Fate sneaks up behind him with a bit of lead piping."*

So, seeing as how we can't ever hope to be fully prepared or totally secure, I've got a better idea ... Let's live today completely; without an ounce of hope or an inkling of expectation. Let's live it fully, as if it were our last; allowing it to absolutely overflow with rich, thick, joyful moments of reckless Caring, headlong Generosity and wild Compassion.



Yeah ...

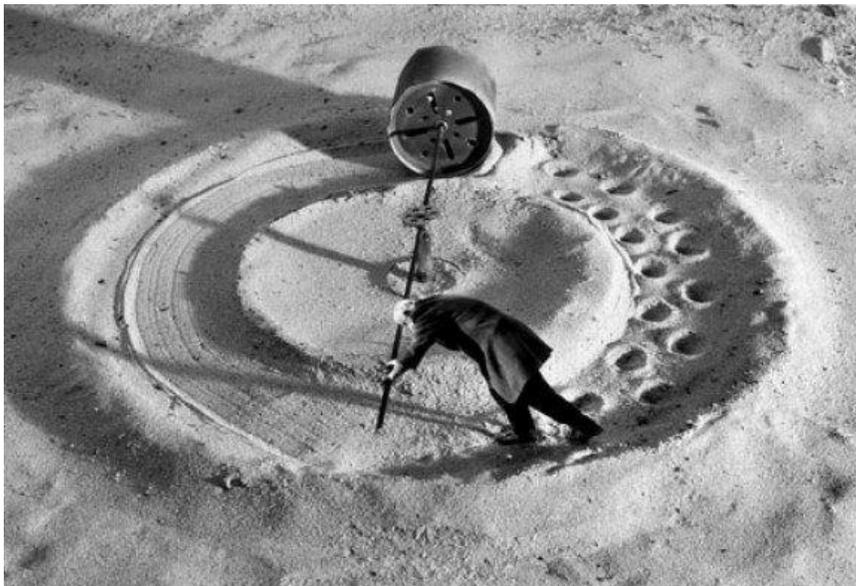
That sounds more like it.

"The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still small voice' within me. And even though I have to face the prospect of being a minority of one, I humbly believe I have the courage to be in such a minority." ~ Mahatma Gandhi

To Plant a Tree ...
(02/11/2014)

A society grows weak & crumbles when its children are taught first & foremost to "be productive" & to "succeed"; to care for their lives by primarily caring for themselves ... And yet that same culture becomes both Great & Vibrant when its children see their elders plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit; when those children learn that the only way to truly Care for their own lives is to Care for the lives of others.

(inspired by an ancient-yet-still-poignant Greek proverb)



P.S. Consider setting your busy-work aside for awhile and doing something Meaning-full today instead.



Consider using less paper ...

Consider recycling the paper you do use ...

Consider planting a tree.

Dancing in the Rain ...
(02/13/2014)

I realize that as we get older, it is very tempting to "be mature" -- I realize that it is almost impossible to break free from the societal grip that would have us "be careful" and "work hard" and "be responsible" and "take care of yourself" and "strive for success" and "take life seriously".

And yet, if we are ever to know true Happiness in this life; if we are ever to live Meaning-fully -- and thereby enter the State of Bliss known to many as "the Kingdom of Heaven", then we are simply going to have to have the courage to set aside all those man-made mandates and "become again as a child".

We are going to have to stop being careful and start being Care-full ... We are going to have to stop working hard and start serving selflessly ... We are going to have to stop being responsible and start being Kind ... We are going to have to stop taking care of ourselves and start Caring for others ... We are going to have to stop striving for success and start exuding Compassion ... We are going to have to stop looking to get what we deserve and start looking instead to Give whatever we have to give.

In short, my Friends, outside -- away from your warm prudence & your safe traditions & your familiar routines & your secure friendships -- outside, it's raining ... Outside, your life is literally being inundated with chances to Care. Indeed, right this very minute, right outside the door of your own home (or your own office, or your own car), there is a downpour of opportunities for you to brighten someone else's day. And I don't know about you,

... but I think it's time to go get wet.



Got Wealth? ...
(02/14/2014)

A penny saved is a penny not given; and yet we are here to Give ... A smile not offered is a Kindness not shared; and yet we are here to Share.

My Friends, it is not nearly enough to "get rich" or "be successful" ... Indeed, the only real measure of your wealth is how much you will be Worth once all your money is gone and all your possessions have faded away.

LOVE (the verb) is the only thing that lives forever ... and your **LOVE** (the verb) is the only thing that has any lasting worth or value.

So ... got Wealth?



Transcending Death ... (02/16/2014)

It's really quite easy to die quite early, for life becomes easily lost in lack of attention. And this form of dying -- whether we are cleaning windows absentmindedly, writing a masterpiece dutifully, or caring for another person superficially -- is actually quite real. We might very well be fulfilling our obligations while we go through such motions, and yet when we do so blandly or routinely, we might as well already be dead.

So, my Friends, no matter what you end up choosing to do in this new & glorious day, I offer only this soft-yet-heartfelt incitement:

Stay Awake! ... Pay Attention! ... Remain Alive!

(inspired by Nadia Boulanger)



Rebirthing your fresh Tomorrow ...
(02/17/2014)

Regardless of where we are & what we are doing,
a wondrous Life of Meaning is always ours for the re-making.

And yet, we cannot fully enter our fresh tomorrows,
until we completely release our stale yesterdays.



**"Finish each day and be done with it.
You have done what you could. Some
blunders and absurdities no doubt crept
in; forget them as soon as you can.
Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin
it serenely and with too high a spirit
to be encumbered with your old
nonsense." -- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Knowing real Freedom ...
(02/27/2014)

The number one thing you can do to liberate your mind ...
... is to stop watching television.

The number one thing you can do to liberate your life ...
... is to stop defending a political party or supporting particular politicians.

The number one thing you can do to liberate your Soul ...
... is to stop treating animals as mere commodities.

The number one thing you can do to liberate your species ...
... is to stop disregarding associates & ignoring strangers.

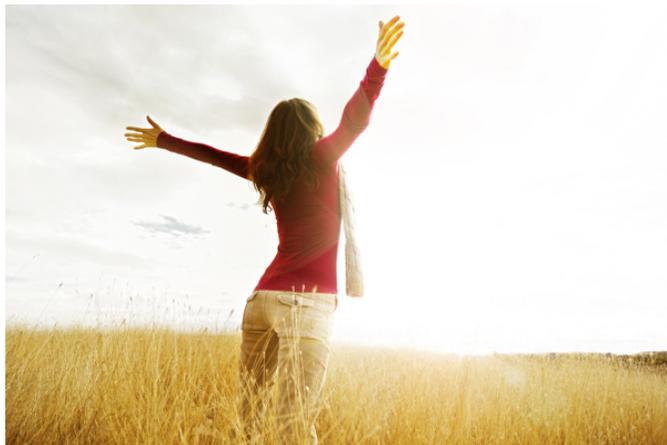
Freedom is nothing if your True Self remains shackled, my Friends. And indeed, without humble Kindness in your life, your Spirit remains hopelessly imprisoned behind thick walls of selfish cowardice.

So be Kind to your mind by turning off your TV ...
Be Kind to your community by turning away from politics ...
Be Kind to your Soul by going vegan ...

And be Kind to your True Self by being Kind to all those others -- friends & strangers & enemies alike -- you meet along your way.

Wishing you all an exceptionally liberating day today.
Go forth freely ... and **LIVE** your Freedom!

*"No one needs permission to offer their Goodness.
We all have the right to bestow blessings ...
We are all free to Love."
~ inspired by John Brierly*



Standing TALL ...
(02/21/2014)

*“You and I are all as much continuous with the physical universe
as a wave is continuous with the ocean.” ~ Alan Watts*

Sometimes it's easy to forget that our species really only just "woke up" a few centuries ago -- that we're still pretty young; that we're still figuring out what it means to be Caring Stewards of our planet; that essentially, we're still rubbing the sleep from our eyes.

With that in mind, today I awaken with a fresh resolve ... Today I awaken and stand once more before the breach; today I vow once more to place my entire being boldly before the subtly-ebbing tide of all things aggressive & cruel & callous; to hold back the flood-waters of our still-ignorant societies and shine the light of Unity once more into the still-thick gloom of our fears.

Though our enemies would have us give up -- though they would have us believe that it is "too late" to do any real Good – though our "leaders" would have us give in; though they would have us believe the lie that conflict & consumption are simply "the way things are" ... Despite them all, today I openly reject these calls to cowardice ...

Today, rather than sit passively by and watch our world crumble,
today ***I choose to stand.***

Today I stand for the Earth ... for all Her valleys & all Her mountains;
for all Her fields & all Her rivers; for all Her jungles & all Her deserts; for
all Her minerals & all Her plants ... And today I stand for our Earth by
standing for all Her brilliantly beautiful, sentient lives.

I do so by standing for Justice ...

I do so by standing for Freedom ...

I do so by standing for Oneness ...

I do so by standing for ***Love.***

Today, though I am saddened by the violence of war & abuse, and weakened by the negativity of ignorance & judgment -- indeed, though I am sorely tempted to give up & give in, *I choose to stand.*

I stand for all that is ...

... and I choose to stand for all that one day might be.

Today I stand for Life;

Today I stand ... for You.

"Whenever I despair, I remember that all through history the way of Truth and Love have always won. There have been tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they can indeed seem invincible. And yet in the end, they always fall. Think of it--always." ~ Mahatma Gandhi



The Greatest Gift ... (02/28/2014)

Siddhartha awoke with a start at the glimmering of dawn and simply knew - knew that he must set forth from his home; that he must leave his wife and his son and his friends; that he must abandon all his relationships and all the comforts of his royal life to rediscover the Great Truth that was his to one day share.

And so he gently woke his wife and made tea. And while sitting with her surrounded by the gathering light he explained his dilemma: that he knew he must go, and yet that also knew he did not want to leave his current life behind ... "There can be no one without the other", his wife calmly said ... and she gently touched his cheek with a smile, silently gathered his cloak and shoes, placed them softly at his feet, and quietly left the room ... And so it was that Siddhartha departed in search of his Truth ... And he was gone for many moons.

During his travels, he met many wise ones and he practiced many paths ... He inundated himself with physical pleasures, and he denied himself every comfort; he surrounded himself with wealth, and he lived as a pauper; he laughed & frolicked with cohorts, and he sat silently alone in quiet solitude ... All these different methods had something to teach him, and yet none of them offered him his Truth.

And then one day, while resting calmly underneath a boddhi tree, after all those months of trying to find the answers, his Awakening found him ... At that moment, he opened his eyes and simply *KNEW*. He knew that human life in its most primal form consisted primarily of suffering ... He knew that this suffering came not from life's painful circumstances & difficult happenings, but rather from our yearning to be free from the same ... He knew that we are all more so much more than "only human"; that we could transcend this primitive dynamic of hollow unhappiness; that real Peace & Joy were available to us all ... And he knew that there existed a simple, practical method for attaining this State of Bliss; a Way of Living that shifted focus away from one's self and towards one's others.

He had rediscovered The Way of courageous Kindness – He had rediscovered The Way of pure Compassion – He had rediscovered The Way of selfless Love ... And it was at that moment that his perfect Soul rose from within. He had become again the Buddha he had been at his birth ... And so he sighed deeply, stood up slowly and returned to his wife and son.

And after many days of walking -- as he got close to his homestead, his wife saw him approaching and headed out to him and greeted him warmly. And Siddhartha held her close and apologized for leaving; saying, "I have found my Truth, and realize now that I need never have left in the first place to find it, for it was within me all along and could have been found anywhere." ... Upon hearing this, his wife stepped back and smiled at him, and said, "Yes ... and yet you never would have known this had you not left. Now come inside and greet your son."

And Siddhartha entered his home ... He so wanted to give his son something precious; he so wanted to show him his newfound Love. And yet all he had was his begging bowl ... And yet he knew that for Love, this was enough ... So he went down on one knee in front of his child, held out his bowl, and said, "This is my only possession ... By giving you this bowl I am giving you The Way; a life of detached gratitude & selfless service. It is the only Treasure that I found on all my travels, and I would like you to have it too."

.....

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whomever becomes humble like this small child is truly the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven ... You know that the rulers of the Gentiles seek to control and dominate, and that the powerful among them act as tyrants. It will not be so with you; for whomever wishes to be truly great must act as a servant, and whoever wishes to be truly first must act as a slave."

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:2-4 + Matthew 20:25-27)



Our Diamond's Destiny ...
(03/01/2014)

It is not a small thing for our Souls to wish for – for them to long for the eternity of a diamond's destiny. And yet isn't that the true meaning of living; to strive to live lives not only long but full? And isn't that the true weight of our worship; to openly show a raw & unassailable gratitude for life itself, however brief?

And indeed, isn't it also true that there is no greater act of reverence for whatever we each call "God" – no more potent method for becoming one with the Divine, and therewith inhaling our own immortality -- than to brazenly Care for another in times of our own lack or fear?

For to revere our own lives via such a willful sacrifice for another's is to simultaneously reflect & magnify the awesome beauty of our Celestial Beloved; thereby boldly announcing to the Darkness that we refuse to be in any way diminished by the inescapable brevity of our flesh-bound time.

Long live such moments ...
Long live such a *LOVE*.

(inspired by Cormac McCarthy)



Seeing the Splendor ...

(03/02/2014)

“The sea is emotion incarnate. It loves, it hates, and it weeps. It defies all attempts to capture it within words and it rejects all shackles that come near. No matter what you can say about it, there is always that which you cannot.”

~ inspired by Christopher Paolini

It is indeed important for us all to frequently pause & reconsider the immense majesty of Nature's beauty that surrounds us, and it is just as important to pause each day & remember that this same, vast splendor is also found within the Spirit of every sentient being we have ever encountered in our past, and within the Spirit of every single being we will ever encounter in our future ...

*It is behind the gaze of every past friend & every current enemy.

*It is within the heart of every intimate lover & every frightening stranger.

*It is the Living Essence of every adored pet ...

... and the departed Joy in every murdered meal.

Today, let us all have the humility to remember both the radiant beauty that shines forth from Mother Nature, and the majestic radiance that shines forth from others' sentient Souls ...

And then, maybe just for today, let us have the Courage to act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.



All that really matters ...
(03/15/2014)

"No man or woman can really be strong or gentle or kind without the world being better for it; without somebody somewhere being helped or comforted by the very existence of that Goodness." ~ Alan Alda

Life can be hard, it's true, and we are all, each & every one of us, under immense pressures every day -- pressure to perform, pressure to "be responsible", pressure to achieve, pressure to "be good", pressure to succeed, pressure to survive ... Indeed, these stressors are so intense that we readily forget that they, while understandably common, don't really matter at all; that in each & every new beginning of the rest of our lives there is only one thing that will truly matter in the end ... and that thing is **not** wealth or influence or security or pleasure. It's not even success or partnership or friendship or "happiness".

No, my Friends, when all is said and done, there is only one thing you can do today that will have any lasting significance in your lives ... and that thing is **Love**, the verb.

And so it is with this Truth in mind that I sincerely wish all of you a day empty of stress ... via a day filled with Kindness.

*"Be Kind whenever possible ...
... It is always possible."
~ Dalai Lama*



Real LOVE ...
(03/17/2014)

*"Real **LOVE** is not an adoration of the other, but rather a Seeing of the other as a reflection of the Divine in one's Self. As such, true Lovers don't ever really find one another ...
... for they are in each other all along."*

~ inspired by Rumi



St Teresa's Prayer ...
(03/18/14)

For all my Friends ...
... and for all my enemies:

May today there be Peace within you ...
May you use those Gifts you have Received.
May you pass on the Love that as been Given to you.
May you be content in Knowing you are a Child of God.
May you let the Presence settle gently into your bones,

... and allow your Soul the Freedom to sing, dance, praise & Love.

~ in inspired by St. Teresa of Avila



May you BE ...
(03/21/2014)

May you sip contentedly upon the fragrant wine of your life.

May you stretch eagerly into the opening light of each new day ... and re-discover the seeds of wisdom lying hidden in all experiences unwanted.

May you find the consolation of gratitude when you are hurting ... and hear the tender voice of the Beloved softly calling to you whenever others are suffering nearby.

May you gather your daily blessings in your Heart ... and persevere in seeking great Peace for others & the world.

May you go to sleep each evening aware of being held in the warm embrace of Divine Love ... and when you awake anew, may you hear the Music of the Spheres singing in your Soul -- lullabying how wonderful it is to simultaneously be alive and aware of that living.



Amen ...

... Let it be so.

