



LESSON 192
I have a function God would have me fill.

Sarah's Commentary:

Jesus tells us that we can't even begin to understand Heaven where our Sacred Self is as pure as God Himself, "**extending love, creating in its name, forever one with God and with your Self.**" (W.192.1.1) In this world, we don't experience this now. Our true Identity cannot be known here, but we can experience the reflection of it through forgiveness. Forgiveness reflects the love of God in this world and thus, "**I have a function God would have me fill.**" (W.192)

Jesus knows that "**within a world of envy, hatred and attack,**" (W.192.1.2) we can't understand this heavenly function of creating and extending. "**Creation cannot even be conceived of in the world. It has no meaning here.**" (W.192.3.1-2) The best we can do is reflect it by offering forgiveness "**in the world in its own terms.**" (W.192.2.1) Forgiveness is the "**means by which untruth can be undone,**" (W.192.2.4) and thus we are called to undertake this function here. It is not needed in Heaven where all is perfect, but it is needed where we think we are as bodies, seemingly living in the world. Undoing what is not true is the only way to restore the memory of who we are.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can awaken from this illusion and experience what the Course calls the happy dream. "**What He [the Holy Spirit] makes are dreams, but of a kind so close to waking that the light of day already shines in them, and eyes already opening behold the joyful sights their offerings contain.**" (W.192.3.6) This journey we take to the real world will be difficult at first and will entail a great deal of conflict while we hold two mutually exclusive thought systems. Once we step on this path, we will experience the split mind more acutely.

We increasingly see everything we have made is false, and this is painful for us. The split mind has made the physical world for just one purpose---to escape from the guilt in the mind and project it onto the world. As was said in Lesson 161, "**Thus were specifics made.**" (W.161.3.1) We need bodies on which to project our hate. This applies to our body and those of others we love to hate. Now we can attack them and justify our attack and anger. We think this keeps us innocent and deserving of Heaven, while our "evil" brothers can pay the cost for our sin. We thus think that we can purchase our innocence by seeing others as guilty, but now we are called to use those specific relationships for healing. "**And now it is specifics we must use in practicing.**" (W.161.3.2)

Jesus constantly reminds us that the world of the ego is the nightmare, whereas the world we see with the Holy Spirit is the happy dream that precedes our experience of Heaven. The means by which we can experience the happy dream is through forgiveness. Forgiveness is ultimately not

just about letting go of grievances but also about letting go of "**all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself.**" (W.189.7.1) Forgiveness is about letting go of anything we think is "**either true or false, or good or bad.**" (W.189.7.2) We let go of our shame and guilt, all of what we have believed about the past, and all our beliefs. That is what forgiveness entails. It is a process that facilitates our transition from the world of ego perception to the world of the happy dream. Our perspectives of the world are replaced by what the Holy Spirit would have us see. We do this by keeping no thought hidden from the light of healing. Jesus asks us not to hide anything, because only by bringing our thoughts to truth can they be healed. The energy we put into defending ourselves against the truth of who we are is enormous. How willing are you to let these unforgiving thoughts go? As long as we justify why we should feel the way we do, we hold onto our perspectives to use them to justify our feelings and our attacks on others. The only way to let them go is with *willingness*; nothing more, but nothing less.

I love the quote by Anthony Greenwald, a contemporary social psychologist, who says: "The ego is a self-justifying historian which seeks only that information that agrees with it, rewrites history when it needs to, and does not even see the evidence that threatens it." I can relate to this, as I see in my own life how I justify why I am a certain way by telling my story of the past without revealing all the details in complete honesty. It is how the ego maintains itself. Complete honesty dismantles the ego.

Yesterday, I said something unkind to Don. It was subtle, so I did not immediately notice how my comment might be hurtful. But I felt uneasy and looked more deeply at my intention. I recognized a bigger grievance hiding under my comment. While I was willing to admit my error to myself, pride kept me from wanting to say anything to him to unveil the nature of my thoughts. It can be difficult for us to step through the barrier of pride; yet, for me, when I confessed my error, I felt I had taken another step in dismantling the ego. The ego is not me! When I am willing to look at it honestly, without justifying my perspective, it literally dissolves.

Forgiveness shifts our perception in several ways. It leaves the world clean of the senseless symbols we have given it. It ends our guilt and overcomes our fear of death. It helps us see our body only as a simple teaching aid that will be laid down when learning is complete. The body is not our home; we really are just a mind without the body. The peace of God is restored to us through forgiveness, and then we become aware of our holiness. (W.192.4.1-7) "**The mind without the body cannot make mistakes.**" (W.192.5.1) And of course, the mistake we have made is to believe we are a body that can suffer attack and can die.

The attraction of death, covered over with the fear of death, is the basis for our denial of our identity as the Son of God. Only through forgiveness can both the attraction and fear be overcome. When guilt is undone, the fear of God's punishment is also undone. The ultimate punishment we fear is death. Our belief in death is undone when the guilt is undone, as now there is no more fear. We are now relieved of thinking we need a body and a world as a place to hide from the fear of God's punishment. Forgiveness returns us from identification with the body to identification with the mind and thus restores "**the peace that God intended for His holy Son.**" (W.192.5.6) We can see why forgiveness is the core of the teaching of the Course because this is the only way we can be persuaded to look again upon our holiness. (W.192.5.7)

