

Daily Meditation 03-10-22

Ukraine: The War to End Wars?

Good morning.

We'll continue our meditations on the ongoing war in Ukraine with the perhaps surprising title to today's essay: "Ukraine, The War to End Wars?" proposing that maybe there's a bigger meaning behind this war that is being live-streamed in our homes, night and day, all over the world in this time of global communications.

Again, I call on Howard Thurman. Yesterday, recall that he said that "the profoundest disclosure in the religious experience is the awareness that the individual is not alone." So he went on about the importance and centrality of community.

At the same time, of course, as we noted yesterday, war is the precise rupture of community, that rupture of relationship. However, there's an irony built into this, as there is in so much that is real.

And the irony is that war also creates community. We're seeing in the example of the courage and the concern of Ukrainians fighting a battle for their own survival. And the many, many around the world and certainly near to the borders of Ukraine, are opening their doors and their hearts and their countries to literally millions of refugees. And so Howard Thurman has this to say about that inward work of community. He says:

Jesus rested his case for the ultimate significance of life on the love ethic. Love is the intelligent, kindly, but stern expression of kinship of one individual for another, having as its purpose the maintenance and furtherance of life at its highest level.... If we accept the basic proposition that life is one, arising out of a common center -- God, all expressions of love are acts of God.

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...Hate, or we might say, war, becomes a form of annihilation of self and others; in short, suicide.

When I think of war, I remember my uncle, who was in the Second World War, and was there for the liberation of Dachau. He had some amazing stories to tell about that.

But he also told me this, and I was surprised to hear it, and a bit scandalized in my young 20s when I heard it from him. But he said that serving in the Second World War was most important, most positive experience of his life.

And I took many decades to think about that one statement from my uncle. He was telling me the rest of his life was an afterthought, because it created a camaraderie and he felt that he was doing something worthwhile. He was literally putting his life on the line for a worthy cause to stop the Nazis and to stop fascism in the 1940s.

So again, this is the irony between the destruction that war is, and yet how war can bring out the best in us, the most generous and courageous. And I think he had a feeling of camaraderie, companionship with his fellow soldiers because they were literally facing death together every single day and night.

I think all that is built into that statement from my uncle about his experience in war. And I think that the courage of the Ukrainian people today that we can all welcome and marvel at is part of that same notion, that community... while war tries to kill community, in fact, it brings out the deepest elements of community and the love ethic, as Thurman calls it, that humans are capable of.

Greater love than this no one has, than to lay down their life for their friends.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.