

## *Deep Healing*

### **Bill:**

We are calling this time today “Deep Healing.”

We have been led into it for a variety of reasons:

For one thing, almost the first thing one encounters in any effort to construct a narrative of Jesus involves the fact that he was a healer. There are many healing stories connected with him.

For another, each of us carries her or his own wounds that are in need of healing.

And, further, our country, our world, the planet is in need of healing.

We have, both individually and collectively, developed a multitude of ways to self-soothe; many of these ways have become addictions. We need healing from these.

One of the marks of someone with a truly evolved consciousness is a reverence for life. Almost anywhere you look, it is clear that this reverence for life is lacking. We need the deep healing that would speak to this.

Again, remember that in spiritual teaching repetition is not redundant, I gently remind you that, for us, moving into and living in the Sacred Stream involves:

increasing our knowledge and information, as well as wisdom and understanding about Jesus and his teachings growing in our self-understanding; and,

knowingly participating in the evolutionary stream we are immersed in. (I'm so glad the Marjorie Webster folks have said a sentence is not something you can end a preposition with.)

### **Holly:**

To set this stage, I want to distinguish between transformation and transmutation, between “learning” and “knowing” and apply it to our understanding of deep healing. Some of what I'm about to say comes from this book: *The Unfolding Self*.

Healing requires some sort of change or transition from one state to another; it follows a basic pattern indicated by an ending, followed by a neutral or “in between” zone, and finally a new beginning. Notice the cyclical nature. The in-between zone is often the most unmooring and confusing - it is where pain arises because we come face to face with the fact that things are changing. At each stage of change we acquire new understandings and capacities. The butterfly, for example, absorbs and retains the experience of the caterpillar, but in its

butterfly state it can fly. I don't know if the caterpillar ever imagine itself as a butterfly, but it possesses the *possibility*. The change the caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly is a physical transformation. The absorption of the caterpillar into the butterfly is a transmutation because it undergoes both psychological and physical changes. It experiences itself in a new way that the caterpillar is simply not capable of because it has not been *through* something.

Many philosophers, spiritual thinkers, and even scientists believe humans are on the cusp of an evolutionary phase that involves changes in consciousness rather than form. This is where we distinguish between transformation and transmutation as it pertains to deep healing. Transformation is an awakening of the mind. We learn something, have an experience that causes us to rethink what we thought we knew, which results in heightened awareness. In this state we are aware of a multiplicity of emotions. We are aware of changes happening in the mind, body, and soul. Perhaps this is what its like to be in the cocoon, when the caterpillar becomes a pile of ooze aptly named "imaginal cells." Transformation may happen quite suddenly, as a result of a singular experience - sometimes a very tragic one. We are transformed by the loss of a loved one, but exactly how it changes us may not be revealed for some time.

Transmutation incorporates both a physical and spiritual change. It references an alchemical shift in which we experience "aliveness" to a wholly different degree. We can't go back to the

state before because - to use a biblical analogy - the scales are removed from our eyes. We see differently and can't go back to the previous way of seeing. It awakens the capacity to hold both ordinary and non-ordinary realities.

It is possible to experience transformation without transmutation. One is irreversibly changed when confronted by the imminence of death if diagnosed with an incurable illness. This could lead to deepening awareness and self-examination or it could facilitate plunging into fear, resignation, denial, or depression. I absolutely do not want to communicate that transmutation and deep healing is easy. We've been sold a false idea that it is somehow quick or linear or inevitable. We even have drinks promising happiness in a can. A huge aspect of deep healing is developing presence and acceptance of all that arises. *It all belongs*. Bill and I were talking about this the other day, and I'll borrow from that conversation here: healing requires patience and endurance. Thankfully we have wisdom stories to draw upon.

### **Bill:**

If you take away the parables of Jesus birth, which were stories created much later than the first narrative we have of the life of Jesus, the writing we call Mark, the Jesus narrative starts with John the Baptist and Jesus going to John. As I said last week, nobody really knows what happened or how long this period of time was. We do know that John's preaching upset

Herod who had John put in prison. Some of this information is attested to in writings not included in the collection of Christian Scriptures. It seems to be after the the time of John's imprisonment that Jesus began what is called his "public ministry." The story of Jesus spending forty days in the wilderness is only in Matthew and was, I believe, created to show how Jesus was like Moses.

The first thing that happens in the narrative is that as Jesus goes about giving the news of how everyone is a child of God just as he is, he begins to call people to follow him. There were people who chose to follow Jesus on their own. But Jesus called disciples whom he later charged with being apostles. A disciple is someone who follows a teacher. An apostle is someone empowered to represent the teacher to others.