When we let go of our identity as an ego, we let go of our anger too. In the world of form, we are constantly in competition. It is all about the principle of one or the other. You must lose for me to gain. It is all about special relationships, where anger is a condition of this world of bodies because

we are always having to compromise, letting go of what we want in order to maintain the relationship. It is an investment in being right about who we think we are as separate individuals. Now we use reason to "**justify our rage and our attack.**" (W.192.7.2) We are invested in what is actually not there at all. Our understanding of everything is severely limited. "**We are lost in mists of shifting dreams and fearful thoughts, our eyes shut tight against the light; our minds engaged in worshipping what is not there.**" (W.192.7.4) While we imprison others with our demands, requirements, expectations, needs, lacks, and ultimately with our anger, we are not free. We are the ones hurt by the judgments, although we think they are being punished by the hate and blame we cast onto them. Only through forgiveness are we released from this bondage. "**Therefore, hold no one prisoner. Release instead of bind, for thus are you made free.**" (W.192.9.1-2)

If we don't let people off the hook for what they have seemingly done to us, we remain with them as their jailor. We demand they stay in the jail we put them in, to do their time for what we hold they have done to us. Now we are bound with them because we must make sure they pay for their sins against us and don't escape from the punishment we have imposed on them. Some of them we have put in that jail cell for a long, long time, and we are thus simply on the other side of the bars, holding them to the debt we feel they owe us. This then becomes our world. Can you see how there is no escape in this scenario? Can you see how we keep ourselves imprisoned and how our own minds are condemned with them? When you are angry and you keep your brother in the prison of your hate, you are not aware of how you are the one imprisoned by that hate. This is illustrated so well in a movie I saw recently called, "The Secret in Their Eyes," where a criminal court investigator is haunted by a twenty-five-year-old unresolved rape and murder case. His search for truth puts him in the center of a judicial nightmare, where the mystery unfolds in the present and keeps everyone captivated. Only through forgiveness can we release those we have bound. We have that choice and we have that power.

A few years ago, I had an accidental fall on a slippery floor in a grocery store that resulted in a broken nose, but more significant, I had many broken teeth. The dental costs were enormous. The store was unwilling to take any responsibility for the fall, so I checked with a lawyer about trying to retrieve some of the costs. The lawyer indicated that this particular grocery chain rarely settled any claims. Several of his clients had fought for years in court. Even when a client won the settlement, the grocery chain would appeal the decision. Nevertheless, he urged me to proceed with the claim. I looked at the years of court action and how it would keep me chained to my grievances against the store and decided my peace was worth more than a settlement that might come years down the road.

"Thus does each one who seems to tempt you to be angry represent your savior from the prison house of death." (W.192.9.6) These very people who seem to cause us pain are actually there to help us see what is unhealed in us. We are called to forgive them, so we can be released from the world of the ego. These are people who not only seem to be our "enemies," but they are the people in our lives whom we seem to love, yet they irritate and frustrate us daily. In each situation where these kinds of feelings are aroused, we have a choice. Will we use the situation as an opportunity to escape this prison house and free ourselves, or will we become the jailor and the jailed? We have an opportunity to be released from our own tortured minds every time we feel a stab of anger. Thus, we owe them our thanks for being in our lives. We don't need to be grateful for their behavior, but only for the opportunity these situations provide us to see what is unhealed in our own minds.

We justify our anger, but it only hurts us. **"Every time you feel a stab of anger, realize you hold a sword above your head. And it will fall or be averted as you choose to be condemned or free."** (W.192.9.4-5) Would we attack anyone if we really believed we were just attacking ourselves? It is unlikely we can currently get through a day without some anger or even mild annoyance, but, this is not a reason for guilt. We can use these situations to realize we are keeping ourselves from the peace of Heaven. Then, we don't notice the anger but release it to the light of the Holy Spirit. We are mistaken if we think we can attack and keep ourselves safe from having that attack boomerang back to us in the same instant. When we attack anyone, we exclude ourselves from the joy and peace available all the time. The attack can take many forms, some of which can be very subtle but equally disturbing to our peace of mind. Every judgment we hold in our minds is a judgment against ourselves and will hurt us.

Increasingly, as we do the healing work, we recognize our invulnerability. We can't be hurt because our reality is not these bodies nor personalities. The belief that we could be hurt is the belief in an image of ourselves that we have made and try to protect and defend, but it is not the truth of who we are. When we fully embrace the truth, we will know our invulnerability because our reality is revealed to us. When anger is gone and pain is lifted from our sick and tortured minds (W.192.6.1) through forgiveness, we experience our innocence.

Today, we are asked to look at whoever we believe owes us a debt for what we believe they have done to us. Who is it that we keep on the hook for this debt and thus keep ourselves imprisoned with them? Today is our opportunity to be born again, which is simply our release from our self-made hell. Whenever you are tempted to become angry today, realize the sword is over your own head, but it can be averted anytime you choose. The power to choose is in our own minds. As you choose to forgive your thoughts about what you think your brother has done to you, you can leave the prison house together with him. Forgive your brother for what he has not done, as what seems to be has only been done in dreams. When we wake up from this illusion, we will see nothing real has happened.

We are asked to be merciful today. (W.192.10.1) Will we choose our freedom or stay in prison? It is our choice. Forgiveness is our function that God would have us willingly undertake. I suspect we will each have opportunities to exercise our function today if it is like any other day in our lives. Each brother we encounter is crying out for mercy. Make a commitment to show mercy to your brothers today so you can receive it for yourself. We are what our brother is---loved by God equally. Our brothers' interests are our own.

I find if I make a commitment in the morning and dedicate my day to peace and forgiveness, I see everything in my day as a classroom for learning to be peaceful and merciful. Nothing is wrong. Everything is just another opportunity to look at my mind. What I see in anyone is just a reflection of what I see in myself. Today is another opportunity to watch how often the sword is against my own throat and to investigate why I would want this for myself.

Our only function here is to forgive so we can know our Identity as the Christ Self. We are our brother, and we recognize our sameness as we let go of our judgments. Our judgments of our brothers are only those we hold against ourselves.

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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