Daily Meditation 12-02-24

Cosmology, Spirituality, and the 4 Paths to Awaken Humanity

Good morning.

Today is December 1. Happy December. And, in the Christian tradition, the beginning of Advent.

Advent, of course, means Coming. It's a waiting period, if you will, waiting for something wonderful to arrive. It seems to me, it may be fitting to share with you a teaching from the Gospel of Luke, that tells about Mary's waiting, when Mary was pregnant, for Jesus to come. And this is quite upfront in Luke, in the first chapter, Mary's "Magnificat."

So this poem is set in the context of her visiting her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also pregnant, according to the story, with the child who became John the Baptist. And Elizabeth cries out to Mary, to her cousin:

Oh, of all women, you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ear, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believes the promise made by the Lord would be fulfilled.

So these are two pregnant women, and relatives, excited about their coming children. Then the Gospel says,

And Mary said, My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord. My spirit exults in God, my Savior. Because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward, all generations will call me blessed. The Almighty has done great things for me, holy is his name. His mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear Him. He has shown the power of his arm, and routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. The hungry are filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, of His mercy, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

So it's amazing how political this poem is. And of course, the poem was constructed by the writers of the Gospels. This is not a tape recording of Mary's response to her cousin's greeting. But it incorporates many passages from other portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, such as the Canticle of Hannah.

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But the point is, that it is about waiting for something great to come, that has political implications. Lowering the rich, taking the rich from power places, and the lowly arising. So it's definitely a liberation poem.

Now I speak in today's meditation about the upcoming dialogue that I'll be doing with Brian Swimme, the cosmologist, about the topic of the Four Paths of Creation Spirituality, which are archetypal, I believe, archetypal guides to our deeper selves, as individuals and as societies. And these concepts are so important, I think, because they shift our awareness, as I point out, to move into the arena of the Four Paths: to incorporate our joy (the Via Positiva), our silence, in our suffering, in our waiting (the Via Negativa), and the Via Creativa of our giving birth, our birthing nothing less than the Christ. As Meister Eckhart says, "We are all meant to be mothers of God," not just Mary, you see.

And that's why this Magnificat is so appropriate for a season, where we're waiting for ourselves to come alive, for ourselves to be other Christs, to be mothers of the Christ, and mothers of God, or mothers of the Buddha, and to be other Buddhas. Or mother of the image of God, salaam and be truly images of God.

So it's an invitation for a whole species to wake up, and to celebrate about what we are capable of as a species, as communities, to reach for our better selves, and to move from injustice to justice, from patriarchy to a balance of the divine feminine and the healthy sacred masculine. And all the rest that makes us alive, and joyful, and contributing, and healers, and passion makers.

Now, in the Tuesday meditation – I've been talking about the Monday meditation, I'm talking to you on Sunday morning -- but in the Tuesday meditation, I introduce a good friend of mine, and fellow faculty member for a couple of decades: Sister Jose Hobday, a Franciscan woman and a Seneca woman. And I share with you one of the many prayers that she taught me in rituals, that of the Prayer of the Four Directions. Because that prayer from the indigenous tradition is so important today, because it gets us out of our solipsism, our anthropocentrism, our narcissism, as Pope Francis has called it, as a species -- and to begin each day opening to the powers of the universe, all four that are seven directions.

It's a wonderful way to pray, and to move on from the small self (small s), which is the ego being nurtured all the time and rewarded -- and seeking truly the Big Self (big S), which is our relationship to the whole. The Cosmic Christ, you know, with the cosmic Buddha.

And Sister Jose was a character in her own right, and a brilliant spiritual teacher. And I'd like to share with you one more story. There are many stories here, because she was all about stories, telling them and giving them and living them. But this is one of her teachings that I think is particularly strong for our times.

She was lecturing in Boulder, Colorado, which is a rather privileged community. She was talking about simple living. And as a Franciscan, she was very committed to simple living. For example, when she was traveling on the road, which she did a lot of because she received some invitations to lecture, she had two dresses, and I think they were the same dress and same style. And she would wash one in the sink every night, and wear a clean one every day. And that was it. You could tell she had very little suitcase material with her.

So she's talking about simple living. And afterwards, a woman came up and she said, "Oh, I'm so moved by your talk, I really want to simplify my life." "Well, wonderful," Jose said, "why don't you go to the Salvation Army and give away a lot of the things you don't need?" The woman said, "what's the Salvation Army?" "Oh, honey," Jose said, "you do need a change in your life. So here's what you do: Get a shovel and a gallon of gasoline, and go to your backyard and dig a deep hole. Put all this stuff in it, and light it."

And the woman said, "Oh, sister, I can't do that. I'm talking about fur coats and bracelets and all the rest, and that I wouldn't want to waste all that, that would be a sin." And Jose said, "Well, that's the whole point. Light the fire, go to confession, and start your life all over again."

I find that a very amusing story. But the bottom line is very serious. Wow, we can start our lives all over again. We can truly change our worldviews and our habits. They are all subject to being lit by fire, and our ways of operating in this world.

So notice, she didn't mince her words. She didn't back away from her teaching about a simple lifestyle. She challenged this woman in a concrete way. But even if the woman didn't take her literally, I think the lesson is there, and it's there for all of us. And so I wanted to combine my work with cosmologist Brian Swimme, and the work I've been blessed to do with Native American spiritual teachers, of whom Jose Hobday is one, a very wonderful one.

Thank you. We will see you in a week.