

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 355

**There is no end to all the peace and joy,
And all the miracles that I will give,
When I accept God's word. Why not today?**

Sarah's Commentary:

Jesus is helping us to see that, beyond this seeming reality of the body and the world of suffering and pain, peace, joy, and miracles are being held out to us in this very moment. He says, "Why not claim them?" "Do we like what we have made?" "Is our experience here one of consistent peace?" "What keeps us from accepting the truth about ourselves and who we really are as the perfect glorious Self at peace forever?" Clearly, we are not yet completely convinced. We fear that if we let go of what we are holding onto, we will disappear. As Byron Katie asks, "Who would you be without that thought?"

Jesus understands our fear and trepidation, which is why he keeps assuring us of what awaits us. He keeps reminding us that this is a world of pain and ultimately death. Even though none of it is real, we still experience it that way. Ultimately, he knows that we will make the choice to embrace who we are and to return to our Creator, whom we have never left, except in dreams. God has kept His Word, which came with us in our seeming exile, that we are exactly as we were created. We have all the attributes of God. Now Jesus waits patiently and lovingly and will wait as long as it takes for us to accept the truth of what we are. But as long as there is fear in the mind, there is healing to be undertaken. Fear is what keeps love at bay.

When the desire is strong and the motivation and willingness to undertake the discipline called for is consistent, we are ready to take the hand of Jesus, who helps us look at everything from his perspective. He helps us to see its nothingness. He awaits the memory to return to us of who we are---the One Son who never left our Father. His patience with us is infinite, but why would we want to wait any longer to release pain and suffering. We can choose to ignore the temptations that come our way to throw away our peace.

As I write this, I am feeling irritation that Don is late coming home and has not called. Finally, the phone rings. In this moment, I recognize I can throw some guilt his way. I can remind him that he is late and has reneged on his commitment to being home at a certain time. I recognize I now have a choice to go with the temptation to throw guilt at him or to choose to step back and bring peace. I can simply express gratitude for the call. Who will I turn to for guidance in this moment? Will it be the ego or the Holy Spirit? My decision will determine the outcome that I experience. Happiness is not contingent on what my brother does or does not do. My decision to free him frees us both. What I give I receive. That is the law of love. When we see how unhappy listening to the ego has made us and how much we suffer, we become more willing to choose another way. We choose to let Spirit guide us. Jesus asks, why would we want to continue to invite pain when we have another choice that we can make. We must be willing to look with honesty and courage at our motivation. Peace and joy are in us, awaiting our acceptance. When I can't make the choice

in the moment, I recognize that I must be honest with my brother in expressing what I am feeling. The purpose of such expression is to use it for the purpose of recognizing that I am responsible for how I feel, not him. It is all for healing my mind. It is not for making my brother feel more guilt.

The reality is that we are always choosing between two thought systems. We are at every moment, choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit. Which side of the ledger am I on at any moment? Am I choosing peace, love, joy, forgiveness, ease, kindness, and truth, or am I choosing the ego programming, which keeps me in fear and distress? Our egoic reactions appear to be involuntary, yet they are under our own control. We are responsible for the decisions that keep us unaware of the state of peace and joy that can be chosen at any moment. Why not now? ***"Why should I wait, my Father, for the joy You promised me?"*** (W.355.1.1)

Jesus reminds us, **"Being afraid seems to be involuntary; something beyond your own control. Yet I have said already that only constructive acts should be involuntary. My control can take over everything that does not matter, while my guidance can direct everything that does, if you so choose. Fear cannot be controlled by me, but it can be self-controlled. Fear prevents me from giving you my control."** (T.2.VI.1.1-5) (ACIM OE T.2.IV.72 "You believe that 'being afraid' is involuntary...") Jesus is dedicated to helping us, but he needs our help to do so. If I am not experiencing the peace and joy available to me right now, it is by my own decision. It is all about willingness. If I am not willing to humble myself, see how wrong I am about everything I perceive, release my ideas of how to respond to situations in my life, allow myself to be vulnerable, give up control over my own life, and accept everything happening as perfect and necessary for my classroom, then I am keeping myself in fear. Every minute of my day, I am making this choice. It is a choice to attack or to forgive. It is a choice to release my fearful thoughts to the Holy Spirit, or to hold onto grievances.