(inspired by Joyce Rupp)

Into the Wilderness ...
(03/23/2014)

It is our Treks into “the Wilderness” -- those barren, depressed &/or painful times in life -- that give us the opportunity to Love Life most. Indeed, in our deepest sense of hopelessness rests the purest essence of our Life's Work ... For it is I those times that we lie mired in the darkest of shadows that the light of our Awakening shines most bright.

So, no matter how "dark" life gets, remember to keep on walking, my Friends ... Keep on walking in-deed.



The Maverick Soul ...
(04/10/2014)

Maverick Souls are the most potent (& the most underestimated) Force in the Universe. They are the ones with the lone forgiving smile in an angry crowd ... They are the ones with the lone joyful face in a collective of frowns ... They are the ones with the lone set of arms open & warm on the sidewalks filled with the crossed & the cold-hearted.

Even though they often seem to be alone, they alone count as many ... Even though they seem to be weak, they alone shine a true might ... Even though they seem to be anonymous, their deeds are well known ... And even though they seem to be useless, they are our only hope.

For these are the insurgents of Compassion ...
These are the renegades of Kindness ...
These are the rebels of *Love*.

These are the Souls who are going to save our species. These are the Souls who are going to keep on reminding the rest of us -- over & over & over again -- who we truly are. These are the Souls who are -- one act of radical Kindness at a time -- slowly but surely bringing us back from the brink of disaster.

My Friends, these brave Souls ...
... are *YOU*.



Mastering the Wilderness ... (04/11/2014)

"He paused long enough to hear the question behind the question and took a slow sip of his coffee ... 'If I could tell you for sure there wouldn't be any bears, it wouldn't be a wilderness now would it?'" ~ Charlie Slocum

Our lives are filled with journeys to the edge of the Wilderness -- those times when we lose something cherished or long for more; those times when we are attacked or abused or betrayed; those times when we wince or ache or cringe. And most of the time when our "Wilderness" comes calling, we head the other way as fast as possible -- head back post haste to all things comfortable & safe & warm & friendly.

And yet no matter how far we run and no matter how well we hide, the Wilderness always returns -- It always finds us; approaching silently from behind, either to tap us on the shoulder or to slap us in the face -- often in moments least expected; always in moments least desired.

Of course, it can be quite liberating to realize that it is not necessary to run from our Wilderness at all; to remember that it is actually deep within our Wilderness where our greatest of all Treasures resides; that without challenge, there would be only the suffocating malaise of endless ease ... that without difficulty, there would only be the droning buzz of a never-ending series of meaningless "successes" ... that without pain, there would only be the exhausting lull between life's brief glimpses of pleasures hollow & unsustainable.

Now I am not advocating that you seek out challenge or difficulty or pain ... Indeed, the Wilderness is not something that can be sought, much less found. For, if the Wilderness is to be our Wilderness, *it* must do the seeking ... It must find us ... And yet the point is this: that when the dis-ease of our Wilderness does arrive (and arrive it will), we need not fight it or strive against it or complain about it. Yes, as thinking, knowing, conscious beings, we can choose to rail against pain and usher it out the door, and yet we can also choose to harness its awesome power instead ... We can choose to reap its hidden gifts -- by setting aside our self-focused fears long enough to reach out courageously through our pain and extend the helping hand of Kindness to another.

And *this* is the true power of our ability to choose ... *This* is the true power of our selfless Self ... *This* is the true power waiting calmly within our every Wilderness.

So, when your next Greatest Enemy approaches – when your next Wilderness arrives with its teeth snarling and its sword drawn, it is no longer required that you bar your door ... No, when your fear grows deep within you and your pain howls near in the night, you don't have to lock them out or shun them away ... When you would just as soon fend them off or slice them to ribbons, you can choose instead to show them the Honor they deserve. You can choose to open your door, you can choose to invite them inside, you can choose to seat them at your banquet table, and then you can choose to ease their voracious hungers with generous helpings of reverent gratitude & humble graciousness.

In closing, the Wilderness will always find you, my Friends. Its drive is insatiable and its allies are unconquerable. And yet, there *is* a way through its times of cold & shadow. And this path through the Wilderness requires not the "strength" of self-protection, but the ability to be gentle with others even while suffering in pain. It requires not the "power" of your bravery, but the ability to be Kind to others even in the face of your fear.

Amen ... Let it be so.



(image above by Katerina Plotnikova)



Beyond GOOD & evil ...
(04/12/2014)

The line between good & evil runs not between conflicting countries or contrasting cultures or contradictory creeds, but rather flows effortlessly down the river of choice that meanders smoothly through the center of every human heart.

Good is that which is done for others and then bears the fruit of Peace, and Evil is that which is done for self and then bears the fruit of suffering. In each & every moment of each & every lifetime for each & every sentient being, choice is the only barrier between the two, and a vapor-thin barrier it will ever remain.

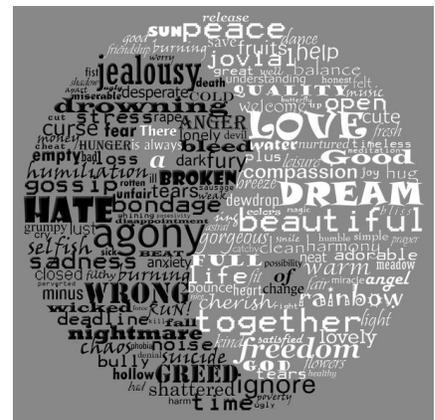
So pause often each day, my Friends ... Pause and remember who you truly are ... Pause & choose anew who you are going to **BE** in this new moment.

Pause & choose wisely ...
... Pause & choose Goodness.

(inspired by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)



(image above by Saibel)



Today is a new Day ...
(04/13/2014)

*"Today is a new day ... Tread it softly;
humble & kind -- exuding a warm & joyous gratitude
for the precious time you have been given
on this most beautiful Earth."
~ inspired by Chris Leach
(a Camino de Santiago pilgrim)*



The Worth of our Days ...

(04/14/14)

“There is only one way to effectively judge the days of our lives; only one way to know whether we have lived each day to its fullest. And this lone accurate measure of our true & greatest Bliss is not the harvest of pleasures we reap for ourselves ... but rather the seeds of Peace we sow for others.”

~ inspired by R. L. Stevenson

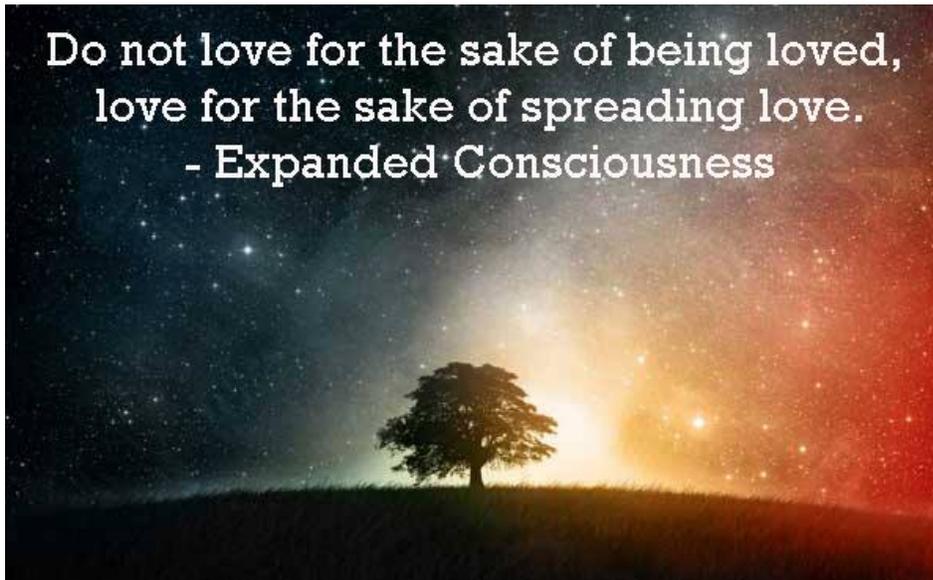


"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions,
and the roots spring up and make new trees."

—Amelia Earhart



Do not love for the sake of being loved,
love for the sake of spreading love.
- Expanded Consciousness

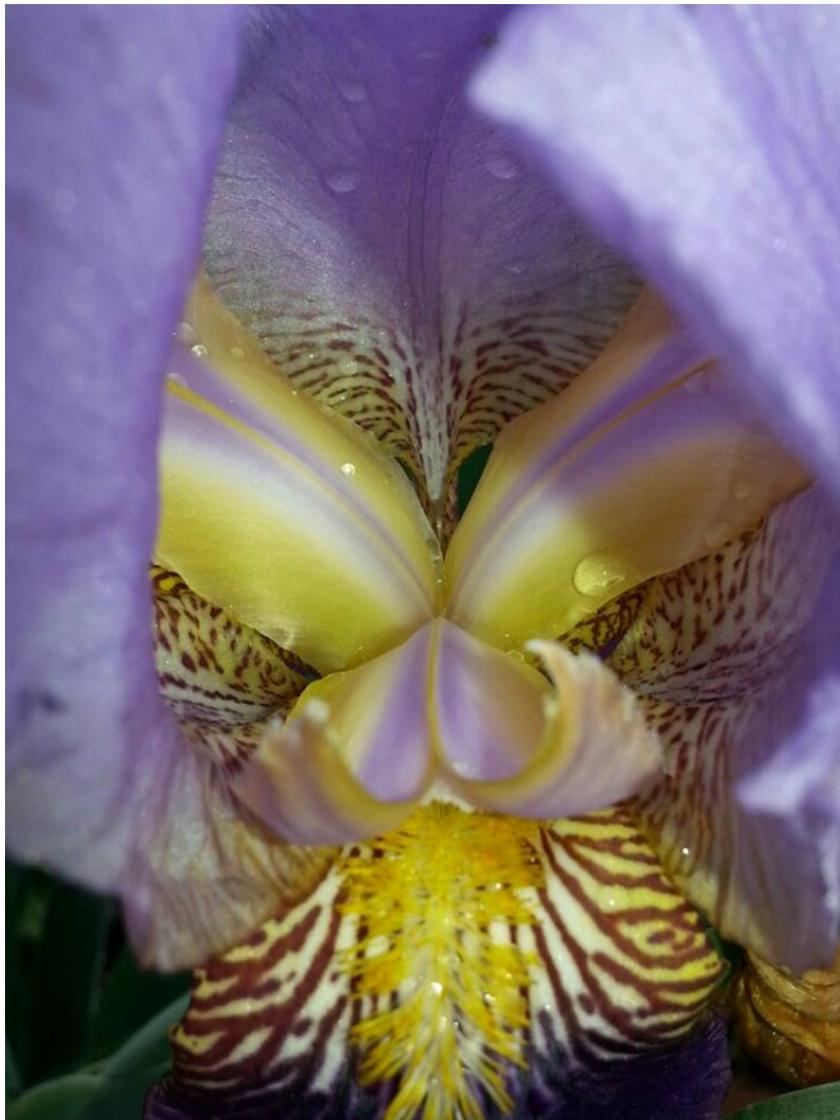


Already arrived ...
(04/30/2014)

Early in your travels you repeatedly wonder how long the journey will take; even maybe whether you will "make it" at all in this lifetime. Later, you come to understand that where you are going has always been *HERE*, and that you have already arrived at your final destination -- over & over & over again -- in each & every *NOW*.

So you stop asking ... to start Finding.
You stop searching ... to start Loving.
And you start Loving ... to start Being.

(~ inspired by Ram Dass)



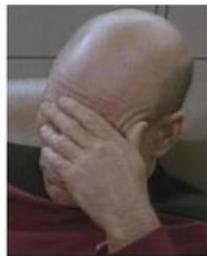
Living as ONE ...
(06/27/2014)

How odd it was sitting in a German restaurant last night watching the United States play Germany in the World Cup; and how odd it was for the Germans sitting near me to hear me, a born American, applauding & cheering the success of *their* team ... How odd it is indeed that we so readily draw lines on a map, and memorize our pledges of allegiance and believe the myths propagated by our teachers & our politicians ... How odd it is that we so easily forget that **WE ARE ALL ONE FAMILY** on this Earth; that the pain of another, regardless of his or her country of origin, is my own pain -- and that his or her Joy is mine as well.



go find yourself

*"Imagine there's no countries ...
It isn't hard to do;
nothing to kill or die for,
and no religion too.
Imagine all the people,
living life in peace ...
You may say that I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not the only one. I hope
someday you will join us,
And the world will be as one."
~ John Lennon*



Facepalm



FIFA WM 2014 Logo

Bathing Buddhism ... (06/28/2014)

There is a quote, commonly attribute to Buddha, that is still popular in "New Age" circles, and it goes something like this: *"Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it -- even if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense"* ... Now on its face this admonition seems harmless enough, and yet when put into practice, it provides a ready excuse for its adherents to fall into patterns of selfishness & superficiality; in fact it provides a ready rationalization for any deed we might engage or belief we might purport that puts ourselves above others.

Of course, for those who have studied earlier Buddhist texts -- and for those who have embodied the humility of the deepest Buddhist teachings, this quote is known to be filled with untruth -- as misleading as it is comfortable ... So it might come as little surprise to rediscover that Buddha in all likelihood never said such a thing at all -- that his more authentic words actually ring quite differently; shining Compassion over callousness, and radiating service over self-focus.

As such, feel free to consider the following, more accurate exultation and then feel free to act accordingly:



*"Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But, after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason **AND IS CONDUCTIVE TO THE GOOD AND BENEFIT OF ALL**, then accept it and live up to it." ~ Buddha*

Amen ... Let it be so.

Forging Paths of Kindness ...
(07/02/2014)

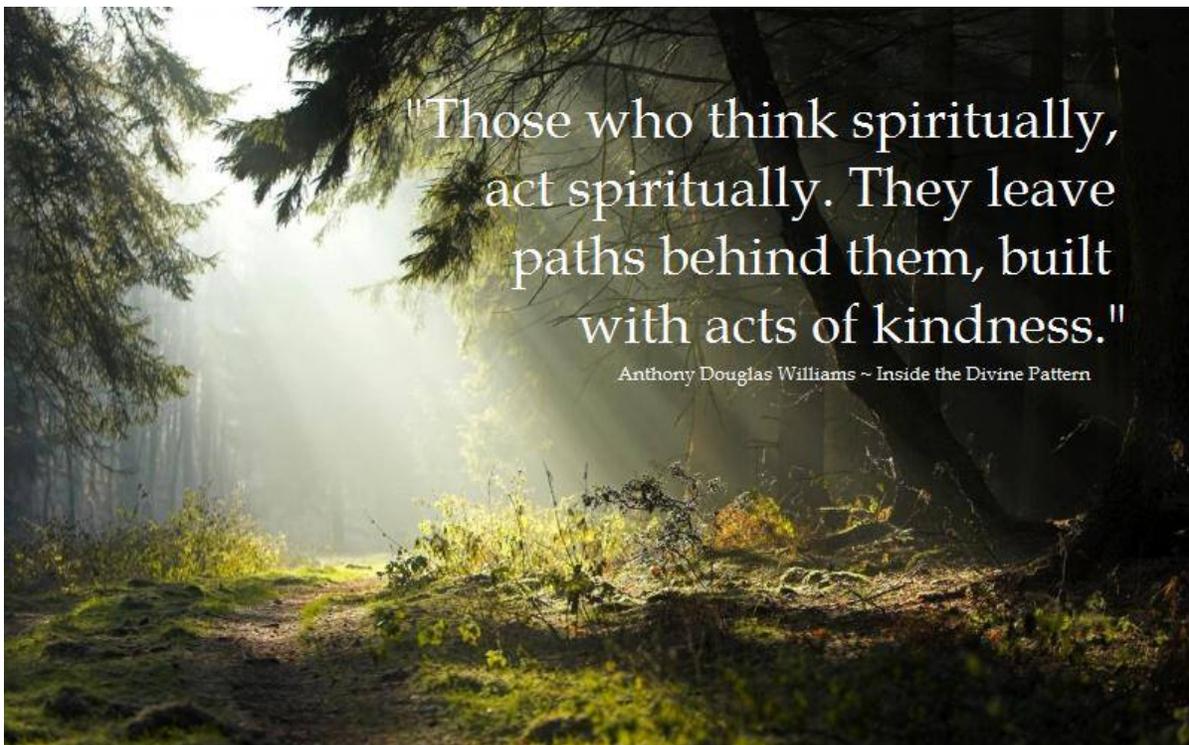
Living the truly Good Life is not about fixing everything that is broken or washing away all of life's sadnesses or saving the world ... It's simply about pausing one moment at a time to reach out and Care.

