



LESSON 188
The peace of God is shining in me now.

Sarah's Commentary:

The focus now is on entering the holy instant. It is to experience moments of stillness and a withdrawal from the world into the quiet center of the mind. Only in the holy instant do we have the experience of deep peace. What is needed to come to this experience is for us to look at our blocks to love reflected in all our judgments and attitudes toward others. In releasing them, we experience the reflection of Heaven. It is a feeling of deep peace and a sense of being at home. It requires a willingness to take responsibility for our thoughts and a recognition that everything we perceive starts within our own minds.

The world is a projection of the guilt in our wrong minds. When the blocks to love are healed, the love in us extends from our heart to everyone. **"It pauses to caress each living thing, and leaves a blessing with it that remains forever and forever. What it gives must be eternal. It removes all thoughts of the ephemeral and valueless. It brings renewal to all tired hearts, and lights all vision as it passes by. All of its gifts are given everyone, and everyone unites in giving thanks to you who give, and you who have received."** (W.188.3.2-6) Now the gifts we give are returned to us ". . . beyond all measure." (W.188.4.2)

How we know whether we have chosen the ego or the Holy Spirit comes from what we perceive. Jesus says, **"It is not difficult to look within, for there all vision starts."** (W.188.2.5) Yet the ego tells us not to look within. It says that all is dark there, and God will destroy us because of the sin in us. So, we are afraid to go there. **"Loudly the ego tells you not to look inward, for if you do your eyes will light on sin, and God will strike you blind. This you believe, and so you do not look."** (T.21.IV.2.3-4) (ACIM OE T.21.V.42) As a result of this belief that we hold, we feel safer in our distractions. Yet when we are willing to look at these false beliefs, we can go beyond them to the light. That light is already in us, blocked by our dark thoughts. Willingness is required to go beyond our defenses. We set up defenses against the love we are because of our fear of God. When we are willing to look past our defenses with honesty and courage, it is the beginning of vision.

The world is an outward picture of our inward condition. Thus, we can clearly see what we have aligned with, whether it is with the dark thoughts of the ego or with the love of the Holy Spirit. Both the problem and the solution are in our own minds. This is where all healing takes place. What we see with our eyes and take in with our ears and other senses is designed to deceive us that there is actually a world out there, acting on us. But the world is in our own minds. Everything we see starts and ends there. That is what is beautiful about this process because all power is in us. **"The power of decision is your one remaining freedom as a prisoner of this world."** (T.12.VII.9.1) (ACIM OE T.11.VIII.70) Nothing outside of us can take our peace and joy. If we do not feel the peace and joy that are ours, it is because we have chosen the ego thought system of judgment, condemnation, and specialness.

We cannot release what we refuse to acknowledge in ourselves. Our beliefs, opinions, concepts, values, and thoughts are what we need to acknowledge as keeping us from love, as we are tempted to deny or project our guilt onto others. It is important to resist this temptation if we are to heal what stands in the way of the love we are. **"Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all."** (W.188.1.4) It is not light we need to seek because we already have it. To find this light, simply look within. It is not about struggling with the ego or struggling against our obsessive thoughts. To do so is to give them reality. It is not even about trying "hard" but only about surrendering. It is to give up our way and follow His way.

"Why wait for Heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now." (W.188.1.1-3) To seek for a future state of enlightenment is what many of us try to do, yet this is precisely what keeps it at bay. We are in the past or future and not accepting the present moment. The moment of the holy instant, where there is an authentic knowing that floods our minds, is the moment of knowing that it is all here now. Chasing the goal of enlightenment is just another ego ploy to **"seek and do not find."** (T.12.V.7.1) (ACIM OE T.11.VI.49)

We need to give up control, as everything has already been determined. The end is certain, so what do we do now? The answer is to choose love in every moment. In every circumstance that is in front of us, we can stay aware of our thoughts and choose how to respond, whether from the ego or from the Spirit. Let your life be guided by Love in each moment. No matter what you are facing, keep asking how Love would have you respond to the situation. The Answer is within you. It requires tuning into the Voice of the Holy Spirit. The ego will tend to speak first, but it is never the truth. When we turn to the Holy Spirit, He will always offer His guidance, which is in direct opposition to the ego.