Everyone in this world is searching for peace, joy, and happiness. Everything we do or have done in this world is about seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, yet our efforts are misguided because we are looking to the wrong guide for the answers. The ego is always willing to come to the rescue with another idol, but Jesus keeps reminding us that the ego's mantra is, "Seek, but do not find." Because we do not know who we are, we can't know our own best interests. As the Course reminds us, our greatest advances, in our eyes, can be our biggest setbacks, and what we judge to be our biggest setbacks can be our greatest advances. When we admit that we don't know and are willing to surrender to another Teacher, we ***"step back and let Him lead the way,"*** (W.155) instead of relying on our very limited understanding.

"Tolerance for pain may be high, but it is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there *must* be a better way." (T.2.III.3.5-6) (ACIM OE T.2.II.48 "Pain thresholds can be high...") In that realization, we become more willing and ready to hear God's Word. His Word reflects the Atonement Principle. This Principle affirms that we have never changed ourselves. We remain as we were created. As we accept this truth, our motivation to be disciplined in our practice of the Lesson is enhanced.

Our part is to become aware of how the ego thought system came about and to recognize how it works in our own lives. To break the cycle of sin, guilt, and fear, we are called to take responsibility for our projections. Forgiveness requires that we see what is in our unconscious minds, be willing to release it to the Holy Spirit, and leave it with Him. The error we make is to think we can fix ourselves, but it is not our job to do so. In fact, the ego will never undo itself. It is the Holy Spirit that shines away the darkness when we give it over to Him. It requires trust in being willing to surrender our own answers for our lives and turn to One Who knows. He needs our cooperation

in this process, so He can lead us gently and patiently to the truth of who we are. The Holy Spirit helps us to see that the peace, joy, and love we seek is already in us. There is nothing in the world, in any form, whether it is the right partner, the right job, the right house, or the right stuff, or even everything going our way, that can bring us these gifts.

I recently watched the Michael Morton story on CNN called, *The Unreal Dream*. He was wrongly accused of murdering his wife and as a result, spent 25 years in prison. Most of those years were spent in anger at the injustice of it all. He said he held up fairly well, learning the ways of the prison system and, ultimately, getting a college degree. Over time, he adjusted to prison life and even developed some strong friendships. It was not until his only son wrote to tell him that he no longer wished to be his son that he totally broke down. In other words, he finally let himself become completely undone and called out to God. He heard nothing but silence until ten days later, on a normal day of regular routines, something changed. He went to bed, plugged into a radio station, and remarkably heard harp music, which he says he had never heard before. Then everything around him lit up in a golden light, and he knew he was in the presence of God. Of course, everything changed after that. He was released, reunited with his son, and knew with certainty that God is all there is and can be totally trusted. **"Tolerance for pain may be high but it is not without limit."** (T.2.III.3.5-6) (ACIM OE T.2.II.48) Every situation, even prison, can be used for our highest good. He said it had become a kind of Ashram for him, where distractions of normal life in the world were severely limited, and this gave him a perfect opportunity to look within. As he left the prison, his fellow inmates wept as they saw what a gift he had been in their lives through his demonstration.

Our function is to **"look on everyone as brother, and perceive all things as kindly and as good."** (W.PII.What Am I?Q14.3.4) In the face of attacking behaviors from others, to look on all things kindly can be challenging because we still believe the cause of lack of peace in our lives comes from outside our own mind. We have reversed cause and effect when we see the cause of our lack of peace in outside events that seem to be happening to us. Yet when we take responsibility for our projections, we have gratitude for every brother who shows us a reflection of what is in our own mind. Our only responsibility, as miracle workers, is to accept the Atonement for ourselves. There is no one to blame.

We see violence and injustice in the world, and we blame others for what seems to be happening. We want to see it fixed. We don't want to accept that it is our own perfect script. What we do is to try to manage effects rather than the cause of our own self-attacking thoughts. The only place where peace can be found is in our own mind. What the miracle does is that **"It merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false."** (W.PII.What Is a Miracle?Q13.1.2) Only through forgiveness and willingness to surrender our way can we remember who we are.

While the ego would use the world to forget God, the Holy Spirit uses all of our experiences to help us remember God. It is up to us, but we are not alone in this. The truth is already in us, waiting for its acceptance. Why wait? Why not accept God's word today?

Love and blessings, Sarah
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