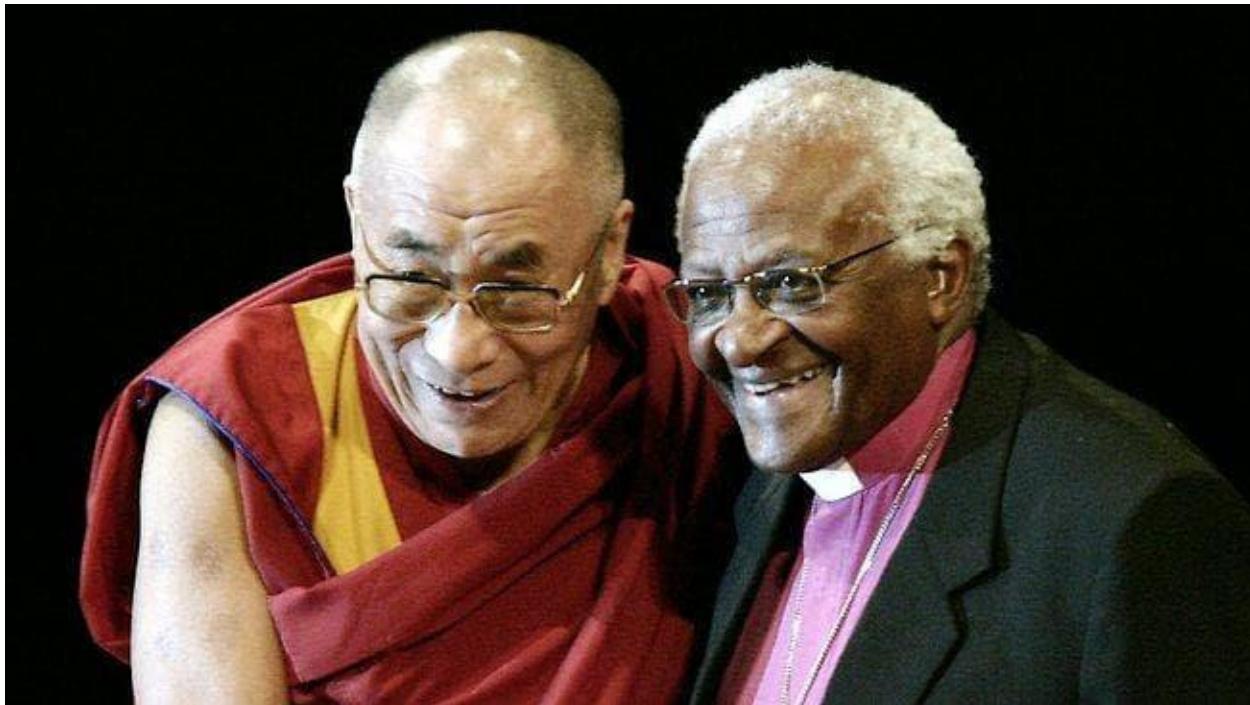


Two Kings

By Ned Abenroth, adapted from the Illuman of Washington January 2020 Newsletter



Two Kings
And what then shall matter in the end?
That we cared for our realms...
and the realms of others.

And who will we answer to?
God alone...The Friend, The Lover, The Mystery...
Found and voiced in everyone and everything.

And what shall our answer be?
Beauty in our Being
Beauty in our Leaving
Gratitude for Both

January 2020

Happy New Decade Brothers,

"There are years that ask questions, and years that answer." ~ Zora Neale Hurston

For better or worse (depending on where you stand), this will be a year of answers. Though none of us know what those answers will be, nor if we will like the results, the answers will come, nonetheless. It is a new year that will mark the United States for generations. It is a new decade that will mark our natural world for centuries.

As we step into it, painfully divided, one thing is clear. Victory of any political ideology that sustains the demonizing of the other side, is a loss for everyone. The US two-party political system is immensely binary, which is to say dualistic. There is a winner and a loser, and there seems no other way possible, especially in these troubled times.

One core hope I hold, is that whatever the outcome of this year's political elections, we in Illuman can embody a King energy that is desperately needed. A wise Sovereign seeks the good of all in the realm, transcending conversations that have degenerated and lifting their eye to a broader and longer horizon.

