



The Still, Voice Small

Judith Pennington

WIND CHIMES

I heard a story recently that strengthened my trust in humankind. A young woman in her late twenties, after giving birth to her first child, was in the hospital awaiting the proud father, who was out of town. Instead there came a note from him asking for a divorce.

The woman was confused and heartbroken; they had been married for only a year and a half. But worse was to come: three months later, her little daughter stopped breathing and died. It was only with tremendous effort and force of will that the woman kept herself alive. Over and over she remembered that just before her baby's last breath, the wind chimes in the room suddenly crashed to the floor. Somehow this memory brought comfort. Deciding to travel, she packed the wind chimes safely in her carry-on luggage, but at the security checkpoint was informed that her wind chimes would be confiscated.

The young woman wept and begged for mercy, brokenly telling her story. The security official, overcome with compassion, put her arms around the mother and cried with her. The long line of people waiting to get on their airplanes stood patiently until the young woman walked away carrying her wind chimes, leaving everyone in that place, on that day, a better person than before.

It is clear to us, in hearing this story, that hands reaching out to one another can cross any barrier and tear down any wall. Just when life looks darkest and fear overcomes us, grace appears and reappears until our hearts open to let in the light which heals and sets us free. We find that this light was inside us all along, and not just in you and me, but in every single person on this planet.

There is a wonderful quote by Sir Francis Bacon, the Renaissance author, courtier and father of deductive reasoning. "If a man be gracious to strangers," Bacon wrote, "it shows that he is a citizen of the world, and his heart is no island cut off from other islands, but a continent that joins them." We do well to remember this today, when so much of the world is separated by prejudice and judgment that desensitize us to killing and war.

Given our boundaries and separation, how do we respond to the clarion call of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter"?

If we are afraid to rustle wind chimes or embrace someone in pain, what hope is there for us as a civilization? If we do not overcome our fears and speak the words of our hearts, then who else will? And when?

Socrates said that, "When anyone has offended me, I try to raise my soul so high that the offense cannot reach it." But did he mean for us to retire to an ivory castle in the sky and leave others to clean up our world? I doubt it, since all great spirits call us to

unconditional love, which in no way hides but shines out like a lighthouse beacon, just like the checkpoint woman whose loving kindness uplifted the entire world in that moment and still now.

When someone insults or hurts us and we do not retaliate, an exquisitely beautiful thing happens. In the hush of love, time stands still and in that transcendent moment grace whispers to us like a gentle wind. It comes to say that we are not alone, that we have never been alone. In the joy of this knowing, we expand into the open perspectives that enable us to view the world from different angles. We solve our problems, create beauty and blossom our lives, breaking through contradictions and differences to common ground and our common destiny as Light.

Victor Hugo, the 19th century poet and novelist, wrote, "The greatest happiness in life is the conviction that we are loved—loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves." This, of course, is our common ground. No matter how far any one of us veers away from unconditional love, it is all that we really want and the only thing we need.

"The fragrance always remains," said Gandhi, "on the hand that gives the rose."

*(Judith Pennington is a writer, singer and coast-to-coast teacher of the art of meditation and the science of consciousness. Visit www.eaglelife.com to read excerpts from her book, *The Voice of the Soul*, and sign up for her free e-newsletter, *TheStillSmallVoice.org*, and online magazine, *OneWorldSpirit.org*.)*

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