

# Friends of Silence

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



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Dear Friends ~ Is it strange to envy a turtle? Not just turtles in general—I’m referring to the specific *Terrapene carolina carolina* (box turtle) who took up residence in the tall grasses behind the woodshed this summer. She and I often crossed paths, especially in the morning hours while she bathed and sipped from the puddles in the gravel road. I liked to crouch, peer into her wary amber eyes, and make small talk about the weather. My dog proved similarly excited about the turtle, though he tended to make more noise about it, barking and prodding her shell like you or I might knock on a neighbor’s front door.

I’m self-aware enough to know that if a giant ever perched over my swimming hole or a furry beast’s teeth chomped and clattered millimeters away from my face, my fearful response would not be what anyone deemed dignified. This turtle, on the other hand, was just plain *cool*. The left side of her carapace was warped and scarred, evidence that she had once survived a predator’s attack. Yet she never fled from us; she merely ambled. And when my dog was too persistent, she’d gradually gather her limbs into her shell and pull up the hinged plastron that protects her head.

And that is precisely what I envy about this turtle: She understands when it’s time to stop. She follows her instinct to turn inward.

Autumn has now arrived in the northern hemisphere, along with the seasonal invitation to a slower pace and introspection. For us humans, it can feel wrong to lean into solitude, especially in a fraught moment when our need for advocacy and community is glaringly clear. It can also feel abrupt, like powering off a radio that’s blasting rock music at full volume. The initial silence rings and thumps with questions that seem impossible to answer: *How can people see the world so very differently? How can I love someone when we disagree about moral issues? When I see harm? Can we ever find common ground? Dream up new possibilities to meet all of our needs?*

This month’s newsletter hums with the voices of wise ones who’ve demonstrated the courage of a box turtle, to pause and turn inward. Out of that silence, they offer us fresh reminders about what it means to move from resentment to freedom, from enmity to...love. ~ Joy



**The small man  
Builds cages for everyone  
He  
Knows.**

**While the sage,  
Who has to duck his head  
When the moon is low,  
Keeps dropping keys all night long  
For the  
Beautiful  
Rowdy  
Prisoners.**

~ Hafiz, translated by Daniel Ladinsky in *THE GIFT*

The time in between my clapping is ma [Japanese word for “emptiness”]. If you just have non-stop action with no breathing space at all, it’s just busyness, but if you take a moment, then the tension building...can grow into a wider dimension. If you just have constant tension...all the time, you just get numb.

~ Hayao Miyazaki

**Truth without love is not transformational truth. Truth from a cruel heart undoes its message.**

~ Richard Rohr in *THE TEARS OF THINGS*

For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have.

The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.

~ James Baldwin, from his essay “Nothing Personal”

To create the world that exemplifies our values, we need to liberate ourselves from enemy images — the thinking that says there is something wrong with the people whose actions or values we don’t agree with... Now, that’s not easy to do. Why? Because it’s hard to believe that those who are doing things far outside of our value system are human beings like the rest of us. It’s very challenging.

~ Marshall B. Rosenberg in *SPEAK PEACE IN A WORLD OF CONFLICT*



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You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?...And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?

~ Matthew 5:43-47

Awaken me, O Mighty One,  
in your holy mercy,  
that I might be free of fear...

With boundless confidence,  
I abandon myself to You...  
For You deliver me from illusion,  
and through Love,  
my heart opens to Wisdom.

~ Nan Merrill from "Psalm 54" in  
*PSALMS FOR PRAYING*

If we work for peace out of anger, we will never succeed. Peace is not an end. It can never come about through non-peaceful means.

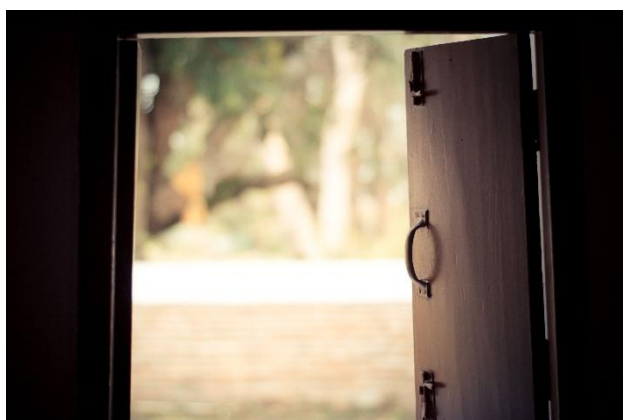
~ Thich Nhat Hanh in *FOR A FUTURE TO BE POSSIBLE*

**You cannot buy the revolution. You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere.**

~ Ursula K. Le Guin in *THE DISPOSSESSED*

If you have resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free.

~ from "Prayer for Resentment" in *ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BIG BOOK*



**Although the wind  
blows terribly here,  
the moonlight also leaks  
between the roof planks  
of this ruined house.**

~ Izumi Shikibu from "Although the wind...",  
translated by Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani in *THE INK DARK MOON*

**Heart is sea,  
language is shore.  
Whatever sea includes,  
will hit the shore.**

~ Rumi

... we should be careful  
Of each other, we should be kind  
While there is still time.

~ Philip Larkin from "The Mower," in *COLLECTED POEMS*

The only sufficient answer is to give up the animosity and try forgiveness, to try to love our enemies and to talk to them and (if we pray) to pray for them. If we can't do any of that, then we must begin again by trying to imagine our enemies' children who, like our children, are in mortal danger because of enmity that they did not cause.

~ Wendell Berry in *Orion Magazine*, March / April 2003

Either you will  
go through this door  
or you will not go through.

If you go through  
there is always the risk  
of remembering your name.

Things look at you doubly  
and you must look back  
and let them happen.

If you do not go through  
it is possible  
to live worthily

to maintain your attitudes  
to hold your position  
to die bravely

but much will blind you,  
much will evade you,  
at what cost who knows?

The door itself makes no promises.  
It is only a door.

~ Adrienne Rich, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note,"  
in *SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: POEMS*