Please remember that every act of Kindness counts, my Friends. Please remember that everyone you meet is in need of the same ...

... and then please act accordingly.

Thank you.

"This is the beginning of a new day. You have been given this day to use as you will. You can waste it, or you can use it for good. What you do today is important because you are exchanging a day of your life for it. When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever; and in its place will be something that you have left behind... Let it be something good." ~ inspired by Rick Kausrud



Two Fun Facts ...
(07/02/2014)

Here are two fun facts for your consideration: first, there are 613 religious laws (called "mitzvot") in the Hebrew Bible ... and second, the Beatles used the word "Love" exactly 613 times during their songwriting careers ... Now aside from the very real possibility of this being a simple coincidence, it *could* also represent quite a few things that are both wonderful & amazing ... hmmmmm

“When someone thinks that peace and love are just a cliché that must have been left behind in the 60's, then that's a problem. Peace and love are eternal.” ~ John Lennon



Yes, we CAN ...
07/03/2014)

There are things in life we cannot change even though we so want to do so: ... drone strikes that create three times the "terrorists" they wish to eliminate (killing more innocent women & children than "dangerous" men in the process) ... major corporations that taint our food supplies, pollute our rivers & destroy our environment ... preachers who cherry-pick scriptures for verses both hateful & condemnatory (and who then use the same to spread messages of intolerance, hatred & fear) ... politicians who look away from our communities' often dire needs while greedily lining their own pockets & satisfying their own desires ... factory farms that disgustingly slaughter millions upon millions of innocent animals every day in ways more cruel & unusual than any Nazi extermination camp ... and the list goes on & on & on.

Frankly, it can be enough to make the most hopeful of us shake our heads & tremble ... *AND YET*, even though there is essentially nothing we can do about these tragedies on a major scale, **WE CAN** stand against them in our own everyday lives -- and by doing so, **WE CAN** make significant changes in our own communities, and thereby inevitably the world as a whole as well ...

Consider the following:

*We cannot stop Obama from turning the United States into the world largest (and most efficient) terrorist state, and yet **WE CAN** become agents for Peace in our own relationships and open advocates for Peace in our communities.

*We cannot stop Monsanto (or Nestle, or Kraft, or any other large corporation) from destroying our planet and selling us poisoned foodstuffs, and yet **WE CAN** stop supporting them in our grocery stores, and **WE CAN** start supporting local organic farmers, and **WE CAN** even start growing our own food and sharing the same with our neighbors.

*We cannot stop conservative reverends & pastors & rabbis from preaching bigotry & hatred & condemnation, and yet **WE CAN** open our hearts -- and even our homes -- to those in our communities who practice faiths different from our own.

*We cannot stop our politicians from looking out for their own interests at the expense of our own, and yet **WE CAN** begin to ignore them completely -- even while we go about the business of rebuilding our own communities in the very ways those politicians should have done long ago.

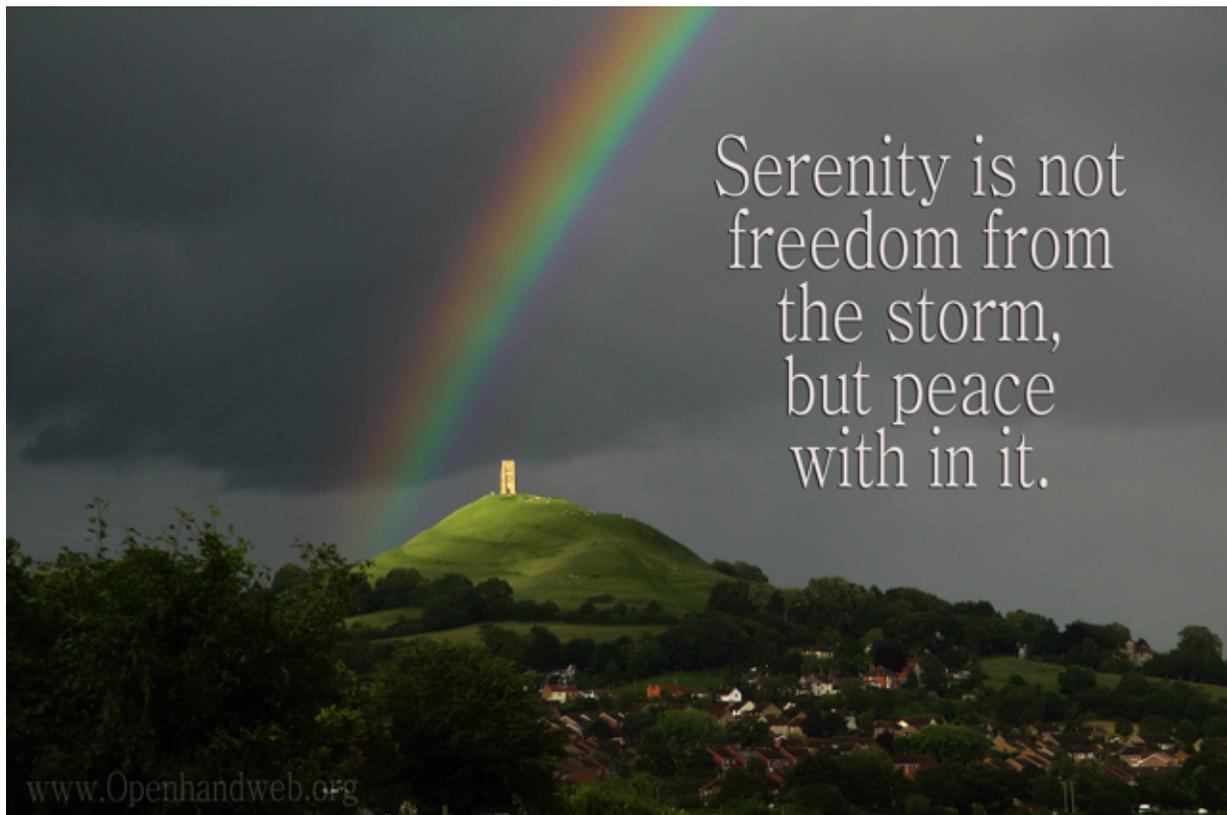
*We cannot stop farmers from imprisoning, raping, torturing and murdering millions of innocent animals (at least not overnight), and yet **WE CAN** stop supporting them with our food choices -- just as **WE CAN** engage any number of methods to openly & publicly & actively champion animal rights and justice for all.

Yes, my Friends, the world is indeed in pretty sad shape ... and yes, it does still sometimes seem like it's all "going to Hell in a hand basket" ... *and yet* even if this is true, ***WE CAN STILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE.***

So please go forth and get busy doing so ...

Thank you.

*"Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and wisdom to know the difference."
~ Reinhold Niebuhr*



Disobeying civilly ...
(07/10/2014)

*"Injustice anywhere
is a threat to justice everywhere."
~ Martin Luther King Jr.*

He was right, you know -- that Martin Luther King Jr. He was right to call out the injustices of his era – he was right to take a stand against them – and he was right to do so peacefully, and thereby Power-fully.

Well, our generation is now up to bat. Make no mistake, my Friends, even in the United States of America -- the "land of the free and the home of the brave" -- freedom is lacking, and more than a bit of bravery is lacking right along with it.

"What?!?!", I hear Americans cry. "How dare you insult our great country?!? We *are* the land of the free, and we *are* a place where justice reigns supreme." ... Well, I hear that national pride knocking, and yet more than few raw & simple facts just won't let it in. Don't get me wrong ... I understand the noble sentiment of my American friends, and I do respect their opinion. *ON PAPER* (and at times still in practice), the United States is indeed still a land of liberty ... *and yet* in many, many too-easily-overlooked cases, it most certainly is not.

Consider the following:

*Americans are required to fund their government's unjust, illegitimate & immoral military conflicts whether they support those terrorist actions or not ...

*Americans are sentenced to long prison terms for petty offenses such as marijuana possession, not paying income taxes (an unconstitutional mandate, by the way), and minor vandalism in the name of animal rights ...

*Americans are convicted of crimes and given longer prison sentences in large part due to the color of their skin ...

*Americans have primary food sources that have been manipulated and tainted by large corporations like Monsanto & Nestle -- and this with the full support of their elected government officials ...

*America is one of the only countries in the world that does not provide adequate health care for its citizens (though the aforementioned elected officials are cared for quite nicely) ...

*The American meat & dairy industry is knowingly & purposefully destroying the health of its customers, and indeed the health of our entire planet, with its cruel and environmentally abusive practices ...

And the list goes on & on ... and the abuses go on & on ... and still far too few Americans are stepping up to take a stand.

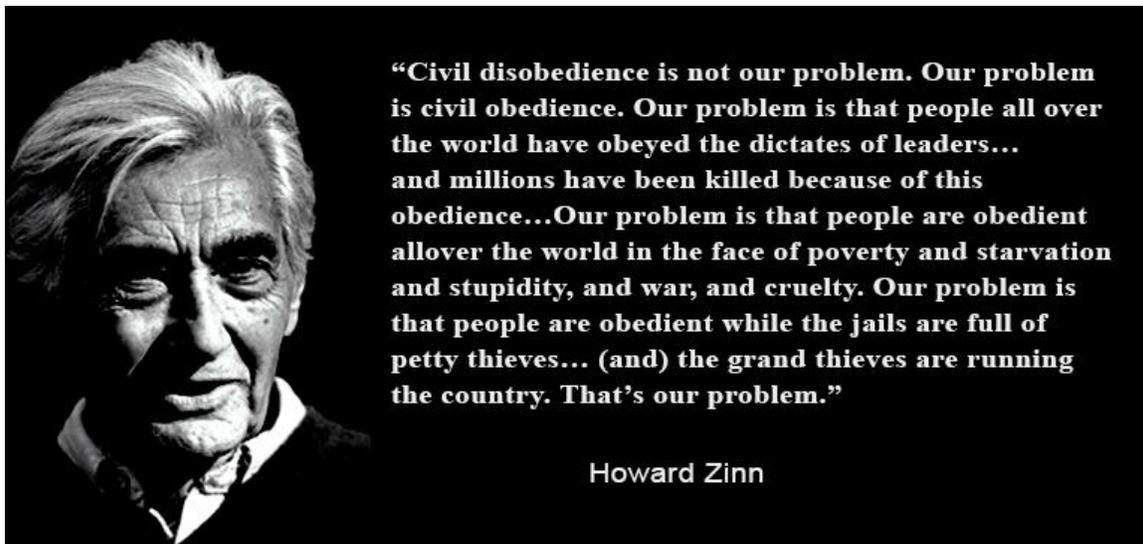
My Friends, there is a reason why we revere Mahatma Gandhi & Martin Luther King Jr. ... It's because they got it Right ... They saw what was wrong with their societies, and then they became beacons of change. And when they did so, they didn't merely rant or complain, nor did they succumb to the delusion that they could use the system to fix the system ... No, we revere these men -- and all those men & women who acted then & act today with similar courage & forthrightness - - because they *ACTIVELY REFUSED TO COMPLY* with the injustices they were witnessing.

Well, my Friends, it's high time we did the same ... There are literally dozens of current causes begging for your civil disobedience.

Please join hands with one of them today ... Thank you.

*"One has a moral responsibility
to disobey unjust laws."
~ Martin Luther King Jr.*

*"Protest beyond the law is not a departure from democracy;
it is absolutely essential to it." ~ Howard Zinn*



So Amazing ...
(07/12/2014)

We humans are so *AMAZING* -- and we are not a collection of different individuals or warring tribes or varied cultures or conflicting beliefs or distinctive nations. Nope -- We are all drawn from the same slate; all molded from the same clay. We are homosapiens -- and we are one large, beautiful, amazing Family. Indeed, we are literally **ONE** -- all of us.

This is a fact as indisputable as it is uplifting.
Consider going forth today and acting accordingly.

Thank you.

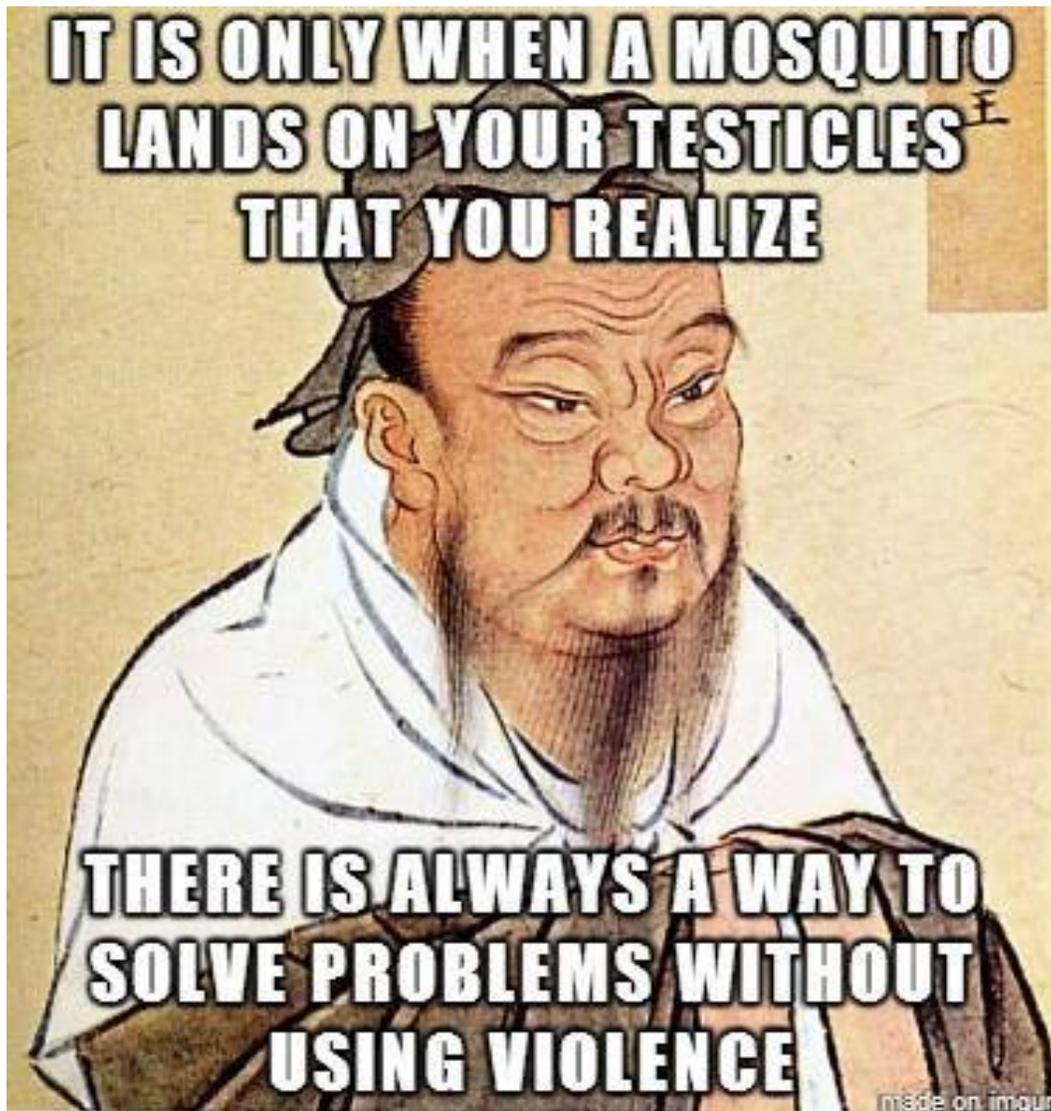
"Every one of us is, in the cosmic perspective, pure and precious. If another human disagrees with you, let him live ... Nay, embrace him. For as far as you might search -- even in a hundred billion galaxies, you will not find him again." ~ inspired by Carl Sagan



AllWays the Way ...
(07/18/2014)

I actually figured the pictured Truth out without the help of any mosquitoes, but I can see how others (especially politicians -- including Presidents Obama & Putin) could benefit greatly from learning such Wisdom.

*"Fighting for peace
is like screwing for virginity."
~ George Carlin*



Just Like You ...
(07/21/2014)

I lived purposefully “on the streets” for over two years of my life, and during that time I met hundreds of homeless folks -- all of them to a degree "dirty" or "crazy" or "lazy" or "addicted" or "lost"; just like me at the time ... indeed, just like all of us today. And -- just like me at the time (and all of us today, *and* just like each & every homeless person any of us will ever encounter in the future), they were all human beings ... they were all people -- Good People, at that ... Each and every one of them had a unique story to tell, and each & every one of them had every right to be given Compassion over callousness, and Joy over judgment.

