

Daily Meditation 4/06/2023

Right Livelihood and Good Work vs. Fox News

Good morning.

In today's meditation we're discussing the spirituality of work. And I allude to the daily meditation of last week, where we talked about right speech, one of the noble actions, from the noble truths that the Buddha taught: to use our speech facilities to speak truth, to seek truth.

And we also need to seek a Right Livelihood in the language of Buddha. And I share with you in today's meditation the quotation from Thich Nhat Hanh:

To practice right livelihood, you have to find a way to earn your living without transgressing your ideals of love and compassion. The way you support yourself can be an expression of your deepest self, or can be a source of suffering for you and others. Our vocation can nourish our understanding and compassion, or erode them.

In my book on *The Reinvention of Work*, I take up this subject, and I invoke theologian Dorothee Sölle, who writes about the spirituality of work. She talks about how there are two traditions in western theology; they come from the Bible. One she calls the curse tradition. I call this the fall/redemption tradition. And in this tradition, work is separated from the goodness of tilling and keeping, from the dignity of co-creating, from the responsibility for the goodness of creation. In the Christian tradition, work is punishment.

And we have that tradition lurking in our collective psyches.

In contrast, there are two great gardening stories in the Hebrew Bible: that of Genesis and that of the Song of Songs. And in these stories, work is not about curse, but about delight. So Genesis 2:15, says "Adam played his place in the garden to till it and to keep it." And the garden of Eden is a place of delight, to keep it and to till it and to foster pleasure.

And the Creation Spirituality tradition picks up on this and points out that our creativity everywhere is meant to reflect and prolong the Divine Creation, and therefore to return blessing for blessing.

Work is not a curse. It's an act of creativity. It's a gift giving; it's a thank-you.

In the Song of Songs, work is presented in the context of working a vineyard, as a metaphor for relationships. Love is celebrated between lover and beloved. So here's how Sölle puts it:

The image of the vineyard and the Song of Solomon stands for erotic pleasure and lovemaking. This image also functions in the Bible as a symbol of peace, defining the relationship between Israel and God. And as a symbol of economic justice, looking to the time when the planters shall enjoy the fruit of the vine, and the oppressors be driven away.

And then there's a third story about a garden in the scriptures and that is Easter, which of course is coming up this week. The Easter story is the third garden story: the risen Christ is encountered as a gardener. And Jesus isn't alone in being resurrected, but the Garden of Eden and its workers are [also resurrected]. The work of the Empire was to kill Jesus but the work of the Spirit is to resurrect; even work itself is resurrected.

So it's in this context that work becomes a celebration and an enchantment.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.