

Daily Meditation 11-13-23

A Big Lesson from Iceland on Moving Beyond War

Good morning.

Yesterday I had the privilege of being interviewed and talking with John Deere, a peace activist, who was a Jesuit priest, and close to his brother, Daniel Berrigan, for many years. Then he was expelled from his order, but still carrying on the great work that he's doing, and he's just finished a major book on the Beatitudes. A very fine book, I highly recommend it.

So, the issue of peacemaking is very much on my mind, as I'm sure it is with many of us, given so many wars raging at this time.

Some of the proposals that I put forward in my talk, included quoting Black Elk, and his teaching that the First Peace has to do with our relationship to the universe. This is the First Peace. And the other peaces, peace between individuals, and peace between nations, is an offshoot of that.

So coming to grips with the new cosmology, brings peace, and brings perspective, you see. We see that our world is much bigger than just humans, going at it with each other with our reptilian brains.

Of course, I spoke to the need to calm ourselves interiorly, to calm the reptilian brain. And that that's what meditation does for us, meditation and contemplation.

And another dimension I didn't have time to speak to, in my talk yesterday, was what MC Richards, the potter/poet/philosopher writes about -- and I quote this in my book on "A Spirituality Named Compassion," in the chapter on Creativity. She says:

There lives inside all of us, a creative person. And it will give us no peace, until we give it attention. Our creativity, our yearning to express ourselves, in whatever format, whatever way this is working within us. We want to pay attention to it.

And of course that is what the art of meditation is about. It's also what the great psychologist Otto Rank teaches us. He died in 1939, but he's the father of humanistic psychology. Rollo May,

and Maslow, and Carl Rogers, I know they stand on his shoulders. But his emphasis also is on creativity. He said,

Our neuroses are born of the artiste manqué, that is the failed artist in all of us, that we use our creativity and imagination often to beat up on one another, or to beat up on ourselves, rather than to search for peace, both internally and with others.

But another approach to making peace in this time of war, is the one that I'm speaking of in today's meditation, and which will continue for a bit longer in subsequent meditations, and that is an emergency.

There is nothing like an emergency for humans, to get over our quarrels, or bickering as the word is employed in today's meditation.

Again, it's a matter of seeing a bigger picture, when the question comes down to the survival of all of us, as it does with the question of climate change, and the question of matricide and ecocide, and the ending of our species, and so many others.

This is the reality, the existential reality we're facing today. When it comes down to that, surely, surely, this emergency, this Apocalypse, can shake us into putting peace forward, peace ahead of our projections onto one another, of our fears, of our tribalism.

This crisis of climate change is an invitation for humanity to grow up, grow up, to grow beyond nationalism, beyond religious internecine warfare, and beyond the reptilian brain, and beyond patriarchy, and beyond adolescence. Our species has been stuck, I think, in adolescence and patriarchy for far too many centuries. And so when there's a struggle or a difference, we go for the guns.

And all spiritual teachers from the Dalai Lama, to the Buddha, to Jesus, to Lao Tsu, to Muhammad, to Black Elk, to Dorothy Day -- all these people are telling us that, well, what Deuteronomy says: "I put before you life and death. Choose life. I put before you war and peace. Choose peace."

Thank you. We'll see you next week.