

Daily Meditation 12/27/2021

Archbishop Tutu, a Real Man, Christian, and Human Being

Morning.

Our meditation this morning follows on the death of Archbishop Tutu of South Africa, an Anglican bishop there, which occurred today, December 26th.

He was a real fighter in the anti-apartheid movement and a real reconciler when that movement finally collapsed, working on creating a new constitution, and on the project of reconciliation and forgiveness.

So, he really was a religious leader who walked his talk, had a profound spirituality that included humor, as well as recognition of the shadow side of human nature and human endeavors--both personal and, of course, social.

So, he really was one of the great souls and great heroes of our time. And his passing is an important event surely.

Now I mentioned in the essay how one of his positions he took, ethical and moral, was about supporting the gay and lesbian population. And in fact, the new constitution of South Africa is the first one in the world that explicitly states the rights of gays and lesbian people. And that, to me, is just an example of how constitutions evolve, or should evolve.

So many of America's problems are based on a constitution written well over 200 years ago, that presumed slavery is a normal thing, since most of the signers of the Constitution were slave owners. And I think one reason America is very slowly receding from the scene of democracy today is that we are operating out of a constitution that's well over 200 years old, written in the time of slavery. And you think we'd be able to do something about that, but politics being what it is, and judicial systems being what they are, there seems to be very little hope for that.

I love his statement, Bishop Tutu, "If you're neutral in situations of injustice," if you are neutral in situations of injustice, "you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

That neutrality is not a virtue all the time. There may be occasions where it is, but not in the face of injustice. And there is a movement today--I even heard someone's response recently to one of these daily meditations. "Oh, we shouldn't talk about good and evil. You shouldn't. Everything's all one thing."

No, it's not. There's a room for non-dualism, for sure. Written multiple books on the mystics and the mystical experience. But there's also room for using our critical minds.

The Buddhists have a wonderful phrase for this, and we should all memorize it. It's two words: idiot compassion. Idiot compassion. There's such a thing as idiot compassion.

There's a lot floating around today in so-called spiritual circles which are not spiritual at all, because they don't know the difference or care, apparently, about the difference between justice and injustice.

And non-dualism, which I think I know something about--I've written about so many mystics, I tried to live it myself. Non-dualism does not mean that you don't use your critical faculties: There's not a difference between nighttime and daytime, between the moon and the sun, between the chromosomes of a female and the chromosomes of a male.

People should get that straight. There is such a thing as idiot compassion. And people like Archbishop Tutu, who put his life on the line more than once, is marvelous proof of that.

Of course, Jesus is, too. He turned over money lenders' tables in the temple for a reason! And pissed off a lot of people in high, high places--religious and the government of the Roman Empire--and he paid a price for it. So yeah, there are reasons to lay down your life, as Jesus said, for love--love based on justice.

And just this one stand that Tutu took about gays and lesbians is so powerful because Africa has been infiltrated by crazy Western religious ideas that somehow the gay people that God creates are all going to hell or something crazy like that. This is not really the African tradition. I've spoken to real African scholars who tell me that, in fact, there's a tradition of many spiritual leaders being gay and lesbian.

So, Archbishop Tutu took a very unpopular stance in Africa, by coming out so strongly in favor of homosexuals. And, of course, he took on an unpopular stance in South Africa by standing up against apartheid. And he took on an unpopular stance in American politics by standing against the Iraq War, and by standing in favor of fairness to both Palestinians and Jews in Palestine and Israel.

So, this is a great man. And we should acknowledge his presence among us still. He's an ancestor, and we can call on him for his kind of courage, his kind of vision, and his kind of compassion, which includes justice, and has nothing to do with idiot compassion.

Thank you, Buddhists, for giving us that phrase.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.