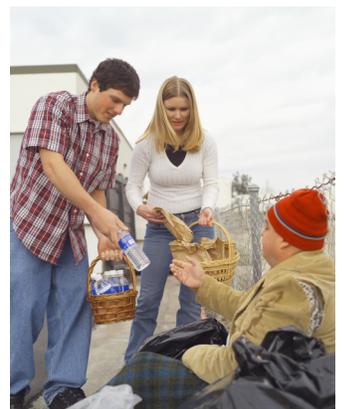
You will see them today as you are out & about – my homeless Friends, and when you do you might be tempted to look upon them with scorn or disgust ... You might be tempted to pass them by ... You might be tempted to turn away instead of offering a smile and some Kindness ... Fair enough.

And yet know that if you do so ... it will not only be their loss;

... it will also be your own.

"A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures."

~ Albert Einstein

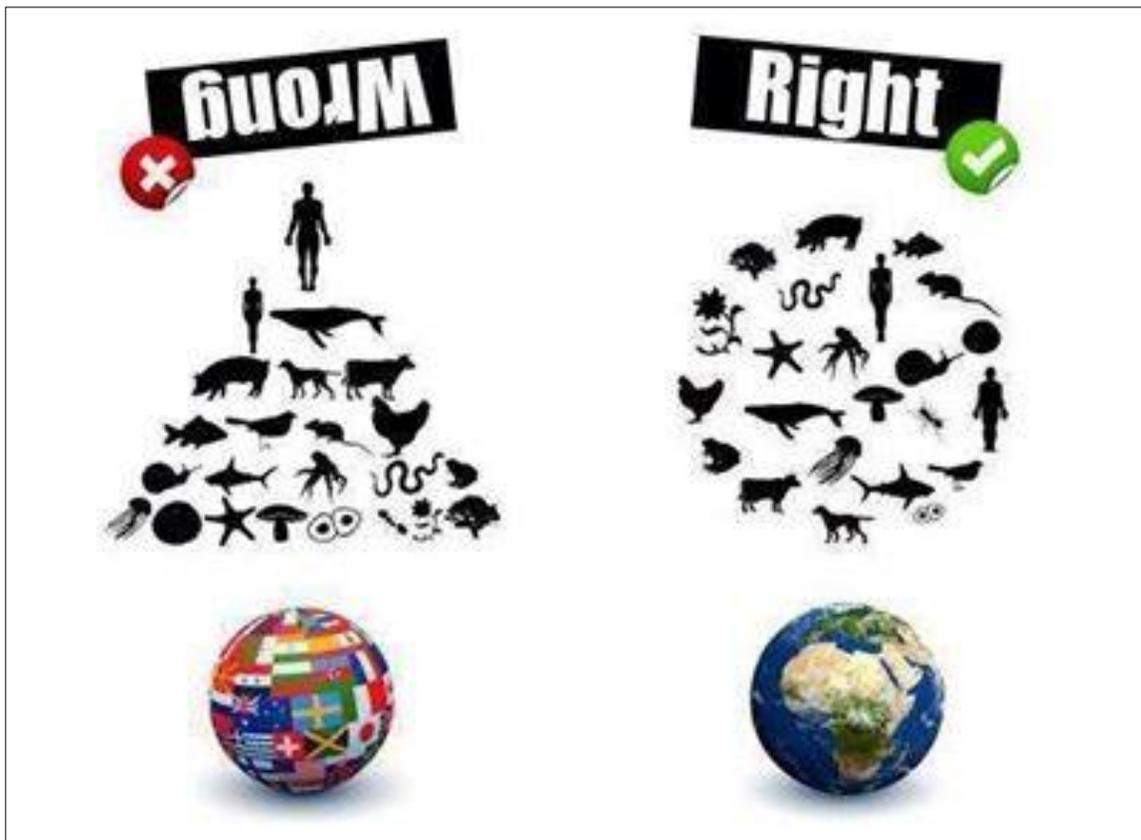


on Right & Wrong ...
(07/25/2014)

If "wrong" means situations, beliefs or behaviors that bring division, pain & suffering -- and if "right" means situations, beliefs or behaviors that bring Harmony, Peace & Joy ... then the picture below is quite "Right" indeed ...

... in-Deed!

"This is the power of the global Goliath: that no one on Earth -- be they fundamentalist or secularist; meat-eater or vegan; conservative or liberal -- can escape its grasp. As such, we all must learn to share our planet, or we perish on it together." ~ inspired by Scott Westerfield



A Tribute to Robin ...
(08/15/2014)

In ancient Jewish tradition, a person was only considered truly "passed on" on the fourth day after their body stopped living (Interesting, isn't it, that Jesus was less than three full days in the tomb ... But I digress). Well, today is the fourth day since Robin Williams was found dead in his apartment, meaning in almost every way he truly has left us ... in *almost* every way.

You see, a part of Robin will never perish; a great part will remain with us all for all eternity. What can never die is the gentleness with which he graced others -- what can never die is the selfless love he gave to so many -- what can never die is the brilliance of his wit -- what can never die are the millions upon millions of laughs & chortles & snickers & guffaws that he brought up from within us; spontaneous eruptions of glee that are reverberating & bouncing & echoing throughout the Universe still.

So thanks for the laughs, Robin. May we all bring forth even half as much Joy in the lives of others as you did ...

... and may we all recommit to doing so today.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world ... Reality: What a concept!" ~ Robin Williams



Last Words – His & Mine ...
(08/15/2014)

"No matter what people will tell you, words and ideas can change the world." ... I ended my last entry about Robin Williams' death with this quote, and over the course of the few hours since then, it has got me to thinking ... Was this quote actually from Robin, or was it one of the few times he did not improvise the lines in his movies? I quickly reminded myself that it doesn't really matter -- that wisdom is wisdom, no matter its original source (if there even is such a thing).

And then I got to thinking again: Seeing as how Robin Williams birthed & developed & honed so much Meaning via his words; via his over-the-top cleverness & wit, I began to wonder what his last words actually were -- about the final slice of genius to come forth from that remarkably brilliant brain and that remarkably gentle Heart ...

By all indications, we won't ever know. Like my brother before him, Robin left no suicide note, and unlike my late brother's "keeper"*, Robin's family seems keen on respecting his post-mortem privacy ... Though admittedly not that important in the grand scheme of things, those interested will probably be left to wonder; and will probably be better off leaving such wondering behind, in favor of getting out there to live while the living's good.

(*Even though he might have wished otherwise had he been asked, I chose to make my "Tribute to Todd" a most public one.)

And yet, as these Robin-inspired revelations were fading, I began to ponder "last words" in general -- how they somehow **do** often shine an extra significance; how they somehow **do** often more lucidly relay deeper wisdoms; how they **do** somehow often serve to more intensely inspire us to go forth and live our own lives more Meaning-fully ...

So I decided to do some research into "last words", and came up with the following gems -- may you be motivated by them to courageously embrace your Calling; may you be encouraged by them to persevere through times of rejection or ridicule; and may you be amused by them in times of despair or darkness.

P.S. And yes, in case you were wondering, their order from first to last was indeed arranged purposefully ... So enJOY!

A few famous (& a few not-so-famous) LAST WORDS ...

"No comment." ~ Edward Abbey

"No ... I have no final statement." ~ Lawrence Brewer

"I've said all that I've had to say." ~ Bill Hicks

"Last words are for fools who haven't already said enough." ~ Karl Marx

"What time is it? Never mind ... That's not important." ~ Janos Arany

"Pardon me, sir. I did not do it on purpose." ~ Marie Antionette (said to her executioner, after she inadvertently stepped on his foot while approaching the guillotine)

"Now I can cross the shifting sands." ~ L. Frank Baum (author of The Wizard of Oz)

"Not one statesman in a position of responsibility has dared to pursue the only course that holds out any promise of peace ... Political passions, once they have been fanned into flame, always exact their victims." ~ Albert Einstein

"All my possessions for a moment of time." ~ Queen Elizabeth I

"Either the wallpaper goes or I do." ~ Oscar Wilde

"Father, Father ... Why have you forsaken me?" ~ Jesus Christ (quoting the first verse of the surprisingly uplifting 22nd Psalm in Mark 15:34; essentially saying "It's been an honor to serve you fully & completely, Dad.")

"Die, my dear? Why, that's the very last thing I'll do!" ~ Grouch Marx

"Waiting are they? Well ... Let them wait." ~ Ethan Allen (responding to an attending doctor, who had just offered the gentle words: "General, I fear the angels are waiting for you.")

"Take a step forward, lads. It'll be easier that way." ~ Robert Childers (said to his firing squad, during the Irish Civil War)

"I am about to die -- or I am going to die; either expression is correct." ~ Dominique Bouhours (a French grammarian)

"It is good." ~ Immanuel Kant (ironically, his ultimate "moral imperative")

"God bless ... God damn." ~ James Thurber

"Now, now, my good man, this is no time for making enemies." ~ Voltaire (when asked by a priest to renounce Satan)

"Wait a minute." ~ Pope Alexander VI

"I did not know that we had ever quarreled." ~ Henry David Thoreau (after his aunt had asked him if he had made his peace with God)

"I feel great." ~ Pete Maravich (said seconds before his death during a pickup game)

"It's all been rather lovely." ~ John Le Mesurier,

"I am about to take my last voyage; a great leap in the dark." ~ Thomas Hobbes

"I am off in search of the great perhaps." ~ François Rabelais

"I die hard, but am not afraid to go." ~ George Washington

"The fog is rising ... I must go in." ~ Emily Dickinson

"Why not? ... Yeah." ~ Timothy Leary

"Beautiful." ~ Elizabeth Barrett Browning (replying to her husband about how she felt)

"I love many things; I love all people." ~ Leo Tolstoy

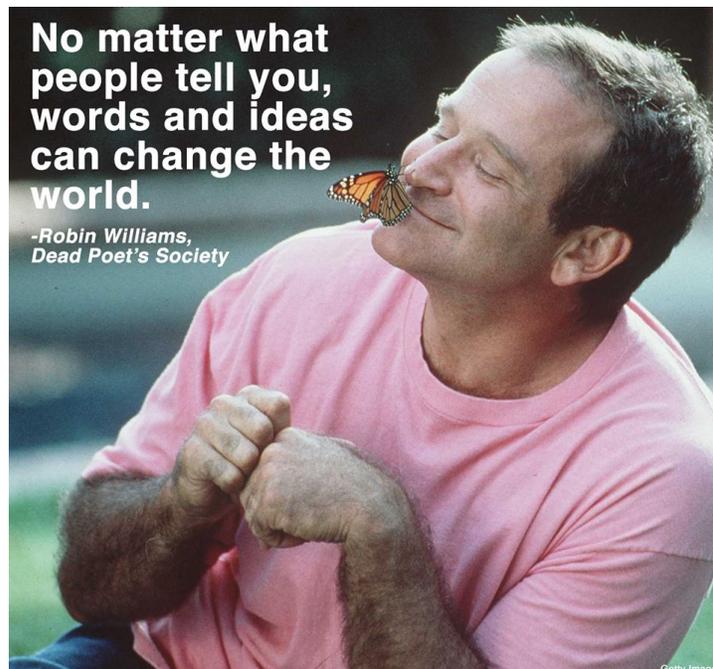
"Make the world better." ~ Lucy Stone (abolitionist & activist)

"What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset." ~ Crowfoot

P.P.S. No matter what anyone one day says or writes to the contrary, my own last words (no matter when I one day happen to say them) are hereby officially noted to be:

*"First, discern the devils in your dogma;
Second, soothe the sufferings of the sentient;
Last ... be Kind when least inclined."*

I realize that this is a mouthful to get out while taking one's last breath, and yet these 20 words encompass the three primary reasons I have chosen to Be; the three main messages I have chosen to share while I am still alive ... So even if I don't actually get them out of my mouth before I pass onward, know that I was most certainly thinking them at the time -- and report them as uttered anyway.



Haikus & Harmony ...
(08/16/2014)

Sometimes haikus don't make any sense ... Sometimes they do.
And sometimes haikus make no sense to the ego -- while
simultaneously illuminating the essential Meaning of Life & Living.

As an example, please consider the following:

*Life can be hard, and
People can be frustrating ...
Be Kind anyway.*

(Amen ... Let it be so.)



*Haikus are easy
But sometimes they don't make sense
Refrigerator*

DOing something ...
(08/18/2014)

I'm not saying that the riots in Ferguson are justified due to the reasonable rage that living in abject poverty instills & that flagrant injustice ignites ... And I'm not saying that the riots in Ferguson are wrong because their vastly counterproductive & innately hypocritical means are themselves annihilating their desired ends ...

No, what I *am* saying is this: unless you live near Ferguson &/or are willing to go there and *do something* positive to calm its negativity, then stop watching it -- stop discussing it -- and stop thinking about it. Doing so is simply not constructive, and beaming out your pity or your sympathy or your criticism actually makes things worse.

Besides, you aren't getting the Truth from your television anyway, so *TURN IT OFF* ... And then, after you have done so, consider going out into your own community, finding someone in need nearby (you won't have to look far), and then **DOing SOMETHING** to help alleviate their pain.

Thank you.

“If you alter your focus on that what is striving to influence you, you dramatically expand the possibilities of that which you can influence.”

~ inspired by Guy Ritchie's film "Revolver"



Dancing in the Rain ...
(08/21/2014)

As a Peace Pilgrim, there are many things that I do not possess & there are many luxuries that I purposefully choose not to enjoy, with not owning umbrellas being one of the former & not using umbrellas being one of the latter. The picture below beautifully illustrates one of the reasons why I am so thankful I still don't.

“In the final analysis, the questions of why bad things happen to good people transmutes itself into some very different questions, no longer asking why something happened, but asking how we will respond, what we intend to do now that it has happened.” ~ Teilhard de Chardin



Taking the Leap ...
(08/23/2014)

To worry is to pray in the wrong direction ... There's no easy way to get off the "ride" of Life, so we best set aside our indecision & our cowardice & our jitters while we're on it. Let's take a seat on the front row, throw our arms up in the air, and enjoy every last second of it instead; screaming in jubilation during times of pleasure & plenty ... and smiling in defiance during our moments of frustration & fear.

"All fear has an element of resistance and a leaning away from the moment. Its dynamic is not unlike that of strong desire, except that fear leans backward into the past's last instant of safety, while desire leans forward toward the future's next hope ... Each lacks the presence necessary to revel in the only moment we truly have: this one." ~ inspired by Stephen Levine

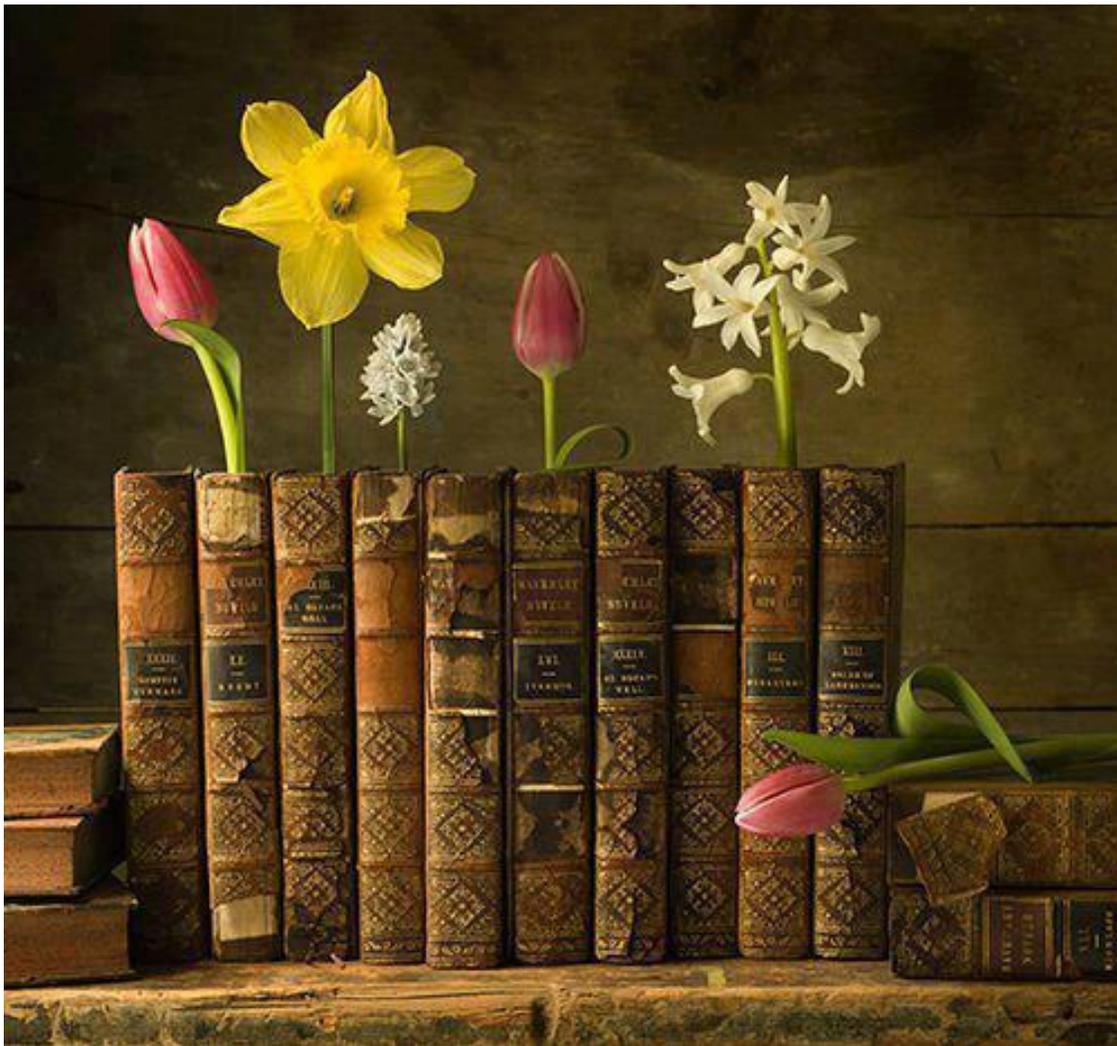


Compassion is a verb ...
(08/24/2014)

Compassion, like all forms of real Wisdom, is not something to be read about & intellectually comprehended ... Compassion, like all forms of real Wisdom, is something to be enacted & actively experienced ... Compassion, like all forms of real Wisdom, must blossom forth to Be;

Compassion, like all forms of real Wisdom ... is a verb.

