

# Friends of Silence

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

Dear Friends ~ One of my college class assignments decades ago was to read a book called COME LET US PLAY GOD. Citing a myriad of scientific, technological, and medical breakthroughs of the time, it essentially raised the ethical questions and implications posed by our ever-advancing human capabilities. I remember at the time thinking that the human species has made breathtaking strides in intellectual development without the commensurate emotional or moral development. We make decisions and choose actions all the time because we *can* without thought for asking whether we *should*. In the midst of this skewed and ethically underdeveloped brew, our culture seems to have set aside values like honesty, integrity, generosity, kindness and civility. We don't hold public institutions and corporations and leaders to a higher moral standard. When I was growing up, my mother used to say all the time—in the context of answering requests or making decisions, “it will build your character.” Nowadays it seems that character as a benchmark has been replaced by power, hubris, and “productivity.” In a recent conversation with families raising young children, one mom was struggling with how to help kids understand what's going on without letting all the ugliness, greed, corruption, and violence permeating the world overwhelm them. She said, “I think I will start with models of kindness.” I think that's about right—we have to build character and give children the tools they need for resilience in the face of an increasingly complex and degenerating world. We have to find our own moral compass and awaken the strength and empowerment to use it.



One cool judgment is worth a thousand hasty counsels. The thing to do is supply light, not heat.

~ Woodrow Wilson

...in our culture, it has been aptly observed, “we are never as kind as we want to be, but nothing outrages us more than people being unkind to us.” In his stirring Syracuse commencement address, George Saunders confessed with unsentimental ruefulness: “What I regret most in my life are failures of kindness.” I doubt any decent person, upon candid reflection, would rank any other species of regret higher. To be

human is to leap toward our highest moral potentialities, only to trip over the foibled actualities of our reflexive patterns. To be a good human is to keep leaping anyway.

~ Maria Popova in the *brainpickings.org* newsletter— “Leo Tolstoy on Kindness and the Measure of Love”

Then there is the listening at the gates of the heart which has been closed for so long, and waiting for that mysterious inner voice to speak. When we hear it, we know it is the Truth to which we must now surrender our lives.

~ Beth Ferris



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We have a long, long way to go. So let us hasten along the road, the road of human tenderness and generosity. Groping, we may find one another's hands in the dark.

~ Emily Greene Balch

“Under conditions of terror,” Hannah Arendt wrote in her classic treatise on the normalization of evil, “most people will comply but some people will not...No more is required, and no more can reasonably be asked, for this planet to remain a place fit for human habitation.” Under such conditions, counting ourselves among the few who refuse to comply has less to do with whether we believe ourselves to be good than it does with the deliberate protections we must place between unrelenting evil and our own sanity and goodness, for among the most insidious aspects of tyrannical regimes is the Stockholm syndrome of the psyche they inflict upon us — upon ordinary people, not-evil people, people who consider themselves decent and good, but who slowly, through a cascade of countless small concessions, lose sight of the North Star of their native moral compass.

~ Maria Popova in the *brainpickings.org* newsletter — “Against the Slippery Slope of Evil”



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Rather than relying on a thin, idealized hope that we will all one day just get along, we can approach conflict resolution as an art form that we are privileged to develop and hone.

~ Diane Musho Hamilton

The fundamental problem, I believe, is that at every level we are giving too much attention to the external, material aspects of life while neglecting moral ethics and inner values...I call for each of us to come to our own understanding of the importance of inner values. For it is these inner values which are the source of both an ethically harmonious world and the individual peace of mind, confidence, and

happiness we all seek. Of course, all the world’s major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness, can and do promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. This is why I believe the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics that is beyond religion.

~ from *BEYOND RELIGION: ETHICS FOR A WHOLE WORLD* by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

People get blocked by living: hurrying and consuming things of no value thinking this is life. Real life is from a point within that radiates out to the world, a point within filled with serenity and assurance that we are loved, that we have a role to play in this world...This is the center of the real self, the best place to be. If you can live from this place, you will be Love’s messenger.

~ from *INDIGO CHILDREN* by Peggy Fay and Susan Gale

Truthfulness, honor, is not something which springs ablaze of itself, it has to be created between people.

~ Adrienne Rich

Blessed are those ears  
Which hear the secret  
Whisperings of Jesus,  
And give no heed to the  
Deceitful whisperings of this world,  
And  
Blessed are the good  
Plain ears which heed  
Not outward speech but  
What God speaks and  
Teaches inwardly in the soul.

~ Thomas a Kempis, *THE IMITATION OF CHRIST*

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

~ Albert Schweitzer



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