The fact that Jesus called men from their families, especially their fathers, and that they followed him is an important point we'll return to later.

Jesus goes out of his way to go into the Jewish religious establishment to announce his "good news." He was not a part of the religious establishment but he crossed those boundaries. Boundary crossing and barrier breaking are two hallmarks of Jesus' ministry.

In the culture at that time the religious establishment controlled who was in and who was out. In a society where the

most important aspect of both identity and well being was belonging, it was the religious establishment who determined whether one belonged or didn't. If you were sick or infirm in any way or for any reason, you were considered to be unfit to "belong" until the religious establishment said you were "okay." There was a multitude of ways to be considered "unclean" or "unfit" to belong.

Jesus does a healing, Peter's mother-in-law, that gets a lot of attention. Then, this is Mitchell's translation, "that evening, they brought to him everyone who was sick or insane, and the whole village was gathered at the door, and he healed many people."

We'll stop the narrative here.

There are many points that could be made here. Among them -

From the beginning Jesus was a trouble maker.

The way that he made trouble, established his reputation or got a following was by healing.

**Holly:**

One of the reasons the Jesus healing stories are so powerful is because they are about more than just providing a cure for an

ailing body. They are about restoring a person to their true selves and integrating them back into a community. The etymology of the word “heal” is to make whole, sound, and well. Jesus is a “whole maker” - a concept that our atomistic western medical and psychological models do not exactly understand. It’s a concept our culture of individualism does not teach. We get stuck thinking that something is broken in us and needs fixing.

Let me say this clearly. There is nothing to fix here. Only to reclaim.

I also want to say there is no healing without pain. There is, however, pain that does not get healed because it remains untouched or unacknowledged. Pain is an indicator of unmet needs. It’s an opportunity to reframe the question from “what is wrong here?” to “what needs are asking to be fulfilled?” That’s a compassionate adjustment.

We live in a culture deeply uncomfortable with discomfort which impacts our ability to deeply heal. We live in a culture that is both formed and informed by unhealed pain. We are, in some sense, born into the inevitability of pain. I realize that sounds bleak...but I’d like to offer that because of this, we are also born into the possibility of healing...of recovering our wholeness.

I cannot name a single person who has not suffered to some degree. Even stages of development are recognized because of

the awareness of loss. One day recently my 6'2" 14 year old son bent down and hugged me. Totally overwhelmed by this man child against whose chest I can now lay my cheek, I said, "Oh my gosh. I used to hold you in my arms." A strange grief bubbled up in me - I could not remember the last day I held him, yet I can instantly recall the feel of his once tiny body seared into my own body's memory. I wasn't ready to have a last time - I wasn't ready for this grief - so right then and there I put his lanky frame on my back and carried him around the house. "There doesn't have to be a last time!" I said jubilantly, until my legs got wobbly, which took approximately 30 seconds. There will come a time when I cannot do this at all...there may come another time when I am so old and frail that he will carry me. Such is the nature of things.

I offer that story as a playful example of the inevitability of change and the big and little griefs it arouses. Jungian Psychologist Francis Weller says that our ability to feel grief is directly correlated with the depth of our love, and holy lord motherhood is chock full of grief. Many of us are programmed to resist change in part because we have no way to honor even the most normal ones. It is a kind of denial that perpetuates suffering. How do I honor this body that is aging and hurting in new ways and has given me so much inside of a culture that teaches me to deny aging?

It is not just change that causes pain, but traumas to our physical and psychic selves as well. In my previous work as a



school counselor and now in Spiritual Direction, I am consistently aware of how much pain people carry. It takes an enormous amount of courage to address it, but I think we are willing to crawl through the fires of hell because we are wired for wholeness, for healing.

I wish I could promise a straightforward journey directly related to how many times a day you complete x or y spiritual practice. The return to self - what we are calling deep healing - is a chosen road with many twists and turns and unmarked paths and occasional blocked roads. This is the picture i drew for a client the other day when asked how do I get through this? The path of healing is available to each and every one of us. Ideally, developing a practice deepens our presence to this fact.

**Bill:**

The way that we hear about healing, the healing Jesus did or our own; the way we experience healing, and the way we heal others is going to depend to a large degree on our level of awareness. Because knowing about this is, in my opinion, so critical important I want to remind us of three of the six in Jim Marion's cognitive development listing.