"Compassion is the essence of Jesus' teaching, and indeed of the teaching of all great spiritual figures ... Yet compassion has been sentimentalized and severed from its relationship to justice-making and celebration." ~ Matthew Fox



Scum & Villainy ... (08/24/2014)

Well, it looks like our "leaders" are trying to start another futile & counterproductive war in the Middle East. God bless our politicians; for they know not what they do -- literally.

"If we really saw war, if we really saw what war does to young minds and bodies, it would be impossible to embrace the myth of war. If we had to stand over the mangled corpses of schoolchildren killed in Afghanistan and listen to the wails of their parents, we would not be able to repeat the hollow and misleading clichés we use to justify war. And this is why our wars are so carefully sanitized. This is why we are shown war's perverse and dark thrills but are spared from seeing war's true & utter consequences ... The mythic visions of war keep it heroic and entertaining -- while the wounded, the crippled, and the dead are, in this great & shameless charade, swiftly carted offstage. For they are war's refuse ... We do not see them. We do not hear them. They are doomed, like wandering spirits, to float around the hazy edges of our consciousness -- ignored, and sometimes even reviled. For the truth-filled message they tell us is simply too painful for us to hear: that war is a sham; that war is a fallacy; that war is organized murder; that war only creates more war. So we sit back and celebrate ourselves & our nation instead -- by imbibing the myths of glory, and honor, and patriotism, and heroism ... words that in combat become empty and meaningless ... words that encourage callousness & violence & cruelty ... words that are therefore the essence of evil."
~ inspired by Chris Hedges



"You'll never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy."



Hey, Mr. Obama ...
(08/25/2014)

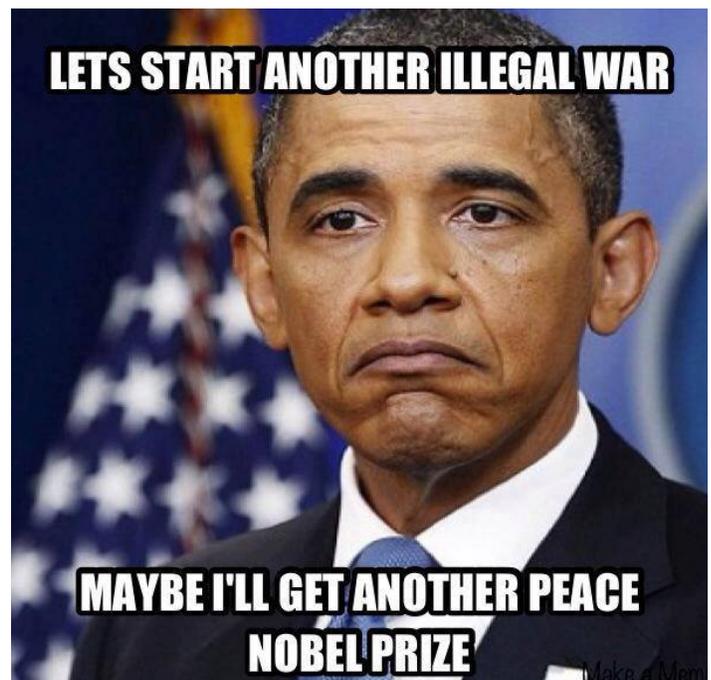
Hey, Mr. Obama ... I just thought you might like to be reminded that you are running out of time to repair your current legacy of lies to the people, abandonments of the poor, pardonings of the rich & panderings to military aggression. A growing portion of your American constituency has joined most of the rest of the world in becoming fully unfooled and this is indeed one of your last chances to recover some sense of decency; one of your last chances to even faintly resemble the noble man who once stood so proudly before us some six years ago.

And so it is that I pray for you, and thereby pray for all of us ... I pray you make a rare, wise decision ... I pray you opt for something radically different than what you have repeatedly chosen until now ... I pray you stand up for what the United States originally stood for (and yet admittedly hasn't stood for in many decades) ... I pray you choose for Justice and I pray you choose for Freedom.

Mr. Obama, quite simply -- and somewhat quite pleadingly -- I pray you make a choice for Peace.

"The thing is, [Obama] posed as a progressive and turned out to be counterfeit. We ended up with a Wall Street presidency, a drone presidency, a national security presidency. The torturers go free. The Wall Street executives go free. The war crimes in the Middle East, especially now in Gaza, the war criminals go free. And yet, you know, he acted as if he was both a progressive and as if he was concerned about the issues of serious injustice and inequality and it turned out that he's just another neoliberal centrist with a smile and with a nice rhetorical flair. And that's a very sad moment in the history of the nation ... Our culture is in increasing decay. Our school systems are in deep trouble. Our political system is dysfunctional. Our leaders are more and more bought off with legalized bribery and normalized corruption in Congress and too much of our civil life. You would think that we needed somebody -- a Lincoln-like figure who could revive some democratic spirit and democratic possibility ... We needed a high-ground statesperson, and it's quite clear now that [Obama] is not that man."

~ Dr. Cornel West



Being only Human(e) ...
(08/26/2014)

As much as I unconditionally LOVE dogs, "but I'm just a dog" is not an excuse ... It wasn't an excuse when my dog Billy would get pissed at me and strew garbage all over the house because I went to my Evidence class and didn't take him with me, and it wasn't an excuse when he destroyed some of my favorite books for choosing to snuggle with a girlfriend instead of him. (You were an incredible Friend, Billy ... I still Love you, buddy.)

Similarly, as much as I unconditionally LOVE other humans, "But I'm only human" isn't an acceptable excuse either ... Like dogs, we homosapiens are almost always fully aware of what is Right & what is "wrong" -- We are aware which of our choices are done primarily for our own benefit, and which are done to benefit others ... We are aware which actions are likely to bring others pain, and which are likely to bring Peace. And while it is indeed often a difficult choice to make, it is always possible to pause in any given moment and choose an option that is both selfless and Peace-full.

Yes, we will of course continue to make mistakes in this regard, *and yet* "I'm only human" is not a reasonable excuse when we do ... For whenever we behave selfishly, as humans, we don't need to pass the blame or make excuses for our poor behaviors ... Instead, we are allowed to accept responsibility for our slips into narcissism, and then atone with acts of radical generosity, and whenever we harm others, as humans, we don't need to rationalize or justify or defend either our actions or ourselves ... Instead, we are allowed to accept responsibility for our (hopefully unintentional) acts of callousness or cruelty, apologize wholeheartedly to those we have harmed, and then atone for those misdeeds with acts of radical Kindness.

In closing, my Friends, consider remembering the simple Truth that none of you are "only human" ... Feel free to remember (and then to re-member) that you are HUMAN instead!



*"Until we extend our circle of compassion to include all living things, humankind will not know peace."
~ inspired by Albert Schweitzer*

Speaking UP for the TRUTH ...
(08/29/2014)

A relatively short while ago, a dear Friend of mine expressed shock (and was even a bit upset) when I informed her that very few people have been showing interest in the truths I have been offering -- not only here on Facebook, but also via my Blog and in person as well. This is how I responded then ... and this is how I continue to respond today ...

“It is true that still very few people seem to be interested in what I have to share, and yet when I pause a moment to think about it, it makes total sense that this is the case. After all, for most folks my message is incredibly uncomfortable -- if not downright terrifying ... You see, we humans are programmed to selfishly take care of our own desires first & foremost; to "survive & procreate" at all costs -- to satisfy our own desires, and to meet our own needs, and to be kind only to our own friends and family. This is the "ego" within every sentient being, and it is the part of our brains that reacts first to every encounter we have. It is what has created our money-based economies, it is what has created our judgment-based religions, and it is what has created our fear-based nations ... And every human being has one of these "me first" generators. It is the way our brains are built. So of course people are going to be more than hesitant about listening to a "crazy man" who tells them that The Way to a profound & lasting Happiness rests in setting these primitive drives aside and empowering another facet of our mental makeup -- namely, the ability to consciously choose to sacrifice ourselves for the welfare of others.

This is the Way of the Soul, of course, and everyone has such a "Soul" (or "Holy Spirit" or "Advocate within" or "True Self" or "Heart Brain", whatever you wish to name it) -- and as such, everyone already knows exactly what I am talking about. Every one of us has a functioning conscience -- we all know that caring for others brings far more Joy than caring for self, and as such we already (subconsciously at least) realize that what I am offering is indeed a Great Truth ... *And yet*, understandably, most of them would rather do anything but give this "radical Kindness" a try. And indeed, I expect most of them to end up trying everything else to find Joy & Peace before realizing that only willing self-sacrifice will ever open the door to their truest experience of what it means to know real Joy & profound Contentment.

AND, on a more positive note, more & more folks *are* opening that door every day. I see it all around me ... Folks are being kinder to strangers, folks are actually speaking with the homeless, folks are shrugging their shoulders and openly forgiving those who have hurt them, folks are going vegan for the animals, folks are courageously protesting against war & corruption, folks are putting away their judgmental religious dogmas and accepting the innate value of all forms of appreciation & reverence (including atheism).

Yes, you won't see much of this Great Shift on the news, and admittedly I don't personally hear from too many people who are actively joining this movement, and **yet IT IS HAPPENING** nonetheless ... And it is my mission to keep doing whatever I can to help it continue to blossom ... And so it is that I will simply keep writing about it and speaking about it (when asked) and living it radically every day - - having Faith that more & more folks will continue to join our "Army of **LOVE**"; that together we will indeed turn humanity's ship around and save our species before it is too late.

Yes, I freely admit that at times my own ego does get a bit frustrated in how few people are actually living lives of Peace & Respect & Acceptance, and yet my True Self knows deep down that humanity **IS** gradually awakening thereto -- and as such I will never ever cease to openly share about the wonders of this Way." ~ S

"In times of rampant deceit, speaking the truth becomes a revolutionary act ... Speak the truth anyway." ~ inspired by George Orwell



**SPEAK THE TRUTH
SHOW YOUR LOVE**



Thanking GOD for “Un-Guides” – an Introduction ...
(09/01/2014)

We all have hundreds of interactions with others every day of our lives. Many of these meetings occur via mass media & social media, while some happen "in the flesh". And during quite a few of these interchanges (during most of them, in fact) we end up hearing various "facts" or receiving various tidbits of "truth"; the open echoes of the beliefs & devotions of those with whom we share ideas.

Now, most of the people we encounter share a mixed bag of information, with some of their opinions being a bit biased, and others being more "objective" ... And yet a few of our everyday interactions involve folks who reside primarily at one of two extremes: namely, our "True Guides" -- those rare people with whom we speak or to whom we listen who give out information that bears the "Good Fruit" of Peace & Joy -- and our "False Prophets": those very few who spout off opposing views that promote division, judgment & fear ... And while it is easy for us to be thankful for the former and to denigrate the latter, I am here today to offer a different way of dealing with life's "False Prophets"; a different way that allows us to use their maladjusted (and sometimes even malicious) misinformation; a way that allows them to serve as a help rather than as a hindrance; a way that allows us to set aside our reasonable feelings of loathing for their lies and hatred for their hatred, and embrace them instead with grace & gratitude ... It's actually a pretty simple process -- Here's how it works:

First, we identify our "False Prophets" -- namely, those people whose values & beliefs directly contradict those of our *conscience* ... Note: These "Un-Guides" are **not** necessarily the people who make statements that we find to be uncomfortable or "radical" or "insulting" or "heretical", or even those who advocate beliefs that contradict our own. No, the "False Prophets" of whom I speak are those who advocate division & judgment & fear & hatred instead of harmony & acceptance & Love & Peace. They are those who champion accumulation over generosity & self-safety over selfless caring ...

And even though such individuals are not that common, there are a few very-well-known figures who are currently fulfilling this invaluable role for many of us (I'll mention three of them in the pages that follow) ... In addition to these more famous examples, each of you will have more-personal relationships with individuals who are only "False" for you ... These folks aren't that hard to find -- oftentimes taking the form of a co-worker or even a family member.

Second, once we have identified our "False Prophets", the next step is to intently (and unemotionally) *LISTEN* to whatever they happen to tell us. This can admittedly prove to be a bit tricky, because our first impulse is often to either ignore them or argue with them, and yet it is critical that we choose instead to simply *LISTEN* -- to take note of what they are saying; to take note of what they are advocating; to take note of what they think we should be doing or how we should be behaving; even to take note of the tone of voice they use while doing so. I admit that this is quite difficult to do (seeing as how every "False Prophet" has a true knack for activating our most highly charged defense mechanisms -- for "pushing our biggest buttons") ... and yet with a little conscious effort, possible to do, it is.

Finally, once you have taken note of what your "False Prophets" are sharing, the last step is actually a fun one: without informing them of their "Un-Guide" status, and without beaming them anything other than the most heartfelt feelings of compassion & gratitude, simply go forth and enliven *exactly the opposite* of what they believe &/or profess. Do exactly the opposite of what they tell you to do ... Be exactly the optimistic of how they show you to be ... Affirm exactly the opposite of what they have chosen to affirm ... Doing so not only allows you to smoothly transition from feeling annoyance & hatred to exuding them compassion & thankfulness, but it also provides you with a veritable boatload of practical & highly effective Wisdom related to living a more Peace-full & Joy-full life ... Indeed, within every wolf in sheep's clothing sleeps a glorious ram ready to reawaken ...

... and it is treating such people accordingly that can help to make it so.

*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits."
~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:15-16)*

"A wise man gets more wisdom from his enemies than a fool does from his friends" ~ inspired by Baltasar Gracian



Thanking GOD for “Un-Guides” – Barack Obama ...
(09/01/2014)

In providing a few examples of "False Prophets", I start with a relatively atypical example -- and yet a very important one. For Mr. Obama is a "False Prophet" not because of what he says he believes, but rather for what his actions *show* him to actually support ... He claims to be a reliable fighter for the rights of the American people -- especially the downtrodden and the less fortunate, *and yet* his long string of broken promises in this regard say exactly the opposite; showing him to be a man who panders instead to big corporations, military manufacturers, lobbyists and power-brokers.

Yes, it is true that a sizable portion of this patent ineptitude rests squarely on the shoulders of the stagnant sham that is the American Congress, and yet the ineffectiveness itself is not what makes Obama a "False Prophet". Rather, it is his refusal to stand up for the principles of equality & justice & peace that does so.

Granted, due to the irreparably broken state of the American government as a whole, we cannot expect any President (or any other political "leader" for that matter) to make any headway on the issues that truly matter. *And yet* what we *COULD* be seeing is a man at the very least willing to publicly & consequently stand firm on those issues. Consider the following Truths ...

