

Friends of Silence

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

Dear friends ~ Spring is the time for throwing open the windows, shaking out the rugs, clearing out the dust and grime of a long winter spent largely indoors. Many of us strive to organize, de-clutter, and downsize in an attempt to simplify our lives and perhaps to stem the pervasive onslaught of consumerism and acquisition. It is in the bitterest cold of winter, when the forecasters predict single-digit temperatures, that my husband chooses to sleep outside with naught but a sleeping bag between him and the elements. Why? To see the stars, to feel alive, to remember who he is and listen to the heartbeat of the world.

After all these years I can still remember a dream I had in my youth—in cream-colored rooms of smoothly curving walls a zephyr wind blew away bags full of stuff like tumbleweeds, leaving behind blessed space pregnant with luminous blue, the lightness of being, utter stillness, and a deeply profound sense of wonder. When does too much comfort lull us into forgetting what our true needs are? What is the interplay between slowing down, living more simply, and care of the soul?



It came to me while reflecting on that woodland encounter with the night that there are two very valuable spiritual gifts that simplicity gives to us. It seems the more we can strip our lives down to essentials, the more deliberately and awake we can live; with few wants and more time for silence and contemplation, the more we have access to our inner resources. The more lightly we walk on this earth, the more she gives to us. I call these spiritual gifts inner smiling and outgoingness of the heart.

~from ADVENTURES IN SIMPLE LIVING by Rich Heffern

Still—in a way—nobody sees a flower, really. It is so small—we haven't time—and to see takes time. Like to have a friend takes time.

~over “Red Poppy” by Georgia O’Keefe

Voluntary simplicity involves both inner and outer condition. It means singleness of purpose, sincerity and honesty within, as well as avoidance of exterior clutter, of many possessions irrelevant to the purpose of life. It means an ordering and guiding of our energy and our desires, a partial restraint in some directions in order to secure greater abundance of life in other directions. It involves a deliberate organization of life for a purpose.

~ Richard Gregg in VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY by Duane Elgin



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I am simpler and more human in a setting where simplicity and the sacred human gesture are norms rather than

exceptions.

~ Dennis Leder in “Presence,” Vol. 1,

No. 2, May, 1995



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NOMADS

nomads, natives, wanderers
 carriers of life's precious elements
 they know what holds value
 the earth, the sky, people, fish, animals, plants, insects
 all that God created is good but man is not complete
 we accumulate things, build things, save things
 what a load to carry on your life's journey
 we are bent and slowed by the weight
 let go of the things
 learn from the wanderers
 the diamonds and pearls will now be there for you to see

~ Bernie Siegel, MD

Each age has its own tasks. For most of us now, our monasteries have no walls except the silence our meditation gathers to the center of our lives, and this is enough—it is more than enough. Our hermitage is the act of living with attention in the midst of things; amid the rhythms of work and love, the bath with the child, the endlessly growing paperwork, the ever-present likelihood of war, the necessity for taking action to help the world. For us, a good spiritual life is permeable and robust. It faces things squarely knowing the smallest moments are all we have, and that even the smallest moment is full of happiness.

~ from the *LIGHT INSIDE THE DARK* by John Tarrant, as reprinted in *AN ALMANAC FOR THE SOUL* by Marv and Nancy Hiles

I thought about the perfection of the morning, tried to name what it is about the morning that is different from the rest of the day. Is it the stillness? And, I thought, often on Sundays there is an all-day silence, or on rainy days or during off seasons; whatever this perfection might be, it's more than the absence of noises made by humans and their machines... In the purity of the morning, I understand how much more there is to the world than meets the eye...

~from *THE PERFECTION OF THE MORNING; AN APPRENTICESHIP IN NATURE* by Sharon Butala

Opening the heart, clearing the mind:
 the experience of sacred emptiness.

~ Common Boundary

The spirit, by its very nature, is Slow. No matter how hard you try, you cannot accelerate enlightenment. Every religion teaches the need to slow down in order to connect with the self, with others and with a higher force. In Psalm 46, the Bible says: "Be still then, and know that I am God."

~ Carl Honoré in *IN PRAISE OF SLOWNESS*

Let the soul banish all that disturbs; and let the body that envelops it be still, and all the fretting of the body, and all that surrounds it; let earth and sea and air be still; and heaven itself. And then feel the Spirit streaming, pouring, rushing into you from all sides, while you are quiet in this Peace.

~ Plotinus, AD 205

The spiritual function of fierce terrain...is to bring us to the end of ourselves, to the abandonment of language and the relinquishment of ego. A vast expanse of jagged stone, desert sand, and towering thunderheads has a way of challenging all the mental constructs in which we are tempted to take comfort and pride, thinking we have captured the divine. The things that ignore us save us in the end.

~Belden Lane in *THE SOLACE OF FIERCE LANDSCAPES*



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As | grew older the things | cared
 about grew fewer, but were more
 important. So one day | undid the lock
 and called the trash man. He took
 everything.

| felt like the little donkey when
 his burden is finally lifted. Things!
 Burn them, burn them! Make a beautiful
 fire! More room in your heart for love,
 for the trees! For the birds who own
 nothing—the reason they can fly.

~ excerpt from the poem "Storage" by Mary Oliver