

Friends of Silence

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



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Dear Friends ~ American culture tends to prize maximum choice with minimum limitations and, especially in this season, urges us to want more—not less. We tie ourselves in knots stressing over constraints of time and chafe at the notion that others may impinge on our space or have more resources. It seems to be human nature that however much space or time expands, we keep filling it and still feel cramped.

Perhaps we could contemplate cultivating alternate perspectives. Freedom and structure are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In some ways, having or expecting to have unlimited choices is an unearned “entitlement” of the privileged few. Could being grateful and attentive to what we have help us to be fully present in the time we are in and actively inhabit the space where we live? Sue Bender, in *PLAIN AND SIMPLE*, ponders the metaphor of patchwork quilting to understand how to make sense of the rhythms of our lives. She suggests that we can use the patches we have been given to create a pattern of meaning and beauty.

So, likewise, here is a gift of some little patches of reflection for whatever you may make of them...



We did not ask for this room or this music; we were invited in. Therefore, because the dark surrounds us, let us turn our faces toward the light. Let us endure hardship to be grateful for plenty... We did not ask for this room or this music. But because we are here, let us dance.

*~ Stephen King and Bridget Carpenter
in a poem from 11.22.63*

Busyness is not a reason for not getting other things done. It is an excuse for not claiming your true priorities.

~ Alan Cohen

Thou hast given so much to me,
Give me one thing more ~ a grateful heart;
Not thankful when it pleaseth me,
As if Thy blessings had spare days;
But such a heart whose pulse may be
Thy praise.

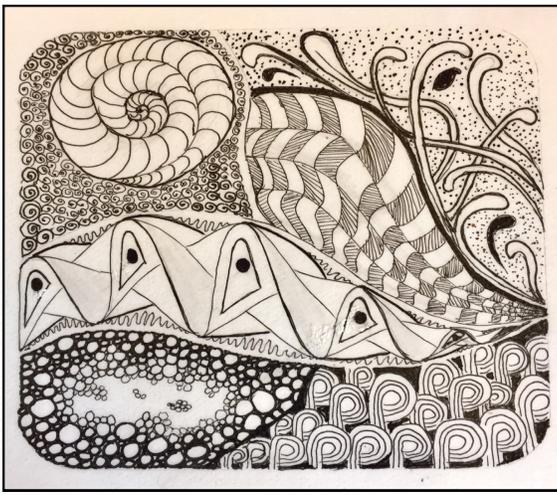
~ George Herbert

Our world is so full of conditions — demands, requirements, and obligations that we often wonder what is expected of us. But when we meet a truly free person [a truly giving person] there are no expectations, only an invitation to reach into ourselves and discover there our own freedom.

*-- from Bread for the Journey by Henri Nouwen,
as quoted in “Thin Places” Sept/Oct/Nov 2010*



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We look with uncertainty
 Beyond the old choices for
 Clear-cut answers
 To a softer, more permeable aliveness
 Which is every moment
 At the brink of death;
 For something new is being born in us
 If we but let it.

We stand at a new doorway,
 Awaiting that which comes...
 Daring to be human creatures,
 Vulnerable to the beauty of existence.
 Learning to love.

~ Anne Hillman

The circumstances of our lives are another medium of God's communication with us. God opens some doors and closes others.... Through the wisdom of our bodies, God tells us to slow down or reorder our priorities. The happy coincidences and frustrating impasses of daily life are laden with messages. Patient listening and the grace of the Spirit are the decoding devices of prayer. It is a good habit to ask, What is God saying to me in this situation? Listening to our lives is part of prayer.

~ Marjorie J. Thompson, from *SOUL FEAST*

Traveling light—imagine this meaning: unencumbered journeying, a graceful way of traveling through life like a single leaf. Now imagine another: the light by which we journey, the light that shows the way. Our traveling light...

What would it mean to live like a single leaf? What would it mean to make one's life a journey of simplicity? a journey unencumbered, uncluttered, without distraction—a journey of focus and intention? a journey of lightness and light?...

We take delight in things; we take delight in being loosed from things. Between these two delights, we must dance our lives.

~ from *JOURNEYS OF SIMPLICITY: TRAVELING LIGHT* by Philip Harden

When you let go of trying to get more of what you don't really need, it frees up oceans of energy to make a difference with what you have. When you make a difference with what you have, it expands. ~ Lynne Twist

...I have another choice—to accept what I didn't get to choose...what I finally get to choose is that tiny space between all the givens. In that tiny space is freedom...

Having limits, subtracting distractions, making a commitment to do what you do well, brings a new kind of intensity...

Before I went to the Amish, I thought that the more choices I had, the luckier I'd be. But there is a big difference between having many choices and making a choice. Making a choice—declaring what is essential—creates a

framework for a life that eliminates many choices but gives meaning to the things that remain.

Satisfaction comes from giving up wishing I was somewhere else or doing something else.

~ from *PLAIN AND SIMPLE: A WOMAN'S JOURNEY TO THE AMISH* by Sue Bender

I think over again my small adventures
 my fears
 those small ones that seemed so big

For all the vital things
 I had to get and to reach

And yet there is only one great thing
 the only thing

To live to see the great day that dawns
 and the light that fills the world.

~ Old Inuit Song