*We *COULD* be seeing a man who uses his executive power to close the prison in Guantanamo, instead of meekly allowing its egregious human rights violations to continue ...

*We *COULD* be seeing a man who demands that all Americans receive quality healthcare -- insurance company profit losses be damned, instead of caving in and pushing through a drastically watered-down "Obamacare" plan that still allows so many to suffer under a health care system that remains one of the least equitable in the world ...

*We *COULD* be seeing a man who uses his influence to diminish the insidious, Orwellian powers of the NSA & the CIA -- to abolish the Patriot Act even, instead of actively using them to spy on his own constituency and label even peaceful animal rights activists as "terrorists" (as is currently the case under the still un-repealed AETA) ...

*And we *COULD* be seeing a Nobel Peace Prize winner who refuses to make hollow excuses for actually *creating* terrorists when his illegitimate drone-strikes "succeed", and for murdering innocent civilians & children when they (more often than not) do not.

In conclusion, then, it is important to remember that "False Prophets" can be more readily identified by what they *DO* (or don't do) than by the smooth words they say. **AND** it is even more important to remember that once we find such "Un-Guides" in our lives, we are to beam them forgiveness & compassion *while* going forth to do the opposite of what they do ...

In the case at hand, where Obama lies, **we can** exude the courage to tell the Truth. In the case at hand, where Obama hypocritically violates the very principles he so eloquently espouses, **we can** exude the courage to truly walk our most Noble Talk. In the case at hand, where Obama makes excuses for violence & aggression & murder, **we can** stand Peace-fully tall in our own lives and actively champion the virtues of Acceptance & Kindness & Peace.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"We must begin by acknowledging the hard truth: We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations — acting individually or in concert — will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified." ~ Barack Obama (Nobel Peace Prize recipient)

"One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle ... The bamboozle has captured us. It's simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we've been taken." ~ Carl Sagan



Thanking GOD for “Un-Guides” – Sarah Palin ...
(09/01/2014)

Unlike Barack Obama, who talks an "enlightened", compassionate game but all too often enlivens exactly the opposite, Sarah Palin is a far more typical "False Prophet", in that her divisive actions tend to match her divisive words, with both of them proving to be founded in -- and actively promoting -- fear, negativity, condemnation, aggression &/or conflict ... Her overall track record as a public figure makes it exceedingly clear that Sarah Palin is a woman who proudly stands for violence towards all she deems to be "enemies", intolerance towards all who hold beliefs other than her own, and an active dismissal of any information that transcends the bounds of her comfort zone. In essence, she stands for conservatism, callousness & conflict in a time when humanity desperately needs open-mindedness, compassion & peace.

And as such, in line with the major premise of this short series of "Un-Guide Tributes", instead of choosing to get upset with Sarah Palin, we can be thankful for her showing us the "un-Way" ... Instead of ridiculing her more ridiculous statements or denigrating her more outrageous principles, we can choose to send her heartfelt compassion – compassion for a belief system that simply *must* be highly unsettling to own, and compassion for a set of values that simply *must* be highly disturbing to champion ... And then, from that more calm & caring frame of mind, we can then go lucidly forth into our own lives and actively do *exactly the opposite* of what Sarah Palin would have us do ... For example:

*When Sarah Palin tells us that "the only thing that stops a bad guy with a nuke is a good guy with a nuke" (from her CPAC speech on March 8, 2014), we can choose to reach out to our enemies with open acts of Kindness & Forgiveness.

*When Sarah Palin asks New Yorkers to "please refute the Ground Zero mosque plan" (a Palin tweet from July 18, 2010), we can continue to fully embrace that plan -- along with all plans like it and all members of all other religions as well (and thereby uphold the 1st Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to boot).

*When Sarah Palin encourages oil companies to "drill, baby, drill" (a Palin Facebook note on June 8, 2010), we can actively campaign to **END** the use of all fossil fuels, and actively support the development & use of all Earth-friendly alternative energies.

*When Sarah Palin reminds us (incorrectly) that Paul Revere rode to warn the British "that they weren't gonna be takin' away our arms" (her speech on June 3, 2011), we can do everything in our power to stop the insanity that is gun violence (an insanity conclusively linked as much to gun possession as it is to gun production).

*When Sarah Palin quips quite earnestly that, "If God had not intended for us to eat animals, how come He made them out of meat?" (a quote from her book "Going Rogue"), then we can go vegan for those abused & tortured innocent beings, and we can do so post haste!

*When Sarah Palin claims that the \$700 billion bank bailout gave "help to those who are concerned about the healthcare reform that is needed to help shore up our economy" (her interview with Katie Couric on Sept 24, 2008), we can know that it was nothing of the sort -- we can know that said bailout was an unjust, illegitimate & corrupt bonus given to businesses who didn't (and still don't) care one bit about either America or their fellow Americans.

*When Sarah Palin admonishes Dr. Laura Schlessinger for resigning from her popular radio show after using the N-word 11 times in five minutes by tweeting: "Dr. Laura: don't retreat...reload!" (quoted August 18, 2010), we can go out into our communities and do whatever we can to reach out to members of other races & other creeds & other sexual orientations & other species; to do whatever we can to completely eliminate the scourge of bigotry from our society.

*And when Sarah Palin says that the American government should "create law based on the God of the Bible and the Ten Commandments" (her interview with Bill O'Reilly on May 6, 2010), we can strive to uphold the actual intent of the American Founding Fathers by keeping our communities & our schools (and thereby the United States, and one day the world) fully & Respect-fully secular.

Amen ... Let it be so.



Thanking GOD for “Un-Guides” – Rush Limbaugh ...
(09/01/2014)

I do prefer to speak of & share about positive role models, and yet I continue to maintain that it is almost as important for us to learn to see the "mean" & the "crazy" & the "annoying" & even the "bad" or "evil" people in our lives as valuable teachers as well. For while the former re-mind us of The Way of selfless Love, the latter re-mind us of the un-Way of selfish fear. While the former in-Courage us to openly Care for others, the latter re-mind us not to gossip about or denigrate or shun or attack our enemies. While the former inspire us to reach out and sacrifice for those around us, the latter re-mind us to avoid protecting ourselves or "loving ourselves first" or "establishing healthy boundaries" ... In essence, the former show us what to Do, while the latter show us what not to.

And so, to honor the man who originally led me to this priceless concept and most potent "Life-Hack", I now pay humble tribute to this series' 3rd & final "Un-Guide": Rush Limbaugh ... Indeed, this entire "use your enemies as Un-Guides" concept was born one day long ago when, after listening to yet another pseudo-racist & highly inflammatory tirade from Limbaugh, I turned to a good friend who had been listening along and noted -- with no small amount of fervor -- that the easiest way for anyone to find objective Truth in life was to listen to Rush Limbaugh and then believe the exact opposite of whatever he happened to say ... While originally meant to be an offhand tidbit of humor, I then started to test this theory on a number of similarly acerbic, bigoted &/or judgmental Un-Guides in my life -- a test which met with an astounding amount of success ... So without further ado, I give you a "False Prophet" for all ages, and all the ages -- Rush Limbaugh. Please consider ...

*Where Rush says "If you feed the children three square meals a day during the school year, how can you expect them to feed themselves in the summer? [They are] wanton little waifs and serfs dependent on the State" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, December 2011), we can respond by going forth into our communities to feed the hungry.

*Where Rush says "Feminism was established to allow unattractive women access to the mainstream of society" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, August 2005), we can respond by going forth into our communities to be especially kind to the strangers our egos incorrectly judge to be "ugly" or "scary" or "plain" or "unattractive".

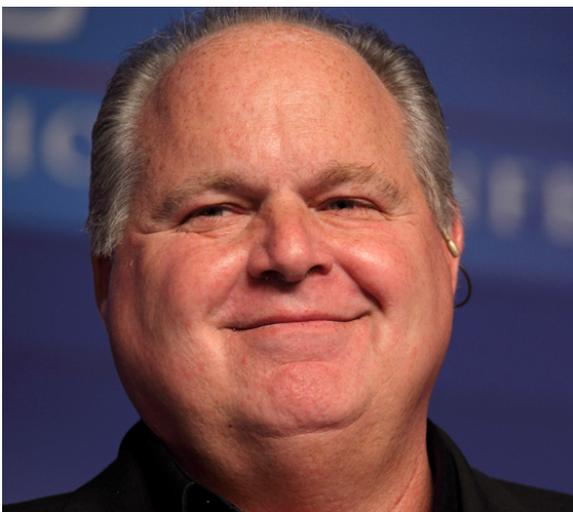
*Where Rush says of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill: "The ocean will take care of this on its own ... It's natural. It's as natural as the ocean water is" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, May 2010), we can respond by remembering that it is never too late to Care for the Earth we are still so callously destroying -- that it is never too late to recycle, or bike to work, or save water, or go vegan, or champion alternative energy sources instead of using fossil fuels.

*Where Rush says of women protesting sexual harassment: "They're out there protesting what they actually wish would happen to them sometimes" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, April 2004), we can respond by being extra Respect-full towards the women in our lives; by being extra tender with our partners regardless of their gender; indeed, by boldly standing up for all those we see being bullied in any way, shape or form -- be it at work, at school, at church, or even at home.

*Where Rush says "Let the unskilled jobs that take absolutely no knowledge whatsoever to do — let stupid and unskilled Mexicans do that work" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, Fall of 1993), we can respond by extending an open & heartfelt gratitude for *ALL* the immigrants in our communities (legal & illegal alike); realizing that without their incredible work ethic & indomitable courage & humble dedication, our communities -- indeed, our entire countries -- would not know even a small portion of the success & prosperity they know today.

*When Rush says "Have you ever noticed how all the composite pictures of wanted criminals resemble Jesse Jackson?" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, early 1990's -- admitted to by Limbaugh in Newsday magazine in 1990), we can respond by flagrantly refusing to profile or stereotype the strangers we meet in any way; indeed, by even going out of our way to approach those people of other color &/or other status &/or other nationality and -- instead of serving up fear or insult -- offering them a kindness or a compliment or a helping hand.

*And when Rush says "I mean if we want to get serious about this, if we want to face this head on, we're gonna have to openly admit, liberals should not be allowed to buy guns, nor should they be allowed to use computer keyboards or typewriters, word processors or e-mails, and they should have their speech controlled. If we did those three or four things, I can't tell you what a sane, calm, civil, fun-loving society we would have ... You would wipe out 90% of the crime, 85 to 95% of the hate, and a hundred percent of the lies from society" (from The Rush Limbaugh Show, January 2011), we can respond first with a chuckle at the irony of Rush Limbaugh making such a statement -- a statement far more applicable to himself than almost anyone else in the public arena, and then by going forth to keep using those keyboards, to keep using



those typewriters, and to keep using those word processors; to keep sending those emails, to keep making those Facebook posts, and to keep giving those speeches -- to relentlessly continue to utilize every channel available to champion Respect over bigotry; to champion Courage over apathy, to champion Harmony over divisiveness, and to *champion Love* over fear.

Amen ... Let it be so.

Rediscovering your real Self – very well worth it ...
(09/03/2014)

Here are two quotes that go really well together -- the first is from Karyn Swaney (and though a bit longer, is well worth the read), while the second is from Gary Francione (and while fairly obvious, is well worth remembering).

As allWays ... enJOY!

When your eyes open to the truth, it can be overwhelming. Everything you knew – everything once so familiar - so suddenly the upheaval. Do not become bewildered or overpowered by what can feel a daunting challenge. Instead let it further motivate you, and hold tight to the fact that you are taking part in something tremendous. Let the spirit that started you on this new path lift you to higher realms of thought, and continue the journey of knowing. This is an opportunity for true empowerment. You will likely find heartbreak and you will mourn. This is because you are an amazing and wonderful person. You will also likely find pure gratitude and joy, often along with a strange feeling of relief... even though you never actually knew you were burdened. Many will grieve for the actions they took prior to their finding understanding. The future is what matters. You matter. You are taking your power back. May your eyes always be open.



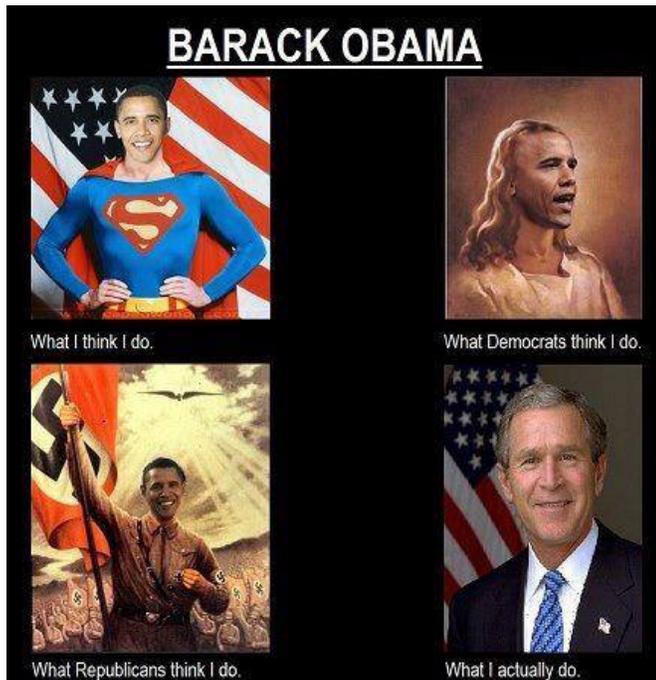
*“If you claim to ‘love’ animals
but you eat animal products,
you need to think critically
about how you understand love.”*

Re-viewing "Radicals" ... (09/06/2014)

The notion that "radicals" are people who hate their country is not only naive and misguided, but usually idiotic as well. What these individuals *ARE*, far more often than not, are individuals who actually adore their country far more than most, and are therefore disturbed & distressed far more than most when seeing its freedoms defanged, its values debauched and its validity denigrated. These "extremists" are not "bad citizens" who have turned to crime; they are the very best of citizens driven to call loudly for a return to a way of Respect and a way of Integrity and a way of Peace.

(inspired by H. L. Mencken)

"Patriotism ... is a superstition artificially created and maintained through a network of lies and falsehoods; a superstition that robs man of his self-respect and dignity, and increases his arrogance and conceit." ~ Emma Goldman



They use our differences to divide us.



**What would happen if we unite
around our love of peace
and freedom?**

Fly Like an Eagle ...
(09/06/2014)

"Our Actions will determine whether or not time will keep on slippin' into the future or we will fly like an eagle letting our Spirit carry us ... To choose to slip is to choose to procrastinate and concentrate on what is going to come to us. Daily activities become mundane and we choose to become stuck in the rut --- the rut of work without considering others, only looking forward to a next paycheck -- - the rut of T.V., only looking forward to the next slice of hollow entertainment -- - the rut of mindless habits and addictions to sooth the ego, only slippin' into the future by ignoring the glories of the moment already present.

To choose differently is to choose Awakening. To choose differently is to choose purpose-fully by jumping from our cliff sof fear and soaring into leaps of real & selfless Faith. By knowing it's ok to let go, by knowing it's ok to not concentrate on "when and how do I get mine", and by knowing it's ok to stand Tall even when Alone ... In such times, Joy comes from the smile upon another's face ... Joy comes from serving someone less fortunate ... Joy comes from Loving our enemy ... Joy comes from saying Yes when we really want to say No ... Joy comes when we choose to leap away from our selves and into our Spirit instead.

As Seal so asutuely noted: "In A SkY FulL oF PeOpLe OnLy SOME wAnT tO fLy, IsN't ThAt CRAZY?" Well I say it *is* crazy to keep our wings folded and impotent. So today I'm gonna' fly (regardless of any judgment condemnation that might come my way) ... I say my Spirit is going to carry me."

~ inspired by Vanessa Curley



Finding real LOVE ...
(09/19/2014)

Real, selfless LOVE is the Courage of Friendship + Intimacy.

It always takes its time in the Now ...
... and its Path is always straight to Here.



*A Journey Back to Humility – Part 1:
Deference to what IS ...
(09/07/14)*

The first stage of knowing real Peace is awakening to the simple reality of our innate & irrevocable Oneness ... The first stage of awakening to the reality of our innate & irrevocable Oneness is setting aside our beliefs & convictions & "knowledge" -- even if just for an instant – in order to open our minds in Humility; in order to consider a Universe far grander, a life far more scintillating, and an awareness thereof far more priceless than anything we have heretofore imagined.

And the first step into that necessary humbleness is the choice to see -- to truly *SEE* -- that we are anything but alone in our Universe, and that we are very far indeed from becoming the stewards thereof; that all our conflicts & concerns & worries & wars -- all our debates & dramas & amassings & arguments -- don't really mean that much; that they are certainly not worth fighting over -- and most definitely not worth killing over, much less even hurling mild insult.

