

Daily Meditation 09/07/2021
Anger and the Prophet, Outrage and Effective Action

Good morning.

In today's essay and meditation we're dealing with the subject of anger and outrage. And our anger is a positive thing, if we don't let it run us but we learn to manage it. And I point out that prophets are in touch with their anger; that's what prophets do, as I say, they lasso their anger and put it to good use.

So for example, Gandhi. I think of Gandhi and his people. It's not just about an individual being angry, but about a community. Gandhi and his people were pretty angry at the British empire for the way they had treated India. And he did not respond with guns, but he responded with deliberate non-violent action, including filling jails, but also marching to the sea, and also getting back their industry of weaving, and really bringing back the spinning wheel as a symbol, a metaphor, a symbol -- prophets deal in symbols because people at our gut level deal in symbols.

And so what Gandhi was doing was preventing a warlike response to the British which could have been extremely deadly and which they would probably have lost, because the British empire at that time had much more intense weapons than did the Indians.

So that's how important imagination is, and creativity is, to move beyond a stalemate and to bring an effective response to injustice.

And this is what prophets do. Jeremiah took off all his clothes! He was a streaker, ran around the walled city to call people's attention: What's going on? Who is this guy? What's he got to say? What's he so pissed off about?

Dr King, of course, followed in the footsteps of Gandhi and did something very similar. He filled the jails deliberately, and smartly worked television, black and white television in his day, with the civil rights struggle by marching and by bringing out the hate of the segregationists and their deputized police with their dogs and their fire hoses and all the rest. When it got on TV that human beings were treating other human beings like this, that finally shifted the consciousness of America as a whole. A brilliant non-violent but creative investment of their anger.

So that's what you do with moral outrage and anger: you don't sit on it and you don't just scream and vent in public. You may have to do that in private for a little bit, but you invest it through creativity imagination and organizing. And that is the best solution if you will, the best use of our moral outrage and anger.

And obviously another fine example would be Nelson Mandela. He and his people had plenty to be angry about after decades of apartheid, but so wisely, after he's released from jail, he steered the country into reconciliation. Not into covering up the crimes, but making it public, without vengeance as his bottom line but rather getting the truth out.

And that too was a fine investment not only of his personal outrage and anger but of his people's anger, making it work towards something effective.

Thank you, we'll see you tomorrow.