

SEEDS
for
CELEBRATION
for the
JUBILEE! Community
Asheville, NC

Summer, 2008
Via Positiva
"One Love"

Via Positiva: One Love

You can chop your celery; you can carve your turkey. You can slice your sushi and cube your cantaloupe. You can chop wood, lop branches, hack vines, snap kindling, saw lumber and split rails. You can cut grass, scythe wheat, slash brush and weed-eat weeds.

But then, you can also partition countries, segregate races, break off relationships, disconnect computers, mince words, shred papers, divorce spouses, clip toenails and divide the sheep from the goats.

So many ways to split things up; so little time.

We divide our days by minutes and hours, calendars and clocks. We divide our lives by birthdays and anniversaries, victories and failures, milestones and memories, births and deaths. And we divide each day of our lives into job and recreation, eating and love-making, shopping and sleeping, cooking and driving, planning, partying, parenting, praying and pooping.

But no matter how much we separate the various parts of our lives... no matter how much we pigeonhole our activities, thoughts, worries, joys and passions... what it finally comes down to is this: We each and all have but one life. No more, no less. One life. Chop it up, split it up, segment it any way you choose, it's all one. Every goof and glory, every crushing defeat and smashing success. It's all one. You and I and every bozo bouncing around on this Milky Way Marble have one life apiece. Only one. That's all you get, at least until you bow out. After that, God only knows.

Which means that whatever you do – even the smallest thought, the most insignificant activity in the tiniest moment – affects everything else. Every time you lay your money down for whatever doodah you think you just gotta have, you are shifting and shaping every element of your one life. Your one precious life.

Every chat you have, every movie you watch, every lip you kiss, every bath you take; not to mention every grudge you hold, every kindness you share, every worry you clutch, every delight you enjoy... not one of these bits of you can be isolated. Every bit of it is part of you. It's not that every little bit touches every other little bit; cause we're not little bits. We're one.

Likewise, our earth. We tend to think of Big Mama as divided up into earth, air, water and fire. Animal, mineral, vegetable. We mentally divide up our own species into nations and races, religions and governments, rich and poor, pacifist and terrorist, criminal and law-abider, smart and stupid. But, the truth is, we're one. Only one. Each of us, part of one earth. And so far, this is all we got. Ain't none of us can run off to another planet any time soon.

The ancient Hebrews must have known this somehow. They came up with a phrase, *Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad*. It literally means, "Listen, you who struggle with God, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." *Echad*. One. And whether you believe in God or in Allah or in The Big Wahoo or The Grand Muffin Cake or nothing at all, it really doesn't matter. What matters is how you live. If you live as if it's all one. As if there's finally no separation within each of us or between each of us and the rest of creation.

Which is, of course, what love is all about. Connecting. Uniting. Bringing together, reminding and acknowledging that in the Big Picture, Sweet Cheeks, we are all one.

- Howard

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**June 22, 2008: DOUBTS & DISTRACTIONS**

Lamentations 3: 22-33

The Lord is good to those who wait... to the soul that seeks.

Mark 5: 21-24, 35-43

Do not fear; only believe.

Doubt is not such a bad thing. Doubt can keep you from doing stupid things. Or at least slow you up before you do them anyway. Doubt is faith's quality control. It can keep you from getting googly-eyed and buying into whatever silver-tongued holy huckster or con-ananda happens to make a pitch to your will and wallet. Doubt can serve you well.

And all too often, distraction gets a bad rap as well. Keeping you from getting things done and so forth. But distraction just might lower your anal-obsessive stress level. Just might introduce you to people, places and ideas you would never otherwise have known. And a good distraction just might serve up a little variety and thereby spice up your life.

But when doubt and distraction are all that's running in your tank... when doubt and distraction take the throne and begin to call the shots... when doubt and distraction become a way of life instead of a happy alternative, then, Sweetcakes, you can welcome your sweet self to Schizo-Town. Flounder-ville. Wishywashy-Borough. Where the spineless, spiritless, fearful and irresolute flip-flop back and forth from indecisiveness to fear to dead-end endeavors to television sitcoms.

When you gaze into the stars or into the eyes of one you love, sometimes you are reminded that you are an integral part of one big grand and glorious Mystery. Capital "M" Mystery. A Mystery that's worth living for. A Mystery that can keep your faith and focus strong. A Mystery that can never dispel all doubts and distractions; but can certainly put them in their place.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**June 29, 2008: DISTRUST**

Ezekiel 2: 1-5

They are a rebellious house.

Mark 6: 1-6

He could do no deed of power there.

If you don't trust, you could never get out of bed in the morning. God only knows what might be lurking under your posturpedic. If you don't trust, you could never take a shower (can never be sure what they put in that water) or eat in a restaurant (you know all cooks pick their noses). Without trust, you could never go to the movies and sit there in the dark with absolute strangers right behind you. All around you. And you certainly couldn't eat the popcorn. Without trust, you could never fly in plane, float in a canoe, ride in a taxi or even walk across the street. Without trust, every breath you breathe would be taking a chance.

Of course, you can't trust everything. Or everybody. There are some wackos doodling around out there: religious wackos, fashion wackos, internet wackos, health food wackos, political wackos, corporate wackos... wackos who - if you trust 'em - will take your good sense, common sense, dollars and cents and leave you in the gaggle of other gullible goofballs.

Healthy distrust can help and protect you. But, taken to extremes, distrust can hurt and debilitate you. Can keep you, quite literally, from life, itself.

The bad news is that there are people and things which can't be trusted. The good news is that those people and things are in the minority. Major minority. The big stuff, like the earth's rotation, the change of seasons, the tides, the moon, the sun... these things have all proven themselves trustworthy. And the even better news is that you and I and every amoeba, anchovy and aardvark are part of that big stuff. One with that big stuff. One with a universe that is worthy of your trust; and, in some crazy way, trusts you, as well. Trusts you to live a trustworthy life.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**July 6, 2008: OVERLOOKING**

Amos 7: 10-15

I am no prophet...

Mark 6: 7-13

He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two...

You got your Ghandi, you got Thoreau. You got Solomon, Socrates, and St. Francis. Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Julian of Norwich. You've got Emily Dickinson, W.E.B. Dubois, Isadora Duncan, Tao de Ching and the Dali Lama. But none of these shining teachers, thinkers, gurus and mystics can hold a birthday candle to the succinct, concise and cosmic wisdom of Foghorn Leghorn, when he said, "Pay attention, son! I say, pay attention! How, I say, how you gonna learn anything if you don't pay attention?"

Whether it's a sports event, a relationship, a college class, a job orientation, reading a book, sailing a boat, dancing with your honey, making a deal or simply walking across the street, if you don't pay attention, it could lose you the ball game.

We all know that when you're driving your car, flying down the interstate, you need to pay attention; but sometimes we forget that when we're flying through the day from work to meal to bathroom to shopping to friends to loved ones, paying attention is just as important. Maybe even more so.

Perhaps one of the reasons we feel disconnected, strung out and isolated from life is that we forget that the sun did come up this morning... that there was enough air to breathe for each breath we took... that the moon was still circling the earth and our DNA still circling inside us.

When we fail to pay attention to the bird song that starts our day or the showers that renew all life around us, or the wild flower growing through a crack in the sidewalk or the stars that stir our wonder night after night or the loved one, whose touch or memory can awaken our delight... when we overlook these gifts, we can easily forget that we are, each and all, part of one amazing gift. One astounding miracle.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**July 13, 2008: PREOCCUPATION**

Jeremiah 23: 1-6

I will bring them back to the fold.

Mark 6: 30-34

Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest...

You can be preoccupied with money. You can be preoccupied with work. You can be preoccupied with fashion, cars, movies, swimming, sleeping, schooling, snorkeling, scheming, sailing, sarcasm, sanskrit, Saks 5th Avenue or the size of your butt.

J.S. Bach was preoccupied with melody and harmony. Emily Dickson, with meter and words. Ghandi was preoccupied with independence for India, Martin Luther King, with a dream and Brittany Spears, with media and money.

Ask an aardvark, however, what his preoccupation might be, and he might answer "ants." Ask an amoeba and she will reply, "anything wet." Ask a six-year-old human and he might answer, "boogers."

Most species of life on earth (where else you gonna find it?) are preoccupied with one thing: survival. We all want to live and live and live right up until we die. Which means, at least for the animals among us, we are preoccupied with having the regular opportunity to eat, sleep, poop and procreate.

Admittedly, each species is more concerned about its own survival than the survival of any other; but, perhaps, if we humans got a bit more preoccupied with sharing our space with all the other species and a little less preoccupied with hogging all the resources, we all might live a little better. Which is, most likely, what Big Mama Earth is preoccupied with: That all her children live well.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**July 20, 2008: FORGETTING THE BASICS**

Exodus 24: 3-11

They beheld God and they ate and drank.

John 6: 1-15

...they were satisfied...

A Buddhist will tell you to shut up, sit still and be attentive. A Yogi will tell you the same, except to stand on your head while you're doing it. A meditating guru might tell you to be aware of your breathing. A Christian might tell you to thank God you are breathing. A fundamentalist Christian might tell you that the sooner you quit breathing, the better off you'll be.

A Wiccan might tell you to chant naked under the moon. A sex therapist might tell you to chant naked with someone else under the moon. A life coach might tell you to make a list of the good things in your life. An existentialist will tell you to lose the list and enjoy the show. And a hippie will tell you to roll some weed in the list and smoke it.

So many ways to live, so little time. So many ways to find the essence in life, so many possibilities. Every religion, every philosophy, every political party, along with every parent, every friend, every advice column, every financial advisor... each and all have it as their goal to tell you what is important and how to connect with it.

Maybe that's why so many folks go to "church" by walking in the woods. Or sitting by the ocean or gazing at the stars. Some find their church making love with someone they truly love, or at a dinner table with good food, drink and friends (Jesus was one those).

When we forget the basics: the earth, the air, the water, the fire, the passion, the love... when we forget the basics, we forget who we are. Because, finally, we're all part of the basics. All one with the basics. All one in a vast, mysterious and wondrous love.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**July 27, 2008: SHORTSIGHTEDNESS**

Exodus 16: 2-16

What is it?

John 6: 25-34

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures...

Myopia is a refractive defect of the eye. Because of an elongated eyeball or if the cornea is too steep, focus happens in front of the retina instead of on it. Myopic folks can see things up close just fine; but distant objects appeared blurred. Some call it near-sightedness.

The opposite of myopia is hyperopia – or far-sightedness - in which the eyeball is shorter and, therefore light focuses behind the retina. People with hyperopia can see things up close like a champ; but can't make heads or tails of distant objects or faces.

Nearsightedness and farsightedness are functions of nature. Shortsightedness, however, is all about nurture.

If you have been taught, for example, that the only good people are the people who share your skin color, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, language and way of thinking, then, Sweetcakes, you gots da making for a big honkin' case of shortsightedness. Likewise, if your socialization and education has revolved around a sense of superiority, inferiority, fear, greed or revenge, then, Honeycheeks, your shortsightedness is gonna stick out like a fat ass on a fashion model.

The good news is that there are eyeglasses for the near and far-sighted folk, and love for the shortsighted. Both eyeglasses and love help all kinds of individuals see a lot more clearly. See a lot more of the world around them. And the world within. And to see the amazing connections in and among it all.

You have to go to school to learn to be an ophthalmologist; but even the goofiest of us bozos can be a ophthaloveagist.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**August 3, 2008: JUNK FOOD**

1 Kings 19: 4-9

Get up and eat.

John 6: 41-51

I am the bread of life.

Go to any health food store and, sooner or later, you'll run into a Health Food Nazi: some pompously-biased bozo who will try to convince you that their way is the only way a human should eat. These folks are so full of tofu, wheat germ, omega-3, bee pollen, antioxidants and themselves that a Slim Jim bit them on their essentially-oiled butts.

You don't find junk food Nazis. Even in bars, truck stops and convenience stores. Junk food diners mostly keep to themselves. They know the value of barbecued chips, Vienna sausage and a cold Pabst; and they don't feel the need to convince anyone of it.

We know, of course, that not all health food is organic, free-range, all natural, lowfat or even good for you. Likewise, not all junk food is full of trans fats, carcinogens, sugars or enough sodium to salinate Lake Michigan. Some junk food can keep you regular.

The point is this: Chef Life serves up a bunch of healthy vittles and junky yukky every day. And try as we may to eat off the healthy side of the plate, inevitably we make bad choices and dabble in the doo-doo. Life offers us huge servings of sunshine, wind, clouds and dazzling beauty; and we turn our back on that fine cuisine for a diet of computers, television, moaning about the cost of gas or stupidity of politics. Eating off the junky side of the plate.

None of it's all bad, of course; and none of it's all good. But, when Chef Life whips up a pretty fabulous serving of sunset, thunderstorm, loving eyes or warm rain to walk in, you don't have to possess a degree in nutrition to know what's good for you. To know what will truly feed you. And, of course, we all know: you are what you eat.

So, will it be sitcoms or sunrises?

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**August 10, 2008: STARVING YOURSELF**

Proverbs 9: 1-6

Wisdom calls, "Come eat of my bread and drink of my wine."

John 6: 52-59

Whoever eats me will live because of me.

Anorexia nervosa is a complex disorder, involving neurological, psychological and societal components. The word anorexia comes from the Greek: *a* or *an* meaning "no" or "not" and *orexia*, meaning "desire to eat." Don't know about you, but I have a strong case of *orexia*. *Nervosa* simply means that it's not a strictly psychiatric issue.

Anorexia nervosa, however, is not the only way of starving yourself. Not by a long shot. Just as a sufferer from anorexia may be afraid of getting fat, there are plenty who starve themselves because they are afraid of one thing or another.

Fear of intimacy, for example, causes a whole bunch of folks to starve themselves of affection. Fear of success can keep many of us from chowing down on opportunities. Fear of growing older can keep mucho personas from delighting in the giddy and goofy desserts of age. Fear of expressing yourself can keep you from sipping the sweet nectar of your own juice.

Big Mama Nature is always in the kitchen hustling up some fine fare. Some of it will make you fat; some will make you skinny. Some of it will make you laugh; other dishes may bring on the tears. Her entrees can be pungent and spicy or soothing and comforting. Her sides can be tart, tangy or sweet as honey.

But one thing you should know: It ain't polite to turn down Big Mama's cooking. Hunh-unh. Not a good idea at all. Cause what she serves up is always what will help you grow into what you're made to be. And will help you realize that you are part of it all. Come on in the kitchen!

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**August 17, 2008: STUPID CHOICES**

Joshua 24: 1-2. 14-15

Choose this day whom you will serve.

John 6: 60-65

It is the spirit that gives life.

Let's hear it for stupid choices!

1) If it weren't for stupid choices, we'd have nothing to use for comparison; and would therefore never know when we made smart choices. We wouldn't know the difference. We wouldn't know what a smart choice was. In other words, if it weren't for stupid choices, we'd never make a smart choice again.

2) If we didn't make stupid choices every now and then, we wouldn't have any friends. Nobody likes perfection. Nobody can stand a flawless do-gooder. It's clear to see: Stupid choices enhance our social life.

3) We often learn from our stupid choices. Not always. Not even most of the time. But, every now and then, we actually learn something from having made a stupid choice. To be precise: Stupid choices make us smarter.

4) We all know that a single moment of good judgment is usually the result of years of bad judgment. Put simply: Bad choices make us better persons. And finally...

5) We all make stupid choices. No matter what our race, nationality, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or place on the babe or stud-muffin continuum, we all screw up. Again and again, we all screw up. Making stupid choices actually connects us with the whole human family.

So, the next time you make a stupid choice, stand up proud and say, "Yes! Now I am even more truly one with all humanity!" And know that, thanks to love, we're all forgiven.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**August 24, 2008: HALF-ASS LIVING**

Song of Solomon 4: 16 – 5:1

Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love.

Mark 7: 1-8

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Moderation has its merits. Some areas of life can use a bit of moderation. Daily hooch or drug consumption, for example. Or automobile speed. Number of sex partners, perhaps. Or how much chocolate cream pie you eat in an hour.

But, when your only mantra is “moderation”... when you measure everything you think, say or do by what is appropriate... when you begin to value reason and restraint more than passion and delight... when your only contribution to the world is a polite sip of judicious behavior... you can be pretty sure that, sooner or later, the Bland Gods will haul your sad and sensible self off to the Land of Vanilla where you'll live on Cream of Wheat and Saltines, watch sitcoms on TV, talk about the weather and listen to Barry Manilow for all eternity.

Moderation can be of use, of course; but it's not what life is all about. It can, in fact, even keep us from living. Make our time on this planet mere existence rather than passionate hooplah. When we're so busy tempering our behavior, our thinking, our beliefs, our way of living... when we spend so much time modifying and mollifying our daily activities and even life goals to try and fit some goody-two-shoes cultural/religious norm... when we confuse what is appropriate with what's worth living for - confuse what makes us look good with what helps us see, it can lose us the ball game.

Heads don't have a clue, of course, what fullness of life is about. But the heart does. And when you catch your heart's wind, Matey, and begin zipping across the waters, chances are that moderation and half-ass living will freak out, grab its carefully packed belongings, jump over the side and swim for shore.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**August 31, 2008: CLOSED MINDEDNESS**

Isaiah 35: 4-7

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened...

Mark 7: 31-37

Ephphatha! Be opened!

Some religions, philosophies, schools and corporations like to cap things up. Box things in. Itemize and categorize. Like to have things all laid out, put together, set up and nailed down. Call it policy, dogma, doctrine, statutes, rules, beliefs, by-laws or codes of behavior, it's all about organization.

And there's nothing intrinsically wrong with organization, unless, built into that organization there's not an exit door or two. Not a window to the outside and the unknown. A skylight to an infinite heaven where none of the organization's rules, policies and beliefs apply.

Lives can also be boxed up and closed down by an obsession with organized living: where everything must be planned, ordered, controlled. Where every action and intimacy, every conversation and bowel movement must be well-thought out and structured.

If Jesus was anything, he was an advocate for openness: Openness to new ways of thinking. Openness to new ways of living. Openness to healing and hope. Openness to forgiveness and love. Openness to the Spirit.

“Religion,” as Tom Robbins writes, “is nothing but organized mysticism. The problem is,” he continues, “you can't organize mysticism.”

When you close your mind or your heart for whatever reason, you are locking up your soul and spirit. And you should know that souls and spirits don't do well as prisoners. They can give you trouble.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**September 7, 2008: SUCKING UP TO THE SUPERFLUOUS**

Song of Solomon 8: 6-7

If one offered for love all the wealth of the house, it would be utterly scorned.

Mark 8: 34-37

What will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

With the publication of his book, Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan became a literary rock star. In that book, he coined the phrases: “global village,” “global thinking” and “the medium is the message.”

McLuhan's primary thesis is that almost everything we encounter is media. Not just newspapers, movies and TV, but everything from clothing to money to cars to jobs to trees to weather... it's all media, And, according to Mr. Mc, it is the medium which conveys the message that we hear. That we truly hear. And it is that message that molds, fashions and changes us.

If the good Professor is correct, then, would it not behoove us to spend more time with media which connects us with fullness of life? Media which speaks of fullness of life? Media, whose message is richness, breadth and abundance of living.

That would, most certainly, rule out most television and movies; and would, just as certainly include the media of rivers, gardens, thunderstorms and the Milky Way. And the media of skinny-dipping, dinner with good friends, quiet times beside the ocean and holding hands with someone you love.

When we suck up to the superfluous, whether it be in politics, piety or propriety, we miss a grand – if illusive – opportunity to dip deeply into the medium of life, itself, and hear the message our soul is always listening for.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**September 14, 2008: CONTROL**

1 Corinthians 13

Love is patient and kind.

Mark 9: 33-37

Whoever wants to be first must be last...

Funny how we like to control things: From our computers to our finances to our cars to our sleep cycles to our kids to the size of our butts. So many things to control, so little time. And all the while that we struggle to maintain even the tiniest modicum of control, we are riding on a planet at 67,000 miles per hour through uncharted space without even a diddly-doodle of control. Not only are we not at the helm; ain't nobody steering this ship. At least, nobody visible.

And, even if you believe in God and believe that God is in charge and would never steer us wrong, you can't be sure. And, unless you have the arrogance of Genghis Khan or the cluelessness of Gomer Pyle, you certainly could never claim to know the mind of God, much less claim to be in control of The Divine brain. Or personality. Or whims.

One thing is sure: Ain't no controlling love. Love is an outlaw. Self-governing. Self-determining. A free agent. An iconoclast. Can't tell love what to do, how to be, where to go or when to leave the property. Love sets her own schedule. She can show up unannounced at 2:00 in the morning, drop her bags in your heart's living room, move the furniture around and let you know that she just might stay for awhile. Or not.

Folks who try to control love usually end up in despair or on drugs. Like each new day, love offers herself to you in infinite ways. Rather than seeking control, we might be better off if we simply accepted love's gifts as they come, be patient when they don't and offer as much love - and in as many ways - as we can.

VIA POSITIVA: ONE LOVE**September 21, 2008: SAVIOR COMPLEX**

Numbers 11: 4-17

They shall bear the burden of the people along with you...

Mark 9: 38-41

Whoever is not against is for us.

There was a British study done in 2007, reported by the New York Times, on why only a few business entrepreneurs succeed while most fail. And one of the tangential findings was that most successful entrepreneurs were A.D.D. personalities or had A.D.D. traits. A.D.D. As in, Attention Deficit Disorder. As in, short attention span. As in, easily distracted.

Now, what was I saying?

Oh yeah.

And one of the conclusions of the study was that kids who grow up with effectively treated A.D.D. learn early on that they need to ask for help if they are going to make it. And, it is this learned propensity to ask for help - say the researchers - which enables them to get their new business ideas out of their dream world and into the business world. It is the entrepreneurs who solicit assistance who tend to succeed; and those who want to "go it alone" who tend to fail in their efforts.

It may take a village to raise a child; and it takes at least a friend or two just to get you through. To get you where you need to be. The whole point of a community is to support and encourage the other members of the group. To enable each individual to find some measure of success in living. The best communities exist solely for that end.

None of us can do it all. None of us are called to do it all. Some folks refer to Jesus as "savior of the world"; but don't forget about the disciples. Jesus called the disciples. They didn't show up. Even Jesus knew he had to ask for help.