

Ascend!—To Transcend!—All Our Dead Ends!

Acts 1:1-14 John 17:1-11

The Dalai Lama was 23 years old, and a Chinese general had just invited him to a performance by a national dance troupe.

The problem was he was to go without soldiers or armed bodyguards, by way of the Chinese military headquarters.

He sensed a trap. The word went out.

On the day of the dance performance, thousands of protesters surrounded the Dalai Lama's palace to keep him from being abducted, arrested or killed.

The protests expanded into a mobilization of rebel troops to fight and declare independence of Tibet.

As the Declaration was being announced, the Dalai Lama disguised himself as a soldier and slipped through the crowds outside the palace.

In his entourage— his mother, sister, and younger brother.

For two days and two nights they traveled on foot & on horseback without stopping.

To cross the 1,500-foot wide Brahmaputra river, they used a single boat made of yak skin, then continued on foot, walking only at night through the harsh Himalayan mountain terrain.

It took 2 days for Chinese leaders to realize he had escaped. They sent out a ground and air dragnet, but by traveling only at night, the Dalai Lama and his entourage escaped detection..

For two weeks, people around the world feared he had been killed.

Then he appeared in India. He was alive and free.

The Dali Lama's desperate flight to freedom is a vivid metaphor for the liberation which today—all men and women across the Planet Earth are seeking.

Like him, we are seeking both a **path toward** outer, physical liberation—and a **way into** inner, non-physical, spiritual liberation.

We are seeking liberation from ignorance & all barriers to universal education.

We are seeking liberation into universal health care and universal basic income.

We are seeking liberation from all autocrats!

We are seeking liberation from all the isms—sexism, ageism, racism, terrorism, fascism, consumerism, smash and grab-greed-capitalism.

Today's Ascension story in the New Testament offers timely instruction on

1. AN INNER WAY TO LIBERATION!

2. AND AN OUTER WAY TO LIBERATION!

The Inner Way