

Daily Meditation 10-21-24

The Freedom that Forgiveness Brings

Good morning.

In today's meditation, I share with you a powerful poem written by a teenager who was raped on a regular basis by a relative.

It's powerful, because she tells a story of how she went through shame and even guilt, but that eventually she arrived at a place where she could throw off the dynamic of shame, and even resentment, and move on, become her true self, her full womanhood that she talks about.

The power of letting go, the power of forgiveness, in that sense, not of neglecting the injustice that was done her, but of not staying in a relationship with her anger and letting it go, moving on, becoming free, becoming herself powerful.

Now, I think resentment lies at the heart of the dynamic of much of the current election. It keeps coming up all the time---all the scapegoating, the hatred, the names that are called, such as the names toward immigrants, called vermin, called animals, and so forth. This kind of vitriol is extremely dangerous, and it creates a pattern or dynamic, really, of sadomasochism, power over, of demagoguery. Rape itself is a kind of, obviously, a dynamic of control and of dominance.

So this kind of rhetoric builds on an attitude of dominance, which is, of course, a misunderstanding of what masculinity should be, can be, and in its deepest place is.

In this book, *Hatreds We Love: The Psychology of Political Tribalism in Post-Truth America*, by Stephen Ducat, is a very powerful analysis of the dynamics that are driving not only the Trumpian extremes today, but also certain left-wing extremes as well.

But on page 163, as part of a chapter called "The Brittle Manhood of MAGA Males" - The Brittle Manhood of MAGA Males - the author says that in studies they have done in the last year, support for Trump and the 2024 Presidential race based on gender includes a lot of varieties of sexist attitudes.

But the factor that was the most associated with the decision to re-elect Trump was a view that men are victims of persecution in politics and in culture. 77% of men who held that belief said they were voting for Trump. Only 7% of male Biden supporters said that.

77 versus 7.

"The delusion that they are being persecuted for being white, male and Christian is a bottomless wellspring of MAGA man's animating resentment."

He says the animating resentment is based on the fact that they are being persecuted because they are white or male or Christian. *As I mentioned earlier in the book, what they love most about Jesus and identify with is his crucifixion. The fantasy that there is a plot to replace them with swarthy immigrants gets them up in the morning and keeps them locked and loaded.*

That's a very powerful observation about, again, the power of resentment in these political times. And that is why the story told in this poem today is so important, that resentment is something we can rid ourselves of. We can cleanse ourselves of resentment. It takes some time, perhaps, but it can happen. I point out that the true masculinity is learning to forgive, not to demagogue or to build up resentment and create tribal resentment on a large scale. Now, interestingly, at the end of my book is an appendix, actually, to my book on the Antichrist: *Trump and the MAGA Movement as Anti-Christ: A Handbook for the 2024 Election*.

I have a chapter, a short chapter called "MAGA's Precarious Manhood Versus Authentic Masculinity." And I really take that phrase from an article by Harold Myerson about the Republican Party, which he calls "a party of precarious manhood."

And he invokes the admiration that Donald Trump has for Hungary's Viktor Orbán, the near-dictator of Hungary today, who has destroyed courts in the Congress in Hungary and replaced it with himself as a strong man. And Trump calls Orbán "a very tough man." And Trump admires Orbán, and Orbán, in return, said everybody was afraid of him. And Trump also admired strong men like Putin and Kim Jong Un for their toughness.

So this is what Meyerson says. He says the MAGA movement is reliant on the cult of toughness and hyper masculinity. Hyper masculinity. So, they kind of have to cling to resentment, to the anger and the compulsion to control and to dominate. Though he points out that the blue collar jobs disappeared when Trump was president previously, in the Midwest.

Now, what Biden has done with the infrastructure bill and the Inflation Reduction Act have led to the first major increase in factory construction in several decades. But a violent rhetoric is Trump's mother tongue, and this language will carry on, strokes the fires of his followers.

And I point out at the Republican Convention, the wrestler Hulk Hogan was called onstage, and he gave a short talk. And he and others talked about real men, who are real Americans, versus other kinds of men. And very shortly after the convention, Hulk threatened to body slam---that's his language---Kamala Harris.

So these masculinity issues arise when resentment is an integral part of a political leader.

David French wrote an article called "Hulk Hogan Is Not the Only Way to Be a Man." And President Obama addressed that same topic recently in a talk he gave in Pittsburgh.

But David French says that “There's a seductive quality to Trump's masculinity. Grievance is a form of counterfeit purpose, and anger is a form of counterfeit courage.”

Of course, grievance and resentment are really the same thing, aren't they? And it's bringing out the reptilian brain. We win. These people lose.

David French holds up a commencement speech that was given by Admiral William McRaven, former Navy SEAL and designer of the team who killed Osama bin Laden. And he said to the graduates:

You must have compassion. You must ache for the poor and the disenfranchised. You must feel for the vulnerable. You must weep for the ill and infirm. You must pray for those who are without hope. You must be kind to those less fortunate.

So that's another way of defining manhood. And as French puts it, "There's a better way for men, for all of us. It's rooted in honor and courage and love."

So these are some thoughts as we continue our meditations on the current political scene, but also some of the forces behind it---forces that include an unresolved masculine problem and whipping up resentment and scapegoating, and yearning for domination, domineering, "I will be a dictator" kind of attitude.

We have to be alert to this at this important time in human and planetary history.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.