

Daily Meditation 04-12-23

Beyond Evil?

Good morning.

This morning we're talking about evil. And it seems to be very much in the news these days, as it is most of the time, with headlines about war and malfeasance and so forth, certainly tending to dominate the media.

And of course, this is one reason we like to balance such news with better news, with feast days these religious traditions share with us on a regular basis. This month alone, we've had Ramadan, we have Passover, we have Easter.

And of course, they are about taming human decision-making, steer it in directions that are more beautiful, holy, and useful for humanity, and that stand up to the evil that is present within us and around us.

But the news is, there's also the sacred present within us and around us. There's Jesus' teaching: "The kingdom and queendom of God is among you, is within you."

I cite Rabbi Heschel in today's meditation at the end. And I think it is a powerful statement of his.

He also says this, he says, "The opposite of good is not evil. It is indifference. Indifference to evil is worse than evil itself."

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So I like to talk about how the opposite of evil is not good, that it is the sacred. But here we have another statement on the same topic. And it's an important topic, worthy of many angles and many opinions on it: that the opposite of good is indifference. Cold heart, not caring, being preoccupied with our agendas and not enough with the bigger picture, the forces, the milieu, the context. And that is what is kind of scary about our time: the context and the milieu seems to be getting deeper in its mistakenness.

That indifference to evil is worse than evil itself -- that's a very strong statement. But again, it's not unlike Dante saying that the bottom ring in Hell is not fire. The bottom ring in Hell is ice. That an icy heart, icy consciousness, icy culture that does not respond to injustice and to evil, is extremely dangerous.

So all of us and all of our religions and all those who do not participate in religion-- nevertheless, it's common to all humanity to ask these questions about how do we stand up to evil.

And one thing we have to do is acknowledge its presence and not go into denial about that shadow side of nature and of history and of culture that presents itself to us every day and requires that we respond.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.