Yes, the very first step on the Way to Peace, my Friends, is realizing the uncomfortable Truth that -- despite all our sensible doubts & reasonable enmities & understandable frustrations -- our lives, and indeed everything within them, are not at all about ourselves.

Indeed, the only realization worth having is the one that has us remembering the very simple Truth that our lives are about nothing more or less than how we can harmonize ourselves with all beings both near and far.

"Look again at that image of our Earth; look again and see it for what it is in the grander scheme of things: a pale blue dot. That's here ... That's home ... That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and our suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and every coward, every creator and every destroyer of every civilization, every king and every peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals and every corrupt politician, ... every saint and every sinner in the history of our species lived here -- on this mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam." ~ inspired by Carl Sagan

"After millennia of philosophical debate, the issue was settled decisively in favor of the plurality of worlds. They might be profoundly different from our planet. None of them might be as congenial for life. But the Earth was hardly the only one ... But by the nineteenth century, observational astronomy had made it clear that the Sun is but one lonely star in a great self-gravitating assemblage of stars called the Milky Way Galaxy. Far from being at the center of the Galaxy, our Sun with its entourage of dim and tiny planets lies in an undistinguished sector of an obscure spiral arm ... [And today], some modern deep sky photographs show more galaxies beyond the Milky Way than stars within the Milky Way. Every one of them is an island universe containing perhaps a hundred billion suns. Such an image is a profound sermon on humility ... We could not have known beforehand that the evidence would be, so repeatedly and thoroughly, incompatible with the proposition that human beings are at center stage in the Universe. But most of the debates have now been settled decisively in favor of a position that, however painful, can be encapsulated in a single sentence: We have not been given the lead in the cosmic drama. Perhaps someone else has -- Perhaps no one else has ... In either case, we have good reason for humility." ~ Carl Sagan



*A Journey Back to Humility – Part 2:
Re-making what could BE ...
(09/07/2014)*

And the second stage of knowing a true Humility -- that will then enable an awakening to Oneness, which will then allow for an experience of real Peace -- is to accept that even though you are indeed a miniscule part of the Universe, you are also EVERYTHING to those in your immediate surroundings; that even though you cannot change or alter the entire Cosmos, you most certainly CAN make great & uplifting change in the lives of all those around you.

You already are your greatest & most noble Destiny, my Friends ...
All that remains is for you to go forth today and act accordingly.

Amen ... Let it be so.

“Every one of us is, in the greater cosmic perspective, truly. So if another being disagrees with you in any way, remember to let them live. For even if you look within a hundred billion galaxies, you will not find another.”

~ inspired by Carl Sagan



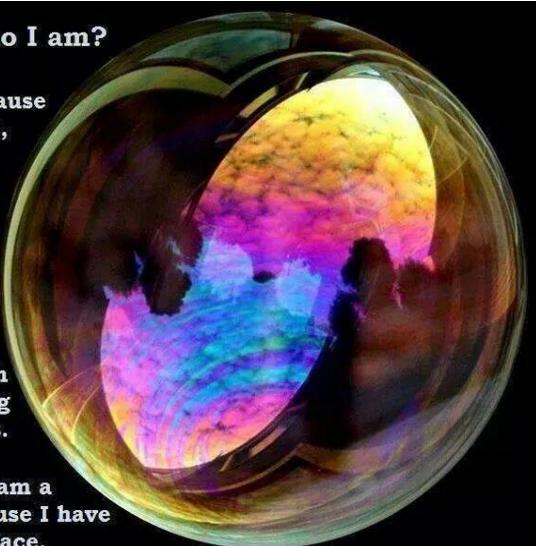
(image by Julie Fletcher)

The best Degree ... (09/12/2014)

The degree to which your religion excludes those who believe differently than you -- much less condemns those who happen to do so to an eternity of suffering, is the degree to which your religion portrays either a false god -- or a real God who is not worth worshiping ... And the degree to which your religion advocates Compassion & Kindness & Respect to ALL, *especially* to those who oppose you or your own personal beliefs -- or the degree to which your religion refuses to damn or condemn or denigrate those who believe precepts different or unusual, is the degree to which your religion actually honors a God of Love -- a God who is worthy of your gratitude and your homage and, most important of all, a God who is worthy of your emulation.

Amen ... Let it be so.

"Common sense dictates that we evaluate our beliefs on the basis of how they affect us. If they make us more loving, creative, and wise, they are good beliefs. If they make us cruel, jealous, depressed and sick, they cannot be good beliefs." ~ Barbara Marx Hubbard



Do you know who I am?

I say "namaste" because I like what it means, not because I am Hindu.

A lot of people here think that I am a Christian because they think I talk about Christian values, but the truth is I am really talking about human values.

I've been asked if I am a Buddhist, just because I have discovered inner peace.

A lot of my friends are Pagans, and they think I am one too because I say that being in Nature is my idea of going to church.

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them ... A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit ... Thus, BY THEIR FRUIT you will recognize them." ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:15-20)

"The fruit of the Spirit is Love: joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. "
~ Paul (Galatians 5:22-23)



Our Long-handled Spoons ...
(09/06/2014)

One day, a devout man prayed to God to show him the nature of Heaven & Hell ... Seeing as how the man had lived a humble & generous life, God decided that such a request could be granted, and led the man to two doors ... As the man looked on, the first door opened to show a large room that contained one large, round table. In the middle of the table was an enormous steaming pot of vegetable stew, and the aroma therefrom was so thick and smelled so hearty that the man's mouth couldn't help but begin to water.

And yet despite the obvious abundance found there, around that table were seated twelve of the thinnest, palest, sickliest people the man had ever seen, and the cause of their obvious despair soon became clear – for they each had only been given spoons with extremely long handles with which to eat, and while it was possible for all of them to reach the pot in the middle of the table to spoon out some of the stew, there was no way for them to bring that nourishment to their mouths.

"This", said God, with more than a touch of solemnity, "is Hell."

After the door to Hell closed, the second door opened. The man looked in and saw exactly the same room, containing exactly the same table, with exactly the same pot of stew for exactly the same twelve people seated around it, all of whom were holding exactly the same long-handled spoons. And yet this time everyone present was healthy & happy & rosy-cheeked, with eyes that laughed and mouths that smiled ... They were all completely content & at ease.

"This", said God, with more than a touch of Peace, "is Heaven."

The second door closed, and the puzzled man turned to God and said, "I don't understand. How is it so that the same twelve people can be so miserable in the first room and yet so happy in the second?"

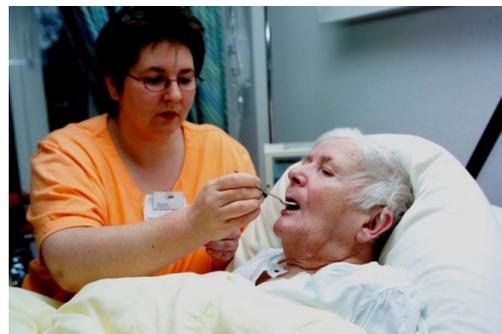
"The difference," God replied, "rests in one simple choice. You see, in Hell, people only think of serving themselves, while in Heaven, they have learned to feed each other."

.....

(While this parable is attributed to Rabbi Haim of Romshishok, variations of it are heard all over the world -- from Europe, where the pot is filled with stew and the people are using long-handled spoons, to China, where the pot is filled with rice and the people are using elongated chopsticks)

"The allegory of the long spoons teaches us that when we struggle to feed only ourselves, we all go hungry. And yet when we focus on relieving our neighbor's hunger, there is always enough to feed everyone." ~ Caritas

Amen ... Let it be so!



The Good Stuff ...
(09/12/2014)

"At the root of all religions are the same basic principles: Live simply ... Act with compassion ... Give to those in need ... Be kind to one another ... Forgive your enemies. And nowhere does any religion say that we should destroy the very thing that sustains our lives. As such, I feel quite confident in saying that from a religious point of view -- regardless from which religion that point of view might come, we must all actively revere all life and all actively protect the sanctity of our Earth."

~ inspired by Gyalwang Karmapa



To Seize the Day ...
(09/20/2014)

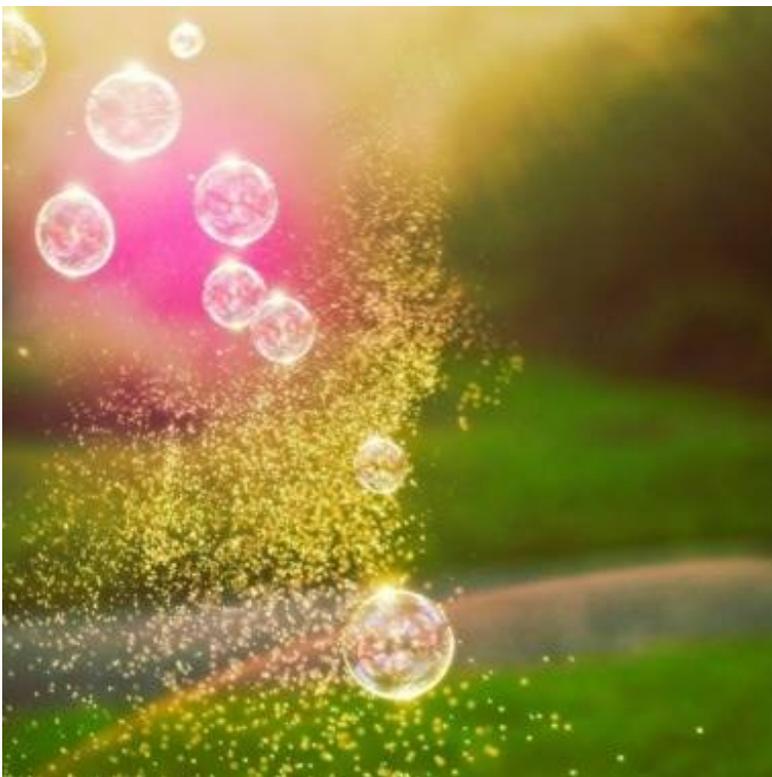
"Life is what happens while you are making other plans." ~ John Lennon

Carpe Diem! ... Seize the Day! ... YOLO! ... So many of us hear these words and think they are an encouragement to go have as much fun as possible; to accumulate as much wealth as possible; to experience as much pleasure as possible --- to sit back & relax, or to jump out of airplanes; to cross things off our bucket lists, or to finally do what we've always wanted to do ... And yet none of these things has anything at all to do with the experience of true Joy or the knowing of real Peace --- and not a single one of them will ever allow us to fully embrace any of the moments we have remaining.

No, my Friends, to truly "Seize the Day" we must have the courage to do so with the Soul more than with the mind; with the conscient yearning to DO Good more than with mere desire to "feel great" ... Yes, to truly seize this day we must have the courage to reach out to those who are downtrodden or depressed; we must have the courage to defend those who are defenseless; we must have the courage to forgive those who seem unforgivable; and we must have the courage to **LOVE** those who we have chosen to "hate".

For indeed, today is the last "today" any of us will ever truly have, so let us not let it slip by uncherished ...

... Let us open up our Hearts and gracefully *SEIZE IT* instead.



Amen ... Let it be so.

"One of life's greatest excitements is to stand somewhat apart and watch yourself softly becoming the author of something Beautiful." ~ inspired by Norman MacClean

An Answer for the Middle East ...
(09/09/2014)

First of all, please know that I realize fully well that the "powers that be" don't really want peace in the Middle East; that I comprehend fully that -- despite decades of desperate cries and bemoaned pleadings from the millions of innocent civilians caught in the bloody crossfire between political juggernauts lusting over land and religious zealots slaving over "salvation" -- violence & bloodshed & ignorance & hatred will probably continue to continue in that region of the world ... at least for the foreseeable future.

AND YET -- as has happened in similar situations over & over & over again throughout human history -- real & lasting Peace will indeed eventually win out there as well. The 90% of the people who yearn for a resolution to conflict -- those masses of "everyday folk" who don't care about the religion or the gender or the color or the culture of their neighbors; those folks who just want to be able to head to the grocery store or take their children to school without fearing for their lives -- will indeed one day rise up *as one* and demand Forgiveness ... and Acceptance ... and Solidarity ... and Peace.

And that is exactly what they will one day receive ... **ALL OF THEM.**

Of course, until that day arrives, they will all remain shackled to the currently greedy & still bloodthirsty whims of their supposed "leaders"; "leaders" who up until now have shown no desire whatsoever to effectuate a cease-fire of any substance or sincerity.

AND YET -- again -- just in case any of those "leaders" (or anyone related to them) is listening. I do have an immediate solution to the problem; I do have a practical path to Peace. Just in case any of you "powerful people" -- you government officials, you religious chiefs, you corporate kings -- just in case any of you who could actually speed up the process of bringing Peace to your ravaged lands -- just in case any of you are listening, how about trying the following:

*How about giving Palestinians a homeland commensurate in size with their population ...

*How about getting rid of that ridiculous wall the Israelis (and their American funders) have built around Gaza ...

*How about engaging in active, mandatory peace accords every month of every year -- whether you want to or not -- and how about including everyday citizens in those discussion; those folks who have already lost loved ones & family members to the bloodshed ...

*How about mutually dismantling a sizable portion of your weapons arsenals every year, and how about doing so together -- at the same time -- in front of each other -- so you can watch each other do so ...

*How about integrating your communities, including mandating that every citizen of every Middle Eastern country attend at least one interfaith religious service at least once every month ...

*And finally, how about engaging *the one & only Solution* that is already 100% feasible and *the one & only Solution* that will be 100% effective -- how about requiring that each & every Israeli teenager and each & every Arab teenager participate in a month-long student-exchange program every single year of their lives until they reach the age of 18.

The only way we will know Peace as a species is for each of us to intimately remember that we are indeed members of the same species ... The only way for us to begin to treat each other as family members is for us to intimately remember that this is indeed already the case.

Amen & Amen & Amen ...

Please, please, please ...
... Let it finally be so!



Abandon politics, you must ...
(09/08/2014)

"The point I am trying to make is that Obama is drastically flawed (as we all tend to be at times) ... Yes, he is different than Bush, and yet he has not sustained the popularity with which he began his presidency because of *his* poor choices -- not because of Republican opposition or "bad luck". Once we stop giving him (and any other particular politician) the power of believing he has the ability to make decisions without consequence -- of believing that we will simply go along with his actions & support his agendas merely because "He is our leader and the people chose him, and we need to support him instead of criticize him", then & only then will we know real Freedom ...

Indeed, if we choose instead to become actively caring members of our communities -- saying, "No, we are *NOT* going to fight Syria" and "No, we will *NOT* accept that you using drones to kill innocent people" and "Yes, I *will* feed that homeless man over there" and "Yes, I *will* take go forth and be an active force for Good in my own neighborhood", then & only then will we be truly Free.

It is easy to sit back and be complacent; living our daily lives of TV, reading books, playing music, hanging out with friends, etc etc etc -- and thereby allowing the government to decide for us what the rules will be and how our lives will be controlled & regulated. Indeed, if we choose to only make meek checks on our voting forms to effectuate "change", then nothing will ever change for the better. In essence, our politicians have chosen to work primarily for their own benefit, and our passiveness is allowing them to get away with it.

