

June 8, 2020

- *Seeking peace compared to being on a boat in stormy seas*

The God you speak of, the God who is nonjudgmental, the God who is life-giving, the God who is light-giving, surrounds your own lives and lights. It is that God, by whatever name you choose, that is the ultimate source for the peace that you seek.

That peace is defined in many ways according to the needs of those who recognize its importance. The peace that many speak of is a peace that comes when God is present. For such an understanding of peace, there is an expectation that there are times when God is not present. The peace that is sought, nevertheless, is a peace that brings an awareness of God, and that awareness itself expands the sense of peace.

For others, that peace is a belief in balance, a sense that there is a rudder that is useful in directing the craft of life. That balance between going left and right, of being pulled forward or pushed backwards, is the peace that we wish to speak of.

As with any craft in the waters, the winds may blow. The winds may disappear. You may be tossed in one direction or another. You may be graced by good seas and fair wind, but you may find you struggle to maintain a course. That belongs to the experience of being on such a craft in the water. That craft is emblematic of human life. No one goes through life feeling that the wind is to the back, and the only way possible is a way forward. Life pushes and pulls and tugs and rocks. Life comforts. Life destroys. Life can provide great joy and pleasure and the deepest of sorrows. All of that is part of the human experience that you are currently engaged in.

So where is the peace? Is the peace achieved when there are no waves? Is the peace achieved when you are only pushed in the direction you intend? What constitutes peace? What constitutes balance?

We urge you to consider that the peace you all seek, however it is defined, is really a peace governed by the knowledge that there is a rudder, there is a plan, there is a purpose, there is a safe harbor, and there is comfort after a storm. No storm continues with no stop. All is transitory, but despite those storms in life, there is a balancing that can be achieved when you are open to it. If you are consumed by anxiety surrounding a particular direction your lives are heading toward, then you will fail to recognize when conditions change, for your attention is only on the here and now.

The pandemic that is being experienced throughout the world is not permanent. It does not mean the end of the progression of humankind. It is a step that is taken. It is a wave that washes overboard, but that wave does not sink the ship. When you find yourself preoccupied not only regarding this pandemic but other daily issues, that preoccupation is a kind of squinting of the eyes. You see what is directly before you, and any attention to a balance that serves as a counterweight is lost in the obsession of what is.

June 8, 2020

Peace in the real sense is acknowledging that there is a balance even when you do not see it. That balance, that sense of equilibrium of life, is the presence of God. It is God that is the balance. It is not your will to overcome one issue no matter what.

The effect of this recognition of balance, of the sense that life does have purpose, that you are not to remain in the situation you may find yourself, is a way of achieving a real inner peace. Real peace is not the absence of conflict, for when there is conflict, the perceived absence of peace creates chaos—chaos of spirit, chaos of action.

Praying for peace, therefore, as has been acknowledged, is not imploring God to suddenly be present. Praying for peace, even if expressed as a supplication, is in fact activating your own wider vision and deeper understanding. When you ask God to be present, you are asking for your own keener vision, and it is that vision that allows you to experience inner peace.

If there are conflicts with your neighbor, and you pray that your neighbor will change so the conflicts will go away, what actually changes? It is not God changing your neighbor. It is you changing yourself. The peace that you pray for is your own openness, and it is that openness that you achieve that serves as a balance for the animosity you may feel. It is through your own changes that you serve as a reflection to another of the potential for a broader balance. You don't change another by praying that they change. You may strengthen another's spirit through prayer, but it is for you to broaden your own perspective. When that view is indeed broader and more loving, the intensity of the conflicts that you may experience is greatly reduced. The behavior of the other may not have changed. It is you who have changed.

You are particularly aware at this point of the brutality that some are capable of inflicting upon others, and the temptation is to pray that God will intervene and stop the brutality. It is God's power to enlighten the spirit of another, but it is your own power to eliminate the judgment of those who abuse others personally. You can judge their actions, but you cannot judge them. By becoming better listeners, by becoming more willing to understand how others may be motivated to do what they do and say what they say, such understanding gives witness to another presence, God.

Those who abuse the rights of others will not change because they are told they are wrong. They change when they become aware of what is right. They learn to love not by being told not to hate but by experiencing what love is. That reflection of love is a balance. It is a counterforce. It is an energy of its own that has incredible power. It is, then, the light that overcomes the darkness.

If there is conflict that you experience in your life, look to yourself to be a reflection of light and avoid the tendency to immediately judge another. Yes, it is always valuable to question behavior that is destructive, but that is questioning behavior. If another who is acting in inappropriate ways understands more of what is loving, what is beneficial, that understanding is achieved through what is observed and not through what is said. You move another by who you are because what you do comes out of the wellspring of who

June 8, 2020

you are. If you seek peace as being defined as a reduction in conflict, then look for ways that you can demonstrate what it means to be peace-full. You then can be the balance, the counterweight, that lessens the impact of the burden experienced by another so that in the process, the other is lifted up.

This is not a quick resolution that would be achieved. It is a process. Feel that you can be engaged in the process, knowing that the objective is the affirmation of all. Feel that you are part of the balance that is necessary in order to achieve a meaningful peace. Find ways that you can affirm the presence of God in the midst of the roiling seas.

No ship is built without a rudder mechanism. No human being is given life without the potential of knowing what it means to have purpose, to have direction, to have dignity, to have love, and to be loving. Some people immediately grab the tiller when the seas are rough. Others wring their hands and say, "The sea is rough! The sea is rough! The sea is rough! Woe is me, the sea is rough!" The seas don't change for either, but the tiller, the means of establishing a balance of direction, is available for all. It is there. All can see it. All can acknowledge it. All can learn to apply it to the best advantage.

Know that you are always surrounded by peace in that you are surrounded by the ability to find balance in your life. But know that finding that balance does not imply the absence of difficulty but rather achieving a pathway through it to a safe harbor.

You are blessed as you seek inner peace. You are blessed as you seek through balance in your life. You are blessed in the storms as well as in the calmer waters. You are blessed in the night when you are in the darkness, just as you are blessed in the day surrounded by light.

Reach for your own source of balance. For each, that source will appear differently, but it is always there. Find opportunities to lift your spirit and rejoice in those moments when your hand's on the tiller and your eyes are looking forward to that safe harbor.

You are always accompanied by God's light and by our presence on each of your pathways.

Amen.