

DailyMeditation 12/28/2021

How Young Desmond Tutu became Bishop Tutu

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on the wonderful life and work of Archbishop Tutu. And I am thinking about how the greatness of his soul was born, of course, in the rigor of the movement for emancipation, liberation, of his people against apartheid in South Africa. And of course, Nelson Mandela's soul also grew in that context, of course, in years and years of imprisonment because of it. And, of course, our Dr. King's soul, and so many who joined him in his struggle also grew, and so these people become great human beings who have so much to teach us about being human.

There is a writer, Ernest Becker, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his book, *The Denial of Death*, who also wrote a book on evil. And he says this:

Healthy religion offers the possibility of a new heroism, the heroism of sainthood. This meant living in primary awe at the miracle of the created object, including oneself and one's own godliness. Remember the awesome fascination of St. Francis with the revelations of the everyday world: a bird, a flower. It also means unafraidness of one's own death, because of the incomparable majesty and power of God.

Well, he says that recently a lot of religion has lost this greatness, and call to greatness. He says:

Our culture's commercial-industrial hero system is almost openly defunct. It so obviously denies reality, builds war machines against death, and banishes sacredness with bureaucratic dedication. Men are treated as things, and the world is pulled down to their size.

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This was a part of the story told in today's meditation: Bishop Tutu, as a child, seeing his mother treated as a human being by a priest who would walk through her place of work and greet her with dignity. This was what drew him to his vocation. He [Becker] says,

Religion in a perverse way, the churches, have turned their backs, both on the miraculousness of creation, and the need to do something heroic in this world. The early promise of Christianity was to bring about once and for all the social justice that the ancient world was crying for. Christianity never fulfilled this promise, and is as far away from it today as ever. No wonder it has trouble being taken seriously as a hero system.

But we have these heroes in our lifetime, as I say, people like Mandela, and Gandhi, and Bishop Tutu, and Martin Luther King and his many followers, and others too. So the table is set for this kind of growing of our souls in this time when, too, we are challenged anew by climate change, by COVID, and by the demise of democracy in our midst. All of us are called to, to open up and to grow our souls. As Meister Eckhart says,

"God is delighted to watch our souls enlarge."

Thank you. Desmond Tutu, for your very large soul.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.