

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

Greetings dear friends! Having been a teacher for many years, September puts me in mind of reflections on work and the convergence or divergence of making a living and composing a life—a distinctly middle-class conundrum that for so many people is subsumed under the pressing need to find any work at all much less with dignity and purpose. The questions change over one’s lifetime. Trying to discover one’s call flows into striving to accomplish great things, fulfill responsibilities, and perhaps transform the world. Immersing ourselves in work leads to the struggle to gracefully balance meeting the needs of daily life with the demands of a job. Along the way one wonders whether the work has meaning and how inner life flows into and sustains it. When one no longer has a job, is he or she still making a difference in the world? Wherever we are, as Wendell Berry says, “Good work is a way of living...it is unifying and healing...It defines us as we are; not too good to work with our bodies, but too good to work poorly or joylessly or selfishly or alone.”



Every one of us has a “good work” to do in life, which accomplishes something needed in the world while completing something in us. When it is finished a new work emerges which will help us to make green a desert place, as well as to scale another mountain in ourselves. The work we do in the world, when it is a true vocation, always corresponds in some mysterious way to the work that goes on within us.

~ from CRY PAIN, CRY HOPE by Elizabeth O’Connor

Let the beauty we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

~ Jalal Al-din Rumi

The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

If we just worry about the big picture, we are powerless. So my secret is to start right away doing whatever little work I can do. I try to give joy to one person in the morning, and remove the suffering of one person in the afternoon. If you and your friends do not despise the small work, a million people will remove a lot of suffering.

~Sister Chan Khong, Vietnamese nun and peace activist



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So much of workaholicism is trying to do it all on our own and not inviting or allowing the Higher Force to come in and relieve some of the tension.
~ Judith Oloff

Quilt by Linda DeGraf © 2006



Many a humble soul will be amazed to find that the seed it sowed in weakness, in the dust of daily life, has blossomed into immortal flowers under the eye of love.

~ Harriet Beecher Stowe

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I used to think that the goal of life is to do equally well in the spheres of work and love. Now I know there is only one sphere. What matters is the way I treat everyone I encounter in the course of my days: my wife, my child, a friend, a colleague, a secretary, a textbook salesperson, a complaining student. What's important is to treat each one with courtesy, with respect...with love...We're all connected in a web of love.

~from LOVE AND WORK
by Michael Robertson

We are here to do.
And through doing to learn;
and through learning to know;
and through knowing to experience wonder;
and through wonder to attain wisdom;
and through wisdom to find simplicity;
and through simplicity to give attention;
and through attention
to see what needs to be done.

~Ben Hei Hei

The outward work can never be small if the inward one is great, and the outward work can never be great if the inward is small or of little worth.

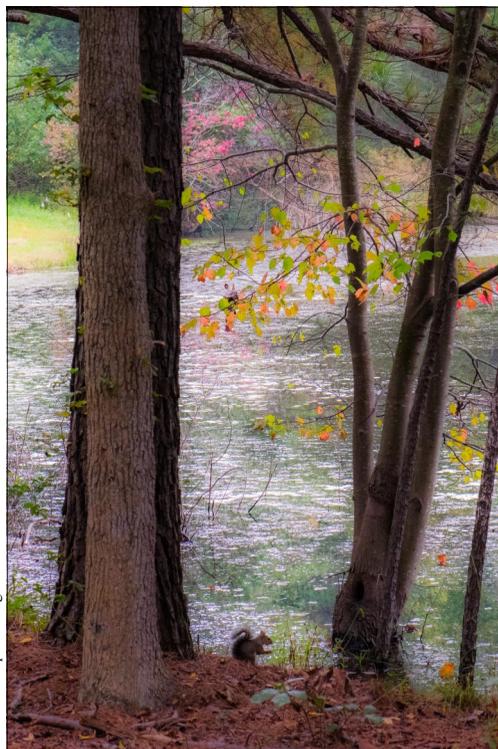
~Meister Eckhart

Sometimes in the busy world one develops what we call the illness of being two-hearted....It is where you want to do and have the ability to do but you don't do, and you argue with yourself about it. Good to be of one mind, one heart, and to see the ifs, ands, buts, and possibilities only as thoughts, without attachment, keeping clear your goal of being all that you can be, understanding the Mystery, seeing the truth as it is. To see the essence of what is, to perceive the harmony and live it, is to accomplish the "good life."

~from VOICES OF OUR ANCESTORS
by Dhyani Ywahoo

The oaks of 1910 were now ten years old and taller than either of us. It was such an impressive sight that I was struck dumb, and, as he never spoke, we spent the whole day in silence walking through his forest. When I reminded myself that all this was the work of the hand and soul of this one man, with no mechanical help, it seemed to me that after all we might be as effective as God in tasks other than destruction.

~ from THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES
by Jean Giono



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Squirrels can teach us balance within the circle of gathering and giving out. . . As masters of preparing, they also are reminders that in our quest for our goals, we do well to make time to socialize and play. Work and play go hand in hand, or the work will create problems and become more difficult and less fruitful.

~ from ANIMAL-SPEAK by Ted Andrews



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In an essay on the origin of civilization in traditional cultures, A.K. Coomaraswamy wrote that "the principle of justice is the same throughout: that each member of the community should perform the task for which he or she is fitted by nature." The two ideas, justice and vocation, are inseparable. It is by way of the principle and practice of vocation that sanctity and reverence enter into human economy. It was thus possible for traditional cultures to conceive that "to work is to pray."

~from IN THE PRESENCE OF FEAR by Wendell Berry

Quiet helps us find what we are passionate about. In that quiet, ask what it is you should be doing. Service is spiritual work or, to some, work of reverence. First, you have to uncover what it is you have a reverence for...what it is you love. It may not look like something that is grand or very important, but if you can do a good thing, a small thing on a regular basis, and keep going, it will shine a light. It will draw other light to you.

~from QUAKER HEALERS by John Calvi

The place God calls you
to is the place where your
deep gladness and the
world's deep hunger meet.

~Frederick Buechner

If personal transformation is global transformation, then each of us in our best creative moments, transforms the whole of humanity...Wealth, success, fame: none of these matter if your heart is not dancing and celebrating each moment of your life.

~from GOING TOWARD THE LIGHT
by Paulette Honeygosky

I think that those who serve most potently, work on levels of consciousness that have to do with radiating love – maybe God's love... It is important that you have a brain and use it, but that is secondary. The basic premise is that you allow something to come through you. Then you use your intelligence to give your heart's work discipline and logic. But the transformative energy, that which can change events, that heals, that helps, that serves, comes from somewhere deep inside.

~ Julie Glover in "Heron Dance"