

A Course in Miracles:
A Hope-filled Spirituality

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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part IV

I always like to read this very comforting line from the text:

"The necessary condition for the holy instant does not require that you have no thoughts that are not pure. But it does require that you have none that you would keep" (T-15.IV.9:1-2).

This is not saying we should be free of ego thoughts. We are not going from the total ego self to a total non-ego self. That is the end of the journey, but it is a *journey*. What this also indicates is that this is a process of gentle, gradual transformation. This is not saying we should not have ego thoughts, thoughts that are not pure. Of course, we are going to have impure thoughts, thoughts of separation, attack, etc. But the condition does require that we have none that we would keep, meaning we would not hold them from the Holy Spirit or from ourselves. We would not try to justify them, rationalize them, spiritualize them, or deny them. We would simply recognize that we became afraid of love right at this moment, and that the only way we could preserve ourselves in the presence of love that we have judged to be fearful is to attack, to be depressed, to get sick, to get tired, to run to this addiction or that addiction, and so on. We need simply realize what we are doing. That's all.

Another line I quote all the time has to do with learning to be beyond suffering. It says that the way to get beyond suffering is to look at the problem as it is, not the way we have set it up (T-27.VII.2:2). We are not asked to let the problem go. We are not asked to become an ego-less person, just like that. If we want to end suffering, we need only look at the problem as it is, not the way we have set it up. The way we have set it up is that we took the problem from its source, which is our mind's decision for the ego, and projected it out onto a symbol, the body. That is how we have set the problem up, so it will never be resolved. It will never be resolved because it has been taken from its source.

To look at the problem as it is means to see that we became afraid of love, so we pushed it away. We pushed away the symbol of love: Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or any other symbol we may have chosen. We push love away and then feel guilty, because it is reminiscent of the "original

sin" when we all pushed God's Love away. Rather than look at the problem as it is, we project the problem onto some thing or place where the problem is not. The problem is in our mind so we project it onto a body, where it does not exist. We project it onto a world of bodies where it does not exist.

All we are asked to do is to look at that and say, "Yes, this is what I have done, and I did it because I am afraid of love." But what else is new? We don't have to deny it, rationalize it, or justify it. We don't have to do anything. We just say, that is what we have done. We are all afraid of love, otherwise we would not be born into bodies. So what's the big deal? That is what we want to learn to say about the ego: "What's the big deal?"

There is another wonderful passage that compares all of our special relationships to "feathers dancing insanely in the wind" (T-18.I.7:6). Jesus tells us to "let them all go" because they are nothing (T-18.I.8:1). That is what they have in common. They are all like feathers. They are all nothing. They seem to be different—different shapes, colors, and textures—but they are all the same because they are all nothing. They are nothing, pretending to be the cause of our problems, but they are literally nothing. Yet as long as we think we are something, as we all do, then we have to use the other somethings of the world to learn that they have no power over us.

It is not helpful to be told only that we are illusions. I know I spent a good part of the day telling you that you are not here [laughter], but I am not as nice as Jesus is. What is important is to be told that what is illusory is that something out there can make us happy or unhappy. That we can learn. As long as we stumble into our bathroom every morning and see an image in the mirror with which we identify, in no way are we going to believe that we are not bodies. It is very important to know that intellectually, but on an experiential level it is not very helpful, and on a practical level it is meaningless. What is meaningful, however, is that we can learn "I am never upset for the reason I think" (W-pl.5). It is not someone else's fault that we do not experience the peace of God right at this moment, no matter what has been done to us. No matter what a microorganism may have done in the body to make it ill, that is not why we do not feel the peace of God. That we can learn.

Thus, the illusion within our illusory existence here is that the world has done this (whatever the "this" is) to us. The world has *not* done it to us. *We* have done it to ourselves. Near the end of Chapter 27 we learn that "the secret of salvation is but this: that you are doing this unto yourself" (T-27.VIII.10:1). We are not responsible for others' egos attacking us. That is their responsibility, but we are responsible for perceiving it as an attack that has robbed us of our peace. That is what we can learn and that takes a lot of work, but that is feasible. That is possible. That is the transformation. The world does not get transformed. How could nothing get transformed? Our *perception* is what gets transformed, and the transformation is a gentle process that leads us from having made the symbol all-important to now realizing the symbol

is not so important. It is the source that is important because that is what gives us power, genuine power. It is that gentle and kind gradual shift that transforms the world in our perception.

People are not nice in this world. I always say nice people don't come here; they stay home with God. Guilty people come here; fearful people come here; angry, vicious people come here; merciless, cruel people come here; delusional people come here. Nice people don't come here, so what is the big deal that there would be people out there who attack us? We know that people in public office lie and deceive. That's news? That there are people who steal from us, lie to us in business, lie to us in relationships is not news. Now if there were a person who was truly honest and with integrity, that would be news! The latest scandal, lie, or deception gets boring after a while.

