



Confusion!

Okay, I am more or less back on track. The subject is 'confusion'.

For quite awhile life has appeared as an upside down triangle. I am at the bottom point. Way at the top is the large, grey and foggy pandemic, below that are decreasing levels of anxiousness, until we come down to the immediate problems like writing this newsletter and doing my income tax return. Believe me, during February I was gathering my thoughts and expected to have finished the newsletter by March. In March I caught Covid; it affected me like a head cold. By April I was, I thought, over Covid, but that was not the case. I confess I am not an energetic person but after Covid I felt really lethargic. I kept doing things but it was as if I was glued to my chair, so hard to get up and active. (I caught Covid at exercise class so activity was a bit suspect anyway.). I was so relieved this past week to feel the post-Covid part of the fog lifting. I feel better, and I'm back at the computer.

The original thoughts, however, remain. The pandemic does cloud everything we think and do. And that cloud does cause confusion in our thinking.

While I was glued to my chair I saw/heard a discussion about the book of Job in the Old Testament. I have always been disturbed by that story. I don't believe in God needing to test, much less so cruelly as to allow Job's family and all his assets to be destroyed as part of the action.

Just being alive is 'exciting'. In Creative Mythology Joseph Campbell says, "Life is like arriving late for a movie, having to figure out what was going on without bothering everybody with a lot of questions, and then being unexpectedly called away before you find out how it ends."

It's that part in the middle, between birth and death that is the concern, the exciting bit. We can

work very hard to live the best life possible but good things happen and bad things happen, often without any input on our part. This is where Job comes in. In chapter two his wife is so upset at all the calamity she says to him, “*‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ But he said to her, ‘You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?’ In all of this Job did not sin with his lips.*”

The ‘foolish women’ aside, Job made a good point. We give thanks for good things happening to us, why shouldn’t we give thanks for adversity? How often with hindsight do we realise that the adverse event has led to wonderful things in our life?

(I am not trying to make light of the truly awful things that can happen in our lives or in anyone’s life. War and natural disasters and accidents and illnesses of all kinds do happen but I do not think that any of these adverse events are an excuse for turning our backs on the ‘spirit’.)

I pray often, but I have not prayed giving thanks for this pandemic, or for the climate crisis, or for overpopulation, or floods and cyclones. How can you pray when this grey cloud envelopes you? Quaker Caroline Stephen, 1834-1909 said “*No clear impressions, either from above or from without, can be received by a mind turbid with excitement and agitated by a crowd of distractions. The stillness needed for the clear shining of light within is incompatible with hurry.*”

So, it is up to us to look away from the fog and confusion. George Fox (1658) said, “*Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts...*”

That is not easy when you feel overcome and confused, but when you do, “*and then thou wilt find the principle of God to turn thy mind to the Lord God, whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes, to allay all tempests, against blusterings and storms. That is it which moulds up into patience, into innocency, into soberness, into stillness, into stayedness, into quietness, up to God, with his power.*”

When we can achieve a modicum of stillness by leaving our own thoughts and opening our minds to the spirit we receive the help and power we need to give thanks, and to think how we can cope with the ‘confusion’.

I’m sure I haven’t explained myself very clearly. But from my own experience I know that prayer brings me closer to whatever the ‘spirit’ is and gives me strength.

Yours in friendship

Carril Karr

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