

December 2, 2018

When There Is No Room: Hope



Zaatari Refugee Camp, Jordan credit: Foreign Commonwealth Office

First Reading ~ Jeremiah 33:14-16

“The days are surely coming, says YHWH, when I will bestow upon Israel and Judah all the blessings I promised them. In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous branch from the line of David, who will bring justice and integrity to the land. In those days Judah will be safe and Jerusalem will be secure. They will call the land, ‘YHWH is our Justice.’”

Contemporary Reading

~ adapted from *Mystical Hope*, by Cynthia Bourgeault

Must we be whiplashed incessantly between joy and sorrow, expectation and disappointment? Is it not possible to live from a place of greater equilibrium, to find a deeper and steadier current?

The good news is that this deeper current does exist, and you actually *can* find it in hope that flows from the source. The journey to the source of hope is ultimately a *theological* journey, one up and over the mountain to the sources of hope in the headwaters of the Christian Mystery. This journey to the wellsprings of hope is not something that will change your life in the short term, in the externals. Rather, it is something that will change your innermost way of seeing. From there, inevitably, the externals will rearrange.

The journey to the wellsprings of hope is really a journey toward the center, toward the innermost ground of our being, where we meet and are met by God.

Deeper than our sense of separateness and isolation is another level of awareness in us, another whole way of knowing. Thomas Keating, in his teachings on centering prayer, calls this our “spiritual awareness” and contrasts it with the “ordinary awareness” of our usual, self-centered thinking. The simplest way of describing this other kind of awareness is that while the self-reflexive ego thinks by means of noting differences and drawing distinctions, spiritual awareness “thinks” by an innate perception of kinship, of belonging to the whole. The whole of humanity. The whole of God.

The only thing blocking the emergence of this whole and wondrous other way of knowing is your over-reliance on your ordinary thinking. If you can just turn that off for a while, then the other will begin to take shape in you, become a reality you can actually experience. And as it does, you will know . . . your absolute belonging and place in the heart of God, and that you are a part of this heart forever, and cannot possibly fall out of it, no matter what may happen.

In the contemplative journey, as we swim down into those deeper waters toward the wellsprings of hope, we begin to experience and trust what it means to lay down self, to let go of ordinary awareness, and surrender ourselves to the grace and mercy of God.

And as hope flows out from the center, filling us with the fullness of God’s own purpose living itself into action, then we will discover within ourselves the mysterious plenitude to live into action what our ordinary hearts and minds could not possibly sustain.