

The Compassionate Spirit

Larry Krantz: Welcome everyone to our Sunday morning gathering. In a collective such as this, we can accomplish much more spiritually than we can as separate individuals. There is an exponential leap in the radiance released by reason of our agreement, as long as those concerned are on tone. Of course, people agree about all kinds of things, even acts of destruction, but if it isn't in the flow of the tone of life, then there is little spiritual potency; it's kind of flat, just a re-hashing of the old human state. When there is agreement in the tone of life and active spiritual substance available, a current moves out to uplift the consciousness of humanity, to inspire an awakening to the truth. Today, we can spark a remembrance of our divine heritage and inherent glory.

If change is to occur, we must leave behind the limited, false self and allow the real person to come forth. Recently, I read about a Russian soldier who defected; his situation is illustrative of allowing change to come. He was a Group Commander in the brutal paramilitary Wagner Group who became disaffected after witnessing at least ten killings of his compatriots for allegedly disobeying commands. Russian prisoners were conscripted and, he said, used essentially as cannon fodder. He was given a group of convicts for his platoon; only three of 30 men survived, so they gave him more prisoners and many of those died as well. He finally had seen enough killing. So, he deserted and sought asylum in Norway.

This soldier came to the point where he had to make a change. He could no longer be a part of the callousness and cruelty. We might say he had a change in polarity, from identifying as a destroyer to longing for something else—to create, to be helpful, not hurtful. He changed the direction of his life. It is the same process for us, although not in the same way. When we can no longer behave in a way that is not our finest expression, we are compelled to let it go and change. When we do, and live more in harmony with our divine Self, our consciousness ascends; we see things from a new perspective and act differently. This is a process of continual refinement, moving to higher and higher ground. Each person has an inner compulsion to reveal their innate beauty and creativity. It presses to come forth, although most tend to rationalize it and express something far less than they know they should. If a person is to rise up in consciousness, he-or-she must leave behind who they thought they were and become someone new, more of their true Self.

Noble expression and selflessness give evidence of our true nature. At first the inner urging appears as a small voice whispering encouragement to move in a new direction, often barely discernible amid the noise and chaos of this world and our tangled thoughts and

feelings. If we know that we have to change the way we live and move in that direction, that voice grows louder and we learn to trust its guidance, for it is our true Self speaking. When we see the world differently and align with spirit, we become a new person, upright and true. It is how we know divinity, through our own living expression of fineness and nobility. We should let nothing sway us from this inner connection, from merging with our divine reality, no matter what others tell us, or the personal cost.

We may recall things we've said and done in ignorance that, looking back, feel cringeworthy. I know that I can! Such things may lift up feelings of guilt or shame. We may wonder how we could have been so stupid and selfish. There is no need to judge our old selves and feel ashamed, for we are no longer that person. In false identity, we knew not what we were doing. We can learn from our missteps and change how we behave, which is what matters. Each moment is new and the slate is wiped clean. We have a fresh start, if we let the past go; no need to carry forward ghosts. All that sticky stuff, like shame and guilt, binds us to what has already passed away, is dead. It holds us down. We need not let anything convince us of sin, but live unashamed and innocent.

I am not suggesting we should never feel shame or guilt, only that such feelings need not control us. They spring up when we are not expressing our true nature, when we come up short, act in ways that are not clear and honest. Such feelings tell us something is wrong and encourage us to change, to rise up and express the finest qualities possible to us at that time. It is part of the learning process as we go from ignorance to understanding. Seeing wrong function means we are separating from it. We can leave that kind of behavior behind; we are free now to reveal ever-finer life expression.

This reminds me of my mother, who was adept at controlling people with guilt. It never worked on me. She would call up and begin by telling me I was a terrible son, to make me feel guilty, and then say that if I wanted to be a good son I would come over and do thus-and-such for her. I always said, "Mom, if you need something, just ask. I'm glad to help." No need for laying a guilt trip on me, as people say. I don't think she ever changed in her 97 years. Maybe it was the Jewish Mother in her that compelled her to use guilt as leverage. It was all so unnecessary.

Judge not. We are here, now, untethered to what has gone before. Let nothing of the old self pull us down. In right identity, we are free to cast off the chains of the past. When we let go of the old, selfish ways, we know peace and ease in living. We have been gifted with life in human form and are here to serve a higher purpose. Together, in right agreement, we may fashion the conscious body of God on earth.

Joyce Krantz: I just had this recollection: When I was a child growing up, in my religious schooling God was described as “unconditional love.” In my child consciousness I registered that as instant forgiveness, a get-out-of-jail-free card. If I did something wrong, God would wipe the slate clean because he loved me in spite of my faults. He was present but I couldn’t see him. Then the question popped into my mind, “Well how can I believe in an invisible God?” The answer quickly followed, “You don’t have to, because he/she is right in front of you! Look outside—the flowers, the cacti, look at the animals—there is God’s love animating everything and it is the expression of who you truly are.

This revelation is so simple and true, yet it has eluded human consciousness because we put so many restrictions on our love: this is what your life should look like; this is what’s going to bring you happiness; who to include, who to not, etc. It is like we started with a beautiful clear glass of the heart and gradually smeared soap over it, covering the experience of knowing oneself as a part of God, as a creator in action on earth. What allows somebody like a dyed-in-the-wool atheist to ride into the mountains, look at a flower and feel a complete change in his relationship to love, to life, to the design and order of things and our place in it? It is this power moving through an open heart.

This leads me to my theme today—compassion and connection. If someone cannot fathom the idea of God, or of something beyond oneself, the experience of loving another human being can connect one to the reality of God. Love is the doorway in. When the blinders come off, we see we are indeed made in the image and likeness of God. We are awakening to our true nature, our divinity, and we’re here to offer that to other people.

I recently saw a Netflix documentary entitled, “Mission: Joy (Finding Happiness in Troubled Times).” This is a special film. It is an interview with Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, the Dalai Lama’s exiled home. It gives an intimate view of these two spiritual leaders who have had a profound influence globally, living with joy in the face of adversity, as well as their remarkable friendship. This took place in 2015 when both men were in their eighties. Their infectious laughter, loving connection and deep respect for each other, speaks volumes. Let me give you a little background, because stories can be powerful. What these two have lived through and have brought into the world is a great gift.

As stated in the film, there could not be two more different people. Desmond Tutu grew up in abject poverty in the townships of Soweto in South Africa; the Dalai Lama grew up in a 1000-room palace in Tibet, in Asia. One is Christian and the other Buddhist. But both shared a

lifelong quest for justice, truth and sovereignty for their people and because of that, each received Nobel Peace Prizes for their work.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a significant leader in the nonviolent movement against Apartheid in South Africa. The Dalai Lama continues to seek the liberation of his people and Tibetan homeland which was invaded by the Chinese in 1951.

The purpose of the interview was to seek their wisdom through questions, such as: *How can people cultivate a sense of joy, not just as a feeling, but as a way of being?* The Dalai Lama said that joy means satisfaction, living a meaningful life, and the source of a meaningful life is within our own self.

How do we help people who really want to be joyful but are holding on by the skin of their teeth? Desmond Tutu answered, “When I have some anguish in my life, what keeps me going is that I am a prisoner of hope, but it is not something that just comes readymade from heaven. We are human beings. Fallible human beings. It is through the practice of prayer, meditation, that gentleness and compassion grow. It’s like muscles that have to be exercised in order for them to get their tone and to be strengthened.”

Both the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu have strong disciplines of quiet and prayer. In the five days that they were together, the Dalai Lama invited Archbishop Tutu into the sanctum of his meditation room, a very rare occurrence, where he spends most of his time. The deep respect these two shared for each other and their delight in what is most sacred, led to a guided meditation by the Dalai Lama. Following that, Desmond Tutu offered a Eucharist service for the Dalai Lama. Two different practices, yet symbolically representative of the sacred nature of their hearts. There was a candid moment caught on mic where Desmond Tutu whispered to his daughter (also a minister), “Do I offer him the Eucharist, or do I not offer him the Eucharist?” Serving communion to non-Christians is controversial to some people. His answer was, “It’s God’s table, not my table. So, whoever approaches the table with reverence comes at God’s invitation.” The Dalai Lama graciously accepted the consecrated host and wine offered by the Archbishop, although alcohol is not a part of the Buddhist way. So, he dipped his finger into the wine and placed a drop on his tongue as a gesture of acceptance and respect. To me this was a sweet and beautiful moment of transcending the form of things to share true communion in spirit together.

Neither one of them probably thought they would make it onto the global stage the way they did. The Dalai Lama, who was exiled from Tibet, lost his home and country. That was a great loss, but in retrospect, a great blessing. He could have remained in his Tibetan “golden cage,” captured and restricted under political oppression. Life compelled him in another

direction. At the age of 24, under cover of night, he escaped to India where he was welcomed. He has lived as a refugee there ever since. And this opened opportunities that allowed his life to expand with far greater reach and influence.

The last scene I wish to share with you, which I thought was another beautiful moment, goes to the heart of compassionate leadership. It is the day the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu visit the Tibetan Children's Village. The Children's Village in India is where Tibetan children are welcomed and schooled in the traditions and cultures of their homeland. Their Tibetan parents seek to give their children an opportunity to learn the traditions of their people, with the freedom and opportunity to think and learn. Their children's journey to India was not without difficulty, sacrifice, or peril.

This day, the children were invited to share their experiences with the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu of how they got there. One little girl spoke of her grandmother hiding her underneath their seat on the bus, surrounded by their suitcases to conceal her from the authorities who would have prevented her passage to India. Another young girl recalled the pain of leaving her mother behind, her heart filled with sadness, and tears started to pour out. She couldn't speak. Archbishop Tutu's daughter came to her side and held her from behind to comfort her. As she sobbed quietly seeking to control her tears, Desmond Tutu was visibly moved. He had seen much pain and separation in his life. In that moment, he held space for her in his heart and simply and powerfully uttered, "Sorry." That carried the voice of comfort—"I hear you; I understand." Then the Dalai Lama, representing her spiritual father, spoke, "Now you should think of the present. You have complete freedom and the opportunity to study, not only modern education, but also, you see, learning our ancient thousand-year-old rich culture. So look that way and you will feel okay." By reframing the appearance of loss, to opportunity, through appreciation and acceptance of what is, he offered her courage. These two men provided a beautiful example of balanced spiritual leadership—heart and mind centered in Love. This is the way forward.

In one's youth, we think life on earth will be a very long time, but as one approaches their eighties, as these two men have, that arc is quite brief. One of the questions asked was about death. The Dalai Lama said, "Sooner or later death will come. So while you are alive your life should be meaningful. I think maximum 100 years. That short period should not create more problems on this planet."

Desmond Tutu passed away in 2021 at the age of 90. The Dalai Lama is still enjoying a human experience at the age of 87. I am greatly appreciative for their contributions to our awakening process and giving a face to God.

Larry Krantz: As Joyce indicates, we appreciate fine, noble expression wherever it appears, no matter the religious tradition or culture that gave it birth. Forms are secondary, for we meet in a place of transcendence where we see the evidence of love behind the forms. Those who show compassion and exude a sense of peace are beacons of light.

The other night, we were at a restaurant seated in a corner at a high table, which gave us an overview of other diners. I did not know any of them but somehow felt I knew everyone, an inexplicable familiarity, a sense of oneness. We are not separate, but part of everything, for we are one with God.

We might ask, who or what is God? How would you define God? You can't. What is beyond the dimensional world cannot be defined by parameters of the dimensional world of space and time. We could say that God exists, that "God is." From the individual perspective, it would be, "I exist," or "I am." Divinity comes into this world through a point of connection, where the undimensional touches the dimensional. However, we know God by the reflection of essences that take shape in our awareness.

God emerges as an intense focus of energy called love, which must be shaped by truth, and from which life is born. Life animates all forms. When life no longer holds a particular form together, that form disintegrates. We cannot comprehend the complexity of the spirit of life with our puny human minds, but we can see evidence of how it works, even in our own bodies, where it runs all the complex systems that keep us going, even when we are asleep. Truth inspires thought. Love is the force that holds the cosmos together, and draws people together. This is how we know God, by the evidence of what spirit brings forth, which includes compassion and joy.

Spirit is divine energy in motion. That energy holds visible forms and reveals God. There are ranges of vibrational frequencies that create unique levels of substance. Solid matter is composed of atomic particles which are really packets of energy in specific configurations. Thoughts are another level of energy. In oneness with this flow of divine energy, we experience a transcendent awareness of the nature of God, of love, and realize how this world can be transformed into an expression of divine intent—a place of beauty and wonder, as an essential part of the cosmic whole.

This flow of divine energy that emerges from within should flow through us, into the world. It is not meant to be stolen for our personal gain. When we let a clear spirit emerge through us, we know great joy and fulfilment, a concern for what is beyond us, which is compassion. We bring the fire of love and the light of understanding into the world.

In this context, the word, *sovereign*, mentioned by Joyce, comes to mind. It means “whole unto itself,” as when a country is said to be sovereign. It can also refer to royalty; a sovereign could be a king or queen. We are sovereign beings, majestic and whole unto ourselves, people of unshakeable integrity. Our circumstances ask questions of us, and *we* are the answer.

In true identity, we remember that we are divine beings in human form, each of us unique and necessary. Let the old self pass away so that our true selves may shine forth. As we do this together, we should never underestimate the power of collective radiation.

January 29, 2023

Larry Krantz: crown200@msn.com

Joyce Krantz: crown300@msn.com

Pre-Service Music

Salve Regina

Performed by Tim Allhoff, Robert Mehlhart & Cantatorium

Concluding Music

To the Wild Sky

Composed and performed by Trent Reznor & Atticus Ross