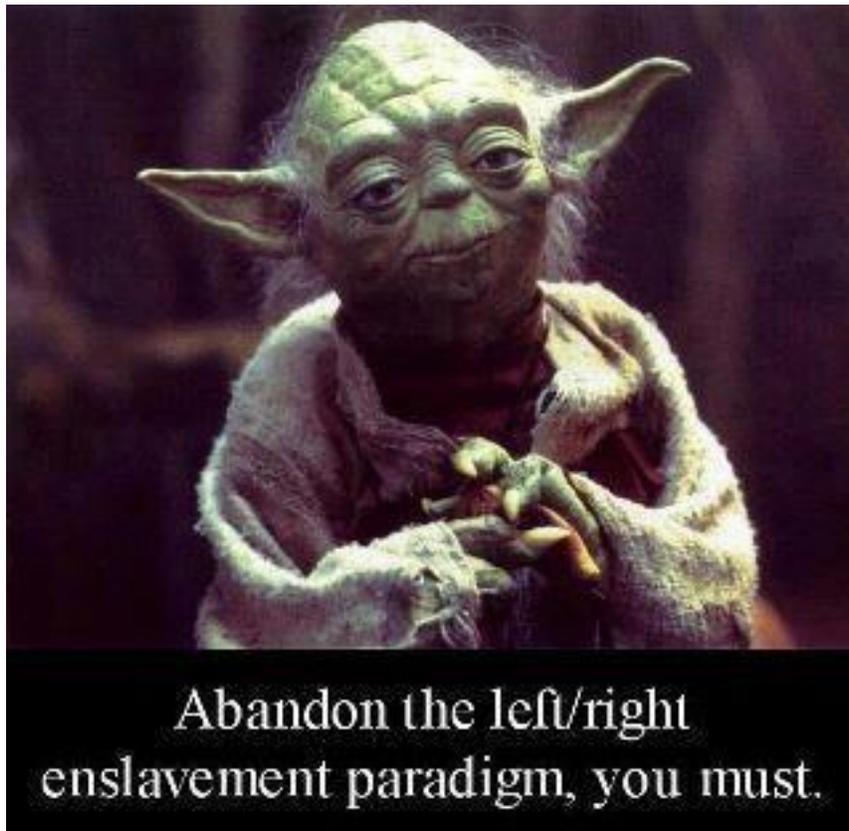
Now I am *not* suggesting Americans overthrow their government and begin a war within their own country -- as this is an option that has often been chosen and that has never truly succeeded. And yet, what I *am* advocating is refusing to jump on political bandwagons that are so run down with conflict & corruption & greed & in-fighting that they can't even get out of the driveway ... What I *am* advocating is that we go into our communities and become everyday active members thereof ... What I *am* supporting is for us to actively support one another ... What I *am* offering is for us to offer to help those who the government continues to cheat and ignore.

And what would I want from Mr. Obama? Simply stated, I would want him to uphold his promises -- I would want him to fulfill even a portion of the hope he used to garner the support of the American people those six long years ago. I would have him think first of the well being of humanity before thinking of his own comfort ... I would have him use his influence to enact agendas that support life instead of wealth, that support peace instead of war, that support healing instead of sickness, and that support education instead of ignorance.

This vision may not be perfect, and I certainly don't have all the answers, and yet it doesn't take a genius to see that your environment, your society, and indeed your values as a people have been crumbling for quite some time. And your politicians are a large part of the reason why ... that, and the blind control you the people have given them to do so.

In essence, Obama & the rest of your politicians (regardless of their particular affiliations) are not making the choices that will bring you positive change, and thus continuing to invest your energy & time in politicians, political parties & politics in general is nothing short of redonkulous."

~ inspired by Vanessa Curley



To Save the World ...
(09/10/2014)

*"Nature never deceives us;
it is always we who deceive ourselves."
~ Jean Jacques Rousseau*

By now it simply must be obvious to everyone (well, almost everyone) that 99% of the world's scientists studying the matter are correct -- that our Earth's climate is changing, that it is changing rapidly, that humanity is largely responsible for this change, and this is very bad news indeed for the ultimate survival of our species ...

And yet there *IS* some good news to report: namely, there is something that **you** can do today that will make a significant positive impact on this crisis; something that is powerful enough that -- if enough of us get on board in time -- could indeed stop the catastrophe from cresting before it's too late.

And this something is as simple to do as it is powerful once done ...
And this something is removing all animal products from your diet.

Once you do so, you will be healthier, you will be happier, your body will become more energized & far more productive, your mind will become more clear & far more calm ...

... and to top it all off -- you just might save the world.

*"One problem facing humanity is now so urgent that, unless it is resolved in the next two decades, it will destroy our global civilization: the climate crisis."
~ Dr. Tim Flannery*

"The likely end of the era of civilization is foreshadowed in a new draft report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the generally conservative monitor of what is happening to the physical world. The report concludes that increasing greenhouse gas emissions risk "severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems" over the coming decades ... One index of human impact is the extinction of species, now estimated to be at about the same rate as it was 65 million years ago when an asteroid hit the Earth. That is the presumed cause for the ending of the age of the dinosaurs, which opened the way for small mammals to proliferate, and ultimately modern humans. Today, it is humans who are the asteroid, condemning much of life to extinction."

~ Noam Chomsky

“Ignoring veganism in the fight against climate change is sort of like ignoring fast food in the fight against obesity. Forget ending dirty coal or natural gas pipelines. As the recent World Preservation Foundation report shows, veganism offers the single most effective path to reducing global climate change. The evidence is powerful: Eating a vegan diet, according to the study, is seven times more effective at reducing emissions than eating a local meat-based diet. A global vegan diet (of conventional crops) would reduce dietary emissions by 87 percent, compared to a token 8 percent reduction for “sustainable meat and dairy” ... Overall, the point seems pretty strong: global veganism would do more than any other single action to reduce GHG emissions.”

~ James McWilliams



What I believe ... & NOT
(09/12/2014)

While I am sure of very few things, I do believe in many ...

I believe in things still unprovable -- the unexplainable "numinous" that permeates the Universe with its glow of wonderment ... the omnipresence of Beauty, the integrity of Justice and the rightness of Forgiveness ...

I believe in the morality of Kindness & the immorality of purposefully causing others pain; in sacrificing personal success & comfort in order to enhance the well-being of the downtrodden ...

I believe in the Grace of consciousness, the Guidance of conscience, & the Power of free will ...

I believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, the poetry of Jalālād-Dīn Rumi & the wisdoms of Gautama Buddha ...

I believe in the Selfless Way as enlivened by St. Francis of Assisi & Mahatma Gandhi & Peace Pilgrim ...

I believe in **LOVE** -- (the verb).

I also happen to believe in things supported by empirical evidence -- in science and the scientific method; in gravity & inertia ... I believe in "quantum interconnection"; the electro-magnetic attraction that binds us all as One ... I believe in evolution ... I believe in the wisdom of Galileo Galilei & Carl Jung & Victor Frankl, and in the intellect of Carl Sagan & Stephen Hawking ... And I believe in the eloquence and the passion of Stephen Fry & Christopher Hitchens.

And, in addition to all of the things in which I *do* believe, there are a few things in which I do not ...

*Even though humility demands that it very well might be possible, I do *NOT* believe in a supreme being who weighs in on the outcome of athletic contests while millions of innocent people die in wars, millions of innocent children die of starvation, and billions of innocent animals die on dinner plates.

*While it is indeed possible that God is a celestial tyrant who demands groveling & submission, I do *NOT* believe that over two billion people in India & China are going to Hell merely for not properly bowing down thereto.

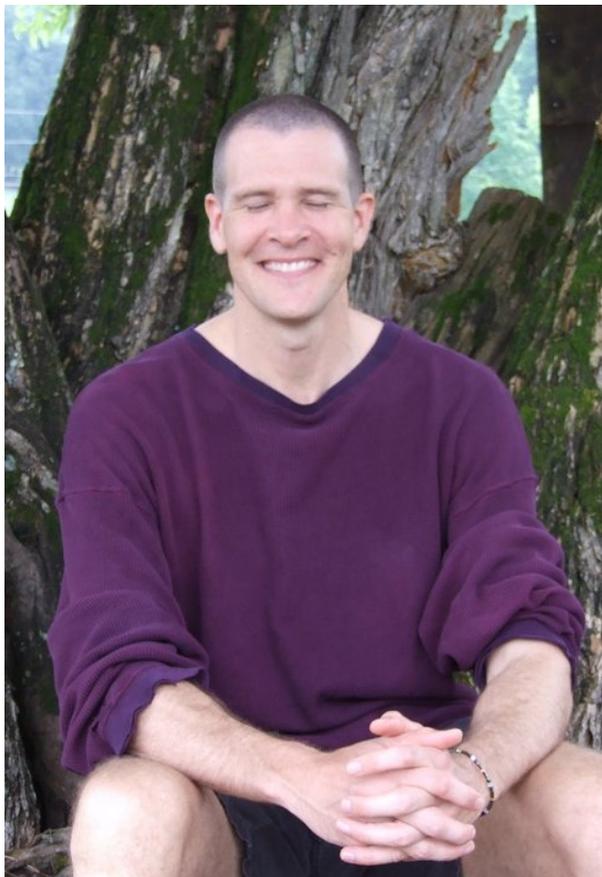
*And while it is indeed possible that there exists a supernatural deity who visits pain & torment on us "lesser beings" in order to teach us lessons or punish us for our misdeeds, I still see too much Love & too much Goodness in the world – and as such do *NOT* believe in a "Divine Dictator" who is so cruel & so callous.

And yet even if I am wrong -- even if God *does* prefer Michael Jordan to all other basketball players & bets on football teams from the SEC; even if He *is* sending billions of "heathens" to Hell for choosing the wrong religion; even if He *will* rain down injustice & suffering in order to punish us for our sins; even if there *is* no escape from His judgment & no appeasing His wrath (other than by caving in to fear and lying to Him about who we truly are and what we truly believe), then I -- as a moral & ethical & caring representative of my self & my family & my species and indeed my entire planet -- choose to stand boldly before Him ...

I choose to stand boldly before Him and proclaim His wrongs;
I choose to stand boldly before Him and protest His injustice;
... and I choose to boldly stand before Him and forgive Him.

In essence, I choose to stand boldly before God the almighty ...
...and remind Him of His **LOVE**.

(inspired by Piper Chapman)



on Doing Something ...
(09/15/2014)

*"Weather forecast for tonight: Dark; continued dark overnight;
with widely scattered light by morning." ~ George Carlin*

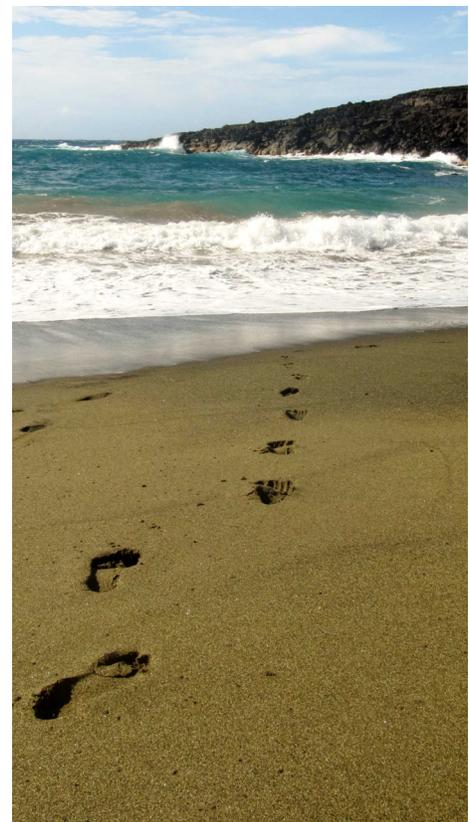
Dismiss all the forecasts & all the prognostications & all the predictions -- and forget all the prognoses & all the polls & all the indicators & all the prophecies ... The only thing that's for sure in your still vibrant life is that you've got this one moment of this one day to **DO SOMETHING** worthwhile -- to extend a Caring hand; to offer a Kind smile; to bravely protest an injustice; to courageously liberate the oppressed; to forgive & accept an enemy; to hug & thank a Friend ... The clock's ticking, my Friends, and this very day could very well be your last chance to do something that will have you smiling peacefully while drawing your final breath -- whenever that breath might come.

And so I say treat this day (and every day hereafter) as though it were your last. After all, if you do so, one day -- one day relatively soon -- you're going to be right.

So what's truly *IMPORTANT* to you?
What "wrong" do you wish your government would make Right? What injustice would you like to see erased? What slaves would you like to see set free? What social crisis would you like to see resolved? What person in your life could use some Joy? What Good Deed can you do for the next stranger you encounter? What anonymous Act of Kindness can you give to your community?

Time's ticking away, folks ... so let's go get to it. Let's go **BE** the change we want to See!

"It's a terrible thing to wait until you are ready ... There is almost no such thing as ready. There is only now. So you may as well do it now." ~ Hugh Laurie





"Every noble work
is at first impossible."

- Thomas Carlyle

(image from Shawn Heinrichs)

"You never know what's around the corner. It could be everything. Or it could be nothing. You keep putting one foot in front of the other, and then one day you look back and you've climbed a mountain." ~ Tom Hiddleston

Every deed enough ...
(09/21/2014)

*“I alone cannot change the world, but I **can** cast a stone across the waters, and thereby create many ripples.” ~ inspired by Mother Teresa*

We need not do anything "amazing" or "magnificent" -- for it is the small acts of Great Kindness that are all Ways more than enough – and this is so for each & every act we engage; each & every day we engage them.

Amen ... Let it be so!



Coming to an End ... (09/22/2014)

"The world is coming to an end ... The animals are being abused, the economy's collapsed ... Intelligence is shunned and ignorance rewarded ... People are depressed and angry. We can't live with each other and we can't live with ourselves ... We pass each other on the street, and if we do speak it's meaningless robotic communication ... More people want 15 seconds of fame than a lifetime of meaning and purpose, because what's popular is more important than what's right.

Presidents lie, politicians trick us ... Race is still an issue and so is religion. Your God doesn't exist, my God does and he is All-Loving ... If you disagree with me I'll kill you ... The average person watches 5 hours of television a day, and it's more violence on the screen than ever before ... Technology has given us everything we could ever want, and at the same time stolen everything we really need ... Money is still the root of all evil, yet we tell our kids "Don't get that degree -- the job doesn't pay enough." ... Good deeds are only done when there's a profit margin ... Videos of the misfortunes of others go viral, and we laugh and share them with our friends to laugh with us ... There are states where people can legally be discriminated against because they were born a certain way.

Companies invest millions of dollars hiring specialists to make Little girls feel like they need "make up" to be beautiful Permanently lowering their self esteem, because they will never be pretty enough ... Corporations tell us buy, buy, buy, get this, get that -- You must keep up, you must fit in -- This will make you happy ... But it never does for long.

So what can we do in the face of all of this madness and chaos? What is the solution? ... Well, we can *LOVE* -- Not the love you hear in your favorite song on the radio. I mean real *LOVE*, true *LOVE*, boundless *LOVE* ... We can perform an act of kindness because that is contagious. We can be mindful during every interaction -- showing a little more compassion than usual ... We can forgive.

We have been sold lies; brainwashed by our leaders and those we trust, to



not recognize our brothers and sisters -- to exhibit anger, hatred and cruelty. But once we truly *LOVE* we will meet anger with sympathy, hatred with compassion, and cruelty with kindness ... *LOVE* is the most powerful weapon on the face of the Earth. So yes, the world IS coming to an end ... and yet the path towards a new beginning begins within you"

~ inspired by Prince Ea

Whispering back at Death ...
(10/04/014)

“Death trips down the corridor ... He keeps changing step, striking out here, shuffling there -- dancing pirouettes through life and spinning smoothly amongst the living. Often I felt His breath on my face when He was miles away; and often I fell asleep and dreamed, while He stood quietly leaning over my bed.”
~ inspired by Arthur Koestler

“The first condition of immortality is death.” ~ Stanislaw J Lec



There is not much that can be said to truly console a person who has lost a Loved One. The loss of friend or father or lover or mother cuts a wound so deep that some say only time can heal ... Of course, even though each must decide for him or herself how & how long to mourn such a loss, it can be helpful in such times to remember that neither time nor mourning will ever truly heal that wound; that all mourning comes from sadness -- that all sadness comes from fear -- and that all fear can only be soothed with a *LOVE* for those still living that is as joyful as it is active.

So to all those -- like myself -- who have lost a Loved One and still feel the pain of that loss, consider a different path ... Consider setting aside your reasonable sadness over missing the one you Loved, and replacing your mourning with acts of Kindness done to honor the one you have lost ... Consider setting aside your prayers that the departed might "live forever in Heaven" after death, and replacing those brittle hopes with courageous acts of Love that pay homage to the Good Times you were able to share with them before their departure.

Indeed, while no one can speak with any certainty about the nature (or even the existence) of the Hereafter, we can indeed preserve any particular Soul for eternity in the Good Deeds we do in their name after they have gone ... And it is in this way, ironically, that we defeat their death most fully. It is in this way that death is suddenly no more the enemy of those departed than our own sleep is the enemy of our ability to serve others in gratitude & wonderment once we awaken the next morn ... For as long as we remain true to our own Soul's true Way, we allow the Souls of our lost Loved Ones to continue softly treading their own.

And it is with this in mind that I send my most heartfelt Compassion & my most sincere wishes for great Calm to come to all of you who have suffered, all of you who are currently suffering, and indeed all of us who will one day know such times of Great Loss ... Peace to you all.



*"Love is how we stay alive,
even after we are gone."
~ inspired by Mitch Albom*

*"Life is for the living.
Death is for the dead.
Let life be like music, and
death a note well said."
~ inspired by Langston Hughes*



*“And I will take one from a thousand
and two from ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)*