To seek the good of all, you must first seek and recognize the good in all. You practice the arts of honoring, not othering, of hospitality, not hostility. So I invite us all in this moment, ...yes actually this moment...this isn't a rhetorical device referring to some future moment...I invite you to breathe and bring to mind one person we know personally who is on the other side of us in the political debates of the day... Now ask yourself the following questions? What about the motives, beauty, dignity of this person can I affirm? What am I not seeing that they might teach me? Where is common ground for us? Where have I stopped being curious and started projecting? What emotions in me are coming up as I sit with them? AND What boundaries must I set to protect myself and others in the midst of conversations of disagreement?

This last one is especially crucial. A King is not naive. The King always is aware of the stakes, that there is a threat of violence whenever people, especially men, gather, and engagement can only go as far as all are able and willing to go...The decorum of the royal court has at its purpose, keeping everyone safe and alive, in a chamber where huge disagreements over monumental decisions are made.

So, this year...this season especially: Enter the King.

We are all Kings, or Queens, or Sovereigns (this isn't a gendered nor patriarchal archetype). Sadly, very few of us are actively living into this part of ourselves. This winter we're working with King energy. Desmond Tutu and the Dali Lama pictured above are both Kings for our Time. Both engaged in their more active days in helping their respective realms move through enormously turbulent waters. For Tutu, an Anglican Priest, it was first bringing down apartheid in South Africa, and then leading a revolutionary truth and reconciliation ritual for the country. The "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" as it was called, gave people on all sides of the racial atrocities a one time window of time to fully confess their crimes, face the pain of what they had done, and ultimately gain amnesty. It took a number of years to complete and while it wasn't perfect, it was still a radical approach to a cultural wide wound that was far better than other attempts at healing in other places that had suffered similar atrocities up to that point. It was full of King energy.

The Dali Lama has been a "King" for the people of Tibet in a time of severe persecution and exile by the Chinese government. Despite being relatively powerless in military and political strength, the strength of his spirit and teaching has transcended the power of the gun, and held his people, and many others as well, together. They say the pen is mightier than the sword, but a warm belly laugh and smile, is more powerful still. Both men have held boundaries, sought justice, and yet maintained a sense of joy and peace in the midst of suffering that is remarkable.

In the Illuman of Washington [winter retreat](#) this February*, we will be looking at the four stages in the life cycle of the king. Most of us begin not awake to the fact that we had royal blood in our veins. From ancient scriptures all the way through fairy tales and now into the mythologies of Hollywood, we see stories of Princes who were lost, of Princesses who didn't know their true identity. Eventually they awaken and enter the second stage, that of the Prince/Princess--who knows of their ultimate destiny but is not ready to step into it yet. The third stage is that of the mature King/Queen. This person attends to their realm, holds the long view on behalf of all of life that is in his stewardship.

The final stage is that of the Elder King, and the picture above points to Tutu and the Dali Lama in this fourth stage of their role as a sovereign. In this season, Kings and Queens raise their focus from the realms that they were charged to care for, to caring for ALL the realms. They know that the realms are not in competition but are called to work together for a whole and just world. In this final season they are statesmen and women, whose allegiance transcends the state from which they came, and moves to a care for all of life. This is Dag Hammarskjöld, the UN Secretary General whom JFK called

"the greatest statesman of our time." Hammarskjöld is remembered as much for his writings and musings on Spirit and action, which were published post-posthumously, as for his career. Of course, as so often happens with Kings who offer a course other than self-serving power, he was eventually assassinated while on the job.

Thomas Merton, MLK, RFK, JFK, Hammarskjöld, Fred Hampton...all remarkable and radical Kings who were assassinated in the 60's...I guess despite what it feels like today...the world has been on fire for some time...there are times when the fire goes underground, and other times it is out in full view...but its burning...hopefully towards something...

I'm currently watching the new suspense thriller "Messiah" on Netflix...and I'm riveted. I don't know precisely how it ends, but of course--we all know how it will end. This young man of color will be murdered...and some will walk away thinking he was a charlatan, and others will hold out he was heaven sent...of course, he might be both...and his death won't distinguish him...A true King's legend grows from an untimely death...just ask Elvis. ;)

We need everyone to become Kings and Queens today...But when you step into this, just don't expect to be welcomed by everyone, even if you are greeting every face you see, as another face of the Friend. Too many, yet do not know this is who they are...

Here's to Royal Awakenings.

*For more information on the Illuman of Washington Winter retreat, [click here](#).