If the peace of God is shining in us now, there is nowhere to go to find it and nothing to seek for. It is indeed humorous to seek for the light while covering our eyes, refusing to see it is here now. **"Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes."** (W.188.1.2) In other words, Jesus says, although we seek it, there is also a part of us keeping it from our awareness. How do we do that? We defend against it by holding it apart from us, believing we will find it some day in the future. **"Why wait to find it in the future, or believe it has been lost already, or was never there?"** (W.188.2.2) Jesus calls these arguments **"ridiculous."** (W.188.2.3) **"The light came with you from your native home, and stayed with you because it is your own."** (W.188.1.6) There is no reason to delay our peace and joy. There is no reason to indulge in the belief that we have to atone for our sins and clean up our act in order to know Heaven. There is no need to suffer any longer. We think it is hard to find and that we need to struggle with our ego. We think that this is a difficult process, but Jesus keeps assuring us that to struggle with the ego is to make it real. Recognition of the light in us is all that is needed. The light is there now. This light cannot be lost. We do not need to try hard to find where it is. We have just forgotten who we are. It is always present, yet we deny its presence.

Everything that seems to happen in this illusion can contribute to our journey if given over to the Holy Spirit. Every event, every circumstance, every mistake, and every situation can be seen as an opportunity to release our self-condemnation, self-attacks, and judgments that we project onto the world. None of these things are a reason for guilt. No mistake should be used for crucifying ourselves or others. It is all there for our learning. It is just another opportunity to release our own self-condemnation that we project onto others. **"In every difficulty, all distress, and each perplexity Christ calls to you and gently says, 'My brother, choose again'."** (T.31.VIII.3.2) (ACIM OE T.31.VIII.87)

Jesus is not denying that we experience difficulty, distress, or perplexity in our lives. We all have a lot of stuff that occupies our thoughts, but all these challenges hamper our spiritual growth if we deny and resist them. As Ken Wapnick writes, in *The Healing Power of Kindness*, pp.38-39: "Rather than feel guilty, angry or depressed about a problem--physical or psychological--we need to accept it as a classroom, telling ourselves this is the form in which we will learn what we need to learn: whatever the distress, it is our choosing. This is not because we are neurotic, psychotic or bad, but because we want to prove we are who we are not; that the separated, sinful, and guilty self is real, and our glorious Self an illusion."

When you feel discouraged on this journey, do not fight yourself. Nothing is wrong. Nothing is out of place. I recently heard Adyashanti say that the world is "benevolently ruthless." In other words, we all get exactly what we need for our awakening. It can be grace, even though it may look like ruthless grace. Whatever you may think that you have done wrong and whatever you may feel frustrated with or sad about, do not resist it or deny it. It is in the opposition of it that we suffer. Allow yourself to accept wherever you are. Allow yourself to be defeated or discouraged. Experience the feeling, instead of trying to manage or control it. It is about absolute acceptance. The truth is that we are perfect, innocent, complete, and always in the Presence of God's Love, but our minds convince us otherwise. When we accept whatever the situation is in front of us and fully accept what we are feeling, we can immediately turn to the Holy Spirit and open our minds to His interpretation.

As long as we hold onto our judgments and grievances and as long as we are unwilling to take responsibility for them, we cannot know the peace of God that is shining in us now. That is why burying, hiding, or avoiding taking responsibility for our dark thoughts keeps them from being purified and washed clean by the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "**We have betrayed them, ordering that they depart from us. But now we call them back, and wash them clean of strange desires and disordered wishes. We restore to them the holiness of their inheritance.**" (W.188.9.5-7) Actually, we do not do that because the ego will never undertake to undo itself. The Holy Spirit does it when we turn our strange desires and disordered wishes over to Him by putting them on the inner altar. This is the miracle. "**We will forgive them all, absolving all the world from what we thought it did to us.**" (W.188.10.2) That is what forgiveness does; it washes away what no longer serves us.

"We practice coming nearer to the light in us today. We take our wandering thoughts, and gently bring them back to where they fall in line with all the thoughts we share with God. We will not let them [our wandering thoughts] stray. We let the light within our minds direct them to come home." (W.188.9.1-4) Today, we practice watching our thoughts by calling them to our attention so they can be washed clean by the Holy Spirit. Thus, they leave room for only God's Thoughts. In the light that has never left us, we find God's peace.

Rather than blaming the world, "**Now we choose that it be innocent, devoid of sin and open to salvation.**" (W.188.10.4) We lay our blessing on it today instead of cursing and blaming it for the conditions we have chosen for ourselves. We say, "**The peace of God is shining in me now. Let all things shine upon me in that peace, and let me bless them with the light in me.**" (W.188.10.6-7)

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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