The "mythos consciousness" level is where probably eighty percent of the adult population in this country are. If a person is under fourteen, characters like the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus are as real as can be. Even though some people drop their belief

in these figures, they likely maintain a believe in a “sky god” or they project their need for guidance and protection onto some strong figure or institution.

People who are stuck at this level religiously see people of other religions as evil, as heretics, or merely as “wrong.”

Then there is “rational consciousness.” To get here requires both work and a willingness to die to the former world view. It can be difficult. Most, but not all, people who have graduated from some institution of higher education have gotten here. They are accused by people who have not made this journey of “living in ivory towers” and “not understanding the ‘real world.’”

By the way, people can attain rational consciousness in some areas and not in others. In my clinical training I ran into many doctors who were religious fundamentalists. There are people who have developed high levels of aptitudes in some demanding arena such as music or piloting aircraft, whose relational aptitudes are on a third grade level. Life and humans are complicated.

The level above the rational level is called “vision-logic consciousness. People at this level are comfortable referring to themselves as “citizens of the world.” They have traveled enough to know that “mother is not the only cook.” Vision logic people are aware, if they are Caucasian, living in the U.S. of

their inherent racism. It is only at the rational or mythic level that one would say, “Oh, I’m not a racist.” People at the vision-logic level are not uptight or judgmental about someone else’s race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, etc. Let’s say that they see and participate in the diversity that evolutionary cosmology is inviting us to participate in.

There are three levels, in Marion’s listing beyond this. The only thing I want to say about those now is that just as people at the mythic level would see what I am teaching as “heresy” of one sort or another, those of us at vision-logic level look at people at stages beyond us as being complete kooks.

(We can say more about this if we have the courage.)

**I can muster the courage. Can you? Maybe others will feel less alone if we do.**

**Holly:**

Gabor Maté, physician and pioneer of Compassionate Inquiry, names some of the the most common obstacles to deep healing at the personal level. Very often traumatic experiences are overlaid with: crippling guilt, self loathing, self rejection, self destruction, repression, and denial. Such obstacles form pathways in the brain that trick us into believing we are neither worthy nor capable of healing. We begin to believe that our pain means there is something wrong with us or that it is something

to get rid of. The pop singer Jewel wrote in her memoir: “My life has not been about fixing what is broken. It has been about engaging in a loving and tender archaeological dig back to my true self.”

What could it look like for you to be the chief archaeologist of your own life? Where the tools are not rock picks, shovels, and sieves, but compassion, curiosity, and acceptance? Approached this way deep healing is about discovery and revelation of treasures long buried. Remember the parable of God’s Kingdom being like a treasure hidden in a field? You are that treasure.

We often adopt the aforementioned mental obstacles at young ages in order to stay a part of the family system. Ironically, by blaming the self instead of seeing the system for what it is - imperfect and sometimes unaware - we create a little hope that if we can just fix ourselves, everything will be okay. An example of a long standing thought pattern that might form if you had a distant or distracted caregiver is for a child to think, “I am unloveable” because she isn’t yet able to understand, “My mom is in her own pain.” The unloveable narrative gets hardwired and instead of protective, it becomes a limiting belief. We are captured by it. Deep healing occurs when we can examine such beliefs and offer them compassion and gratitude, gradually transforming captivity into freedom.

I'll just mention one of my favorite sayings attributed to Jesus from the gospel of Thomas: If you bring forth what is within you, What you bring forth will save you; if you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you.

You know the story of Jonah being swallowed into the belly of the whale? It is a type of archaeological dig back to the self. Jonah is drowning, then he is swallowed for three days and three nights into a dark night of the soul. The number three references the same number of days it took Jesus to experience death and rebirth. After three days Jonah is unceremoniously vomited up onto the shore. Vomiting - however gross - is a kind of cleanse or purge and the shore is a place of continual transition and change. He experiences renewal and takes up his life's mission. He undergoes a transmutation, a softened heart toward himself and others. It is a story about deep healing. The point is not that it takes only three days - I wish that were true - but that it involves death and rebirth into a new layer of self. To heed this call is an extraordinary act of love.

**Bill:**

We will return to this matter of healing because it runs throughout the Jesus narrative.

We will return to this matter of healing because the goal of human becoming is wholeness and, according to many of the

earth's religious understandings, if we don't reach wholeness in this lifetime we return to continue the journey.

We will return to this matter of healing because the move of the evolutionary flow is toward "complexified wholeness." (I made that phrase up.)

No matter what you go this week, no matter what happens, remember this: You carry precious cargo. So, watch your step.