Again, we don't want to change the world: "... seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7). The process is a gradual transformation of giving less importance to what is out there—as a source of pain and rejection or a source of happiness and pleasure—and giving more importance to what is inside, in our minds. We do it gradually because the fear of losing our individual self is so great. We made the world literally—*literally* made the world—as one collective Son to preserve the individuality of our separated mind. We did not make it to hide from God. That is what the ego told us, but the real reason we made it was to hide from our mind so that we would not change it. That is really important to understand. That is the meaning of the line that says, "You are not really afraid of crucifixion. Your real terror is of redemption" (T-13.III.1:10-11).

We are not afraid of crucifixion. We love crucifixion. That is what gave us our existence in the first place. Christianity built up its many religions on crucifixion, sacrifice, and suffering. Our real terror is of the redemption that is found in our decision-making mind that chose the ego but now can choose the Holy Spirit as its teacher. That is what we are afraid of. That is why we made up the world of bodies—so that we would be mindless. Then we made up all kinds of problems to consume our attention.

We have spent eons as societies trying to understand the problems that beset us and then eons trying to solve those problems. It literally is the case of the blind leading the blind because we confuse symbol with source. We don't even know there is a source. Problems cannot be solved externally because as soon as we solve a problem, the real problem of guilt in our mind generates another problem. That is what Lessons 79 and 80 say very clearly. We solve one problem and another rises to take its place because the problem is not in the world; it is not in the symbols. *It is in what the symbols represent.* We want there to be problems so that our attention is always directed to and entrapped by the world outside, the world of the mindless. Thus we never get back to the mindful because then we would change our minds.

We therefore need a process that gradually changes how we look at the world and each other, and we do it gradually because our fear is so great.

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I thought I would close by reading another of Helen's poems, called "Transformation" (*The Gifts of God*, p. 64). It is a very lovely poem. I won't go into all of the circumstances of the writing, but it was written down at Eastertime, which is why there is an allusion to Easter at the end. Briefly, it happened when Helen and I and a priest friend of ours were visiting a group of nuns who lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. It was Palm Sunday and also Passover, so we did a combination Passover Seder and Palm Sunday. We finished the meal, and before going into the chapel to have Mass, we spontaneously sat quietly.

Something happened, and we all (five or six of us) at the same time just became very quiet. It was as if the world disappeared, and we just stayed that way for a while. I was always looking for an excuse to have Helen write down a poem, so on the way home I said to her that this would make a lovely poem, and in the next day or two she wrote down this poem. I am using it as the close of the workshop because it describes what I was talking about, especially at the end where the world is transformed: "The trivial enlarge in magnitude, while what seemed large resumes the littleness that is its due. The dim grow bright, and what was bright before flickers and fades and finally is gone." This is talking about the shift: The world does not disappear right away, but the way we look at it begins to change. What seemed large before was the world, the world of symbols, and what seemed trivial was the mind. In fact, the mind was so trivial we did not even know it existed. That begins to change, and what seemed to be so trivial and insignificant or nonexistent, the mind, slowly begins to assume a greater magnitude. We become aware that this is the source. This is why we are upset. This is why we are peaceful. What seemed to be so important and efficacious about everything we felt begins to shrink in importance because now we no longer confuse symbol and source. We now use the symbol as a way to get back to the source.

This poem obviously reflects that experience with the sisters, but it talks about this sudden shift, and it takes work to make it happen. That is the idea. We have to do the daily work of really looking at everything differently. And even though we may still feel angry, depressed, or excited by events or things, we do not justify the feelings, realizing that yes, this is what I am experiencing, but this is not the way it really is. We look at the problem as it is, which is the mind's decision to be an ego, and not the way we have set it up, which is shifting the problem from the mind to the world and giving the world causative power to make us happy or sad. We recognize that that power lies solely and always and only in our minds.

This poem, again, represents this shift. It ends with an Easter resurrection symbol because it was written down at Eastertime, but in the Course, resurrection has nothing to do with the biblical story. Resurrection is the awakening from the dream of death.

Transformation

It happens suddenly. There is a Voice
That speaks one Word, and everything is changed.

You understand an ancient parable
That seemed to be obscure. And yet it meant
Exactly what it said. The trivial
Enlarge in magnitude, while what seemed large
Resumes the littleness that is its due.
The dim grow bright, and what was bright before
Flickers and fades and finally is gone.
All things assume the role that was assigned
Before time was, in ancient harmony
That sings of Heaven in compelling tones
Which wipe away the doubting and the care
All other roles convey. For certainty
Must be of God.

It happens suddenly,
And all things change. The rhythm of the world
Shifts into concert. What was harsh before
And seemed to speak of death now sings of life,
And joins the chorus to eternity.
Eyes that were blind begin to see, and ears
Long deaf to melody begin to hear.
Into the sudden stillness is reborn
The ancient singing of creation's song,
Long silenced but remembered. By the tomb
The angel stands in shining hopefulness
To give salvation's message: "Be you free,
And stay not here. Go on to Galilee."

(*The Gifts of God*, p. 64)