

**The Longest Journey You Will Ever Make?**

**From your Head to your Heart!**

*“Who Exactly...Am I...Trying To Convince?*

*Myself? Others? God?”*

2 Timothy 6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14

October 27, 2019

So, most of us have been taught that if we learn the word of God...if we figure that out in our heads, we'll be able to live out the wisdom of God in our behavior and choices.

*If I figure out God in my head, I will live a God centered life...feel and experience the presence and love of God in my heart and make right choices in life.*

It makes logical sense. But thinking is not feeling. Feelings are more than rational thoughts. Over-thinking exaggerates feelings, but that sure is not an experience of God!

So if not by a thought process, how does one go about a spiritual quest revitalizing a God-centered life?

How do we journey from our heads to our hearts?

*Well, first realize, we are invited to live as Jesus lived not just do what Jesus did. We're invited*

*...to discover how to be mindful of God...in a mindless world of thoughts and actions, opinions and information overload.*

Live like Jesus lived...always mindful of holiness in each moment, each redeemable moment ...a mindfulness approach to Christian life.

Jesus lived constantly present to God as God was present to Him. It gave Him pause (Wednesday we called that patience!) gave Him pause enough to get out of his head and into his compassionate heart,

to see opportunity for a more peaceful and free life in every situation... and so he (and those he taught) be alive in a very different way in the midst of what was happening in the moment.

So...don't do what Jesus did or even try to think like He thought.

Be present, mindful of God in all moments...God's love for and trust in you all day and night...live just like Jesus!

Slip down into your heart.

Instead of seeking only intellectual knowledge...right thinking about God and life, seek to become aware of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. From there, live.

How?

Be still. Don't get hooked on your stream of thoughts or the drama of situations.

Like Jesus, pause to hear from the heart, go quietly inside yourself...behind that closed door named in Matthew...

be in solitude closing off/shutting out the over-active, overwhelming thought world.

Leave the thought world of rational problem solving.

For we know we can't...solve most things by thinking about how to fix them.

Going down that trail leads you to a dead end for sure!

Mindfulness, stillness, solitude (found in all the major traditions) ...that holy pause...is  
a way to practice  
the awareness of God's presence at all times  
*and learn to live into it.*

Actually, when you get close to that awareness, you automatically live into it. You are released to it.

It is in the desire-the intention to be fully awake and alive  
that God's word becomes alive and active in us...permeating our soul and spirit and so  
then our choices and actions.  
God does it!

Ask someone who does Centering Prayer with us about the calm that leads to awareness and possibility.

And, the cumulative effect of holy hush, felt in the heart, it just emerges. Comes to life...in your life!

We are no longer to live in a non-mindful way, separated from God. In our heads! No longer are we to live a life based on thoughts...even right thinking!

We are to resist the lies of a self-focused world of problem-solving....resist thinking "if we only could just think better and try harder, it will all work out."

Mindfulness: slowing down enough to resist reacting via our thoughts and instead respond from a heart place of compassion.

Mindfulness is a safeguard against living life on auto-pilot, sleep walking through a fallen fantasy world, separated from God...and truly, from yourself!

It is through the wisdom life of Jesus and the teachings of the early Desert Fathers and Mothers and mystics then and now who practice the slowing of solitude and silence...

that we can learn to experience inner peace, abiding love, and the presence of God. And it begins to change everything about how we see the world and the choices we make in it!

When we are mindful of Jesus who incarnates Divine Wisdom...when we go beyond the mind we have to feel “Christ Presence” in our every moment,

where we know everything belongs and can be used for good, every moment and situation redeemable...

when we are mindful, the journey from head to heart becomes a path of becoming One with the Eternal Now and all the ways of being that brings to life!

No longer the trip from your head to your heart the longest journey of your life. “Put your head in your heart and stand before God for all time without ceasing.” (Brother Lawrence)

(Above reflection Paul Bane, July 2019 and Pastor Karen October 2019)

In our Luke Wisdom Teaching today...one is living from his head and ends up nowhere. One is living from the heart and gains a life that takes him beyond his own expectations to what is truly possible.

One tries to convince himself and God and everyone else... and one doesn't even go there!

Can the Pharisee have a change of heart...take that journey?

(Head up, hands up, like the Pharisee): Oh God, thank you! I am not like these others! I can stand up in front of everyone and say that I have gone above and beyond what others are doing. No! I am not like these others who are thieves and rogues and adulterers...ordinary people! Surely, You see...and my place in heaven, a high one!

(Head down, alone, quietly, like the tax collector): God, be merciful to me. I seek Your compassion. You know, and I know, I am a sinner! Thank you, Lord, for just listening. Help me as I leave this place and go back into my life.

The hearers of today's gospel story probably would have expected Jesus to lift up the Pharisee, not the tax collector.

We don't expect the model for us to be an ordinary person who stumbles over life, either.

We fall for that, too...think like we are to strive to be the extraordinary person, well-educated and thinking...  
a thinking person...who skates through life having it all together...or seems to!

We probably fall for that because we want to have it all together and do a little skating.

But it's all a delusion...that you have to have it all together, that anyone is better than anyone else, especially in the eyes of God!

Often those who seem to have it all together, often don't and live a quiet desperation putting up a good front.

Those who heard Jesus tell this story would have been taken by surprise!

But then again, did you catch to whom Jesus is speaking?

He told this story to some who "trusted in themselves"

...who thought themselves "righteous" (thinking in their heads how they have figured it all out and come out on top) ...those who regarded others with "contempt".

He speaks to those who are **self-righteous, not right with God, but right with their own agendas.**

**Well defended as to what they want and what they do, and who see others as they want to see them, rather than as they really are.**

**No compassion. No patience. Living in their heads.**

Let's go to Timothy now, often ascribed to Paul but probably not written by him.

The writer...let's call him "Paul", also talks about being righteous. He talks about God judging both the living and the dead in terms of righteousness.

Thing is...God's judgment isn't about punishing...or rewarding for that matter!

God's judgment is about seeing clearly what is so you can then, more aware, take a do-over...a chance to do life over again.

To be righteous in God's sight is to be right with God's deepest desires for you and for the good of all – at the same time!

...your own good and the good of all are not opposites, but one with each other...a sign of being right with God. And, you get more than one chance!

Seeing clearly, we are called...as "Paul" says...to be persistent proclaiming the message whether the time is favorable or not.

To convince and rebuke...confront,  
but also to encourage those we are rebuking with the utmost patience in teaching them...not judging them, or punishing them, or labeling them!

Rather, being patient,  
surrounding them with positive energy.

Be sober...clear, confront and be patient...and you will suffer if you do this...but endure the suffering that will come when you do this worshipful work in your life

...may suffer as you journey, humbly with our God...and all of us! Suffer as you live into Christ energy, incarnate the Universal Christ who cares about all people and the created worlds and you in it!

“Paul” goes on to say if this is your heart ministry full of compassion, you will find yourself at times standing alone with no one coming to your support, deserted at times.

You will feel like you’re in the lion’s mouth as others will attack you to get you to go quiet or look the other way or do the easy or fun thing rather than the often hard but enduring thing.

“Paul” says God is with us and brings us courage to endure this harsh reality. You will feel the universal love and justice and resolve in the quiet of your own heart.

And if you’ve ever been about truth telling with the intention of doing good, whether in your family, or work, or here, then you know something about the lion’s mouth...

and how surviving it is **totally** dependent on God’s presence **with** you **in** the lion’s mouth...

not rescuing you but with you in it.

It is no little thing to be right with God!

Which begs the question...how do you know? How do you know if you are right with God or being self-righteous?

Jesus gives us an amazing clue...  
you can tell by the humility you feel...or don’t...  
around the issue at hand.

The word humility comes from the same root word as humus, earth...same root from which a-dam comes in the Hebrew...an earthling, not a guy’s name.

We are organically one with the earth and are to be sized just right. Not too big for our bridges or small for our own good. One with the earth...creation.

If we are humble...well, then just like Goldilocks...one way is too big, one is too small, and one way of being who we are...is just the right size!

**Humble is being the right size.**

**Not puffed with your own thoughts, agendas, worth, justifications for your actions.**

**Humble is being the right size. Not cowering, not a doormat, not blindly accepting or shrinking from our responsibility.**

Not sure. Still not sure?

Are you thinking...I'm not sure I am humble? ...not sure I am right with God rather than self-righteous? Well...

Do you feel contempt? Do you feel contempt about a situation or a person or a community?

...feeling someone or something is below you, worthless, deserves what they are getting?

Do you despise others...which moves your feelings into wishing harm or undermining or getting even?

You know, as I was looking up the word contempt in the dictionary, it struck me that it follows the words contemplate and contemporary.

If we are contemplative (meditating on the holy in the midst of life, in our hearts) and contemporary (able to be in the moment), I don't think you can feel contempt.

**If you are feeling contempt in some part of your life...more likely you call it disgust, disregard, getting even...lived out as sabotaging, undermining, ignoring, demeaning...**

**if your self-talk is about convincing yourself that you're right and they are wrong...you're in your head!  
Not humble.**

**Not even on a journey.**

**You have fallen out of life's tippe-canoe, and you're all wet...may even be drowning whether you know it or not.**

And, Jesus is throwing you a life preserver today.

And we are here to reach out our hand to you to help you get back in the tippe-canoe with all the rest of us soggy believers.

I think most of us, when we look into the reflection of those waters we are in, more easily see the tax collector in us...

see those places and times when mercy and compassion are needed and we live “out” of our hearts.

But also...as we...as I see my reflection, sometimes I am sickened to see the face of the Pharisee looking back at me. But for this I give God my thanks and praise.

I have a reflection that mirrors truth  
and sometimes I see  
and so can get out of my head and into my heart.

What really concerns me are the times I look, see  
the Pharisee is there, and I don't see her.

The mirror has two faces.

May we see how our mirrors reflect to us our true selves.

May our faith as lived in the security and truth spoken in kindness here in this community, help us see ourselves rather than blurring our focus on others.

May the community help us understand it is not the reflection that matters but what we do with what we see that counts.

For it is only when we humbly admit to ourselves and to our God that the image in the mirror is broken...that we have misjudged, missed the mark in our lives, live in our heads

...it is only then we can deeply appreciate who we are in God's sight, see the opportunities we have in God to do it over again, and touch the lives of others as we do.

The tax collector does not only ask for mercy, he receives it ...he repents turning his life around.

It is intentional. From the heart.

**We are called, implored, to live intentionally, creating a quieting heart space for God's healing and wholeness to touch our lives and enter this world.**

So, what if you started the day this way

1. As you get up and go to brush your teeth in the morning, look into the mirror. Get very close to it...  
it's OK if it makes you feel silly and you see yourself smile. Maybe that's God smiling at you!

Acknowledge your desire to be loved and accepted and happy. Acknowledge your pain. As you look into your own eyes, see there the eyes of the world. Remember we all want the same thing and we are all connected.

2. Stand there. Force yourself to stand there as a prayer.  
Breathe in, cherishing yourself as God cherishes you. And breathe out cherishing others.

Let go of the judgments you have about people, and see them as God does...see yourself in them as well. You understand them better than you might like to admit.

If the faces of people you are having difficulty with appear, be thankful you realize it and lift them up and appreciate them just the way they are.

For they are on a faith journey, too. Acknowledge the new reality: God is doing something in them just as God is doing something in you.

3. During the day, every time you see a mirror, remember your two faces. Pharisee, Tax Collector. Cherish them both.
4. During the day, see everyone you meet in a mirror where God's self is reflected...the grocery clerk, your family, co-workers, those in the traffic jam with you.
5. Stay in the practice no matter what happens.
6. At night, as you see your reflection in the mirror once again, give God thanks and ask God that you may see yourself there the way God does...beautiful, whole, precious, loved, just the right size. See your true heart.

Your day begins and ends with you...within God.

You are the source of contempt or delight.  
...humility or self-righteousness. ....joy or depletion.

Reflect delight. Reflect humility. Reflect joy.  
Reflect what you truly believe in your heart, not just believe in your head.

Know God is with you no matter where you are  
on your faith journey.

Live into your heart...start that journey.

Carl McColman – "Elizabeth Barrett Browning reminded us: "Earth's crammed with heaven, / And every common bush afire with God, / But only he who sees takes off his shoes; The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."

It's a mystery to me why some people "see" and take off their shoes, while others just keep on plucking their berries.

But that's how things roll. I imagine it has something to do with grace – the person who "sees" has been given a special gift –

but it also has to do with the disposition of the person:

the one who sees is disposed to seeing. Just as the one who recognizes the presence of God in their hearts very often is the one who is open to such a knowing.