

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”



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Dear Friends ~ Standing at the edge of an abyss is no way to contemplate the coming new year. Yet that is how my heart feels, as though the earth has shaken beneath our feet and split asunder. I am reminded of a conversation in a television show of my youth—a teenage African-American tries to talk to his white English teacher—he says she’s got “white folks’ blues.” She expects the world to be good and just and fair and therefore is distraught when faced with a different reality, whereas he has spent his whole life without those illusions and knows life is a struggle. A friend shared recently that he has chosen to pick up some Lenten disciplines again (despite it not being Lent) as a way of caring for his soul so as not to fall into depression or give in to despair. Jack Kornfield says in

BUDDHA’S LITTLE INSTRUCTION BOOK, “Whatever we cultivate in times of ease, we gather as strength for times of change.” Animals gather what they need to survive the winter and so must we. Whether you have ever felt times of ease or not, whether you feel the world’s heartbeat becoming colder or not, the time has come for gathering our strengths where we may.



We must accept finite disappointment,
but never lose infinite hope.

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

I know the world is bruised and bleeding and though it is important not to ignore its pain, it is also critical to refuse to succumb to its malevolence. Like failure, chaos contains information that can lead to knowledge—even wisdom.

~ Toni Morrison

Let us stay in our chairs as long as we dare, breathing gently until another rhythm takes over. Let us risk inaction, become receptive, give our thoughts to the blank wall, let our layers be peeled back, accept our dreams as true even if we must wait and wait, trusting that all human life is part of an intricate unfolding of the One Reality.

~ from *All the Days of My Life* by Marv and Nancy Hiles

While we watch the storm clouds gather and prepare for the storm, let us never forget that the sun still shines behind those dark clouds, and may somehow break through before the storm descends. I see sunshine in the real desire for peace in the hearts of humanity, even though the human family gropes toward peace blindly, not knowing the way.

~ Peace Pilgrim



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It would be far more constructive if people tried to understand their supposed enemies. Learning to forgive is much more useful than merely picking up a “stone” and throwing it at the object of one’s anger, the more so when the provocation is extreme. For it is under the greatest adversity that there exists the greatest potential for doing good, both for oneself and others. ~ from *THE PATH TO TRANQUILITY* by the Dalai Lama



We cannot control our life. If we are set upon doing so, we have abdicated from peace, which must balance what is desired with what is possible. As Hokusai shows so memorably, the great wave is in waiting for any boat. It is unpredictable, as uncontrollable now as it was at the dawn of time. Will the slender boats survive or will they be overwhelmed? The risk is a human constant; it has to be accepted—and laid aside. What we can do, we do. Beyond that, we endure, our endurance framed by a sense of what matters and what does not. The worst is not that we may be overwhelmed by disaster, but to fail to live by principle. Yet we are fallible, and so the real worst, the antithesis of peace, is to refuse to recognize failure and humbly begin again.

~ from *SISTER WENDY'S BOOK OF MEDITATIONS* by Sr. Wendy Beckett

When I despair, I remember that all through history the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants, and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it—always.

~ Mahatma Gandhi

What we cannot understand
or what we deny,
we can never transcend.

~ from *GNOSTICISM* by Martin Seymour-Smith

True faith and courage are like a kite—
an opposing wind raises them higher.

-Buddha

The work has been no different since the beginning,
the thin golden thread through the chaos,
the dimly lit path through the valley,
the hand in the night:

to trust the Giver of Life in the darkness,
to trust the goodness buried in the terrible moment,
in every awful passage, every ending,
to receive the love that is given.

The test is only clearer in dark times,
to see the hollow illusion of princes
and forego their poisoned promises,
to come into this day in the name of the Holy One,
not in the thrall of our fears.

~ from Steve Garnaas-Holmes at www.unfoldinglight.net

So we must learn, in this twisted age, that the ultimate therapy is to identify our own pain with the pain of others, and then band together to resist the conditions that create our common malady...As we learn to see our own plight in the lives of our brothers and sisters we will begin to find health. Therapy involves identifying and building communities of concern. Only so can we heal ourselves.

~ from *40 DAY JOURNEY WITH PARKER PALMER*, edited by Henry F. French

For those of us with a hunger to know the truth, painful emotions are like flags going up to say, "You're stuck!"... such uncomfortable feelings are messages that tell us to perk up and lean into a situation when we'd rather cave in and back away. When the flag goes up, we have an opportunity: we can stay with our painful emotion instead of spinning out. Staying is how we get the hang of gently catching ourselves when we're about to let resentment harden into blame, righteousness, or alienation. It's also how we keep from smoothing things over by talking ourselves into a sense of relief or inspiration...With practice, however, we learn to stay with a broken heart, with a nameless fear, with the desire for revenge. Sticking with uncertainty is how we learn to relax in the midst of chaos, how we learn to be cool when the ground beneath us suddenly disappears. We can bring ourselves back to the spiritual path countless times every day simply by exercising our willingness to rest in the uncertainty of the present moment—over and over again.

~ Pema Chödrön in *COMFORTABLE WITH UNCERTAINTY*

No wonder the prophet weeps yet -
We begin again but not innocent...

And we feebly watch for you and wait.
Teach us how to weep while we wait,
and how to hope while we weep,
and how to care while we hope.

~ from "Teach Us How To Weep" in
*AWED TO HEAVEN, ROOTED IN EARTH:
PRAYERS OF WALTER BRUEGGEMANN*