

Daily Meditation 03/08/2022

War and Becoming Stripped to Our Literal Substance before God

Good morning.

This morning we're talking about Howard Thurman's powerful phrase that repeats often: "We're becoming stripped to our literal substance, before God."

And I close the essay with reference to Meister Eckhart's teaching about breakthrough. "Breakthrough" is a word that he invented in German: Durchbruch. And, as he says, "In breakthrough, I learn that I and God are one." But it often takes breakdown, takes chaos, takes suffering and loss, to bring us to this place.

And I'm going to share with you some more of the teachings from Eckhart.

This is from my major work on him. It was 37 of his sermons. Because he develops this theme of breakthrough in many places. He says, "No other pleasure and joy can be compared with this union, and this breakthrough, and this joy."

So, he equates breakthrough with joy.

"The breakthrough is the reception," he says, "of nothing less than the Godself, and the breadth and fullness of being."

So, again, it is an encounter with the Godself.

He says, "One must learn to break through things, and to grasp one's God in them, and to be able to picture Him powerfully to oneself in an essential manner."

So, we find the divinity within things, within events, and within experiences.

He also teaches this: "The shell must be cracked open, if what is in us is to come out. For if you want the kernel, you must break the shell."

If you want the kernel, you must break the shell. And so, there is this Via Negativa, this breaking, that happens in our lives.

The teaching of Meister Eckhart on breakthrough also goes like this. He said, "A great master says that his breakthrough is nobler than his flowing out. And this is true."

"A flowing out" is Eckhart's talk about creation, or being born.

"When I flowed out from God, all things spoke: God is. But this cannot make me happy for it makes me understand that I am a creature. In the breakthrough, on the other hand, where I stand free of my own will and of the will of God and of all His works and of God Himself, there I am above all creatures, and I am neither God nor creature. Rather, I am what I was and what I shall remain, now and forever. I receive a wealth so vast that God cannot be enough for me and all that makes God God, and with all His divine works. Within the breakthrough, I discover that God and I are one. Here, God is one with the spirit, and that is the strictest poverty one can find."

So, this is Eckhart's Sermon on the Mount. His commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

Because he's talking about the oneness that we have with God and he's commenting on the teaching from Jesus that those who are poor in spirit will experience of the Divine. And part of the breakthrough feeds into the idea from John's Gospel, the Nicodemus story, where Nicodemus is said to be born again.

So, Eckhart says, "In the soul that divides our present now, God begets His only begotten Son. And in this birth, the soul is born again in God. It is one birth. As often as a soul is born again in God, the Father begets the begotten son in the soul."

So, Julian of Norwich talks about our experience of wanting, as a mystical experience. Thomas Aquinas talks about ecstasy as a mystical experience. Eckhart talks about our breakthrough. And Howard Thurman, who we lead this essay with, was very much a devotee of Meister Eckhart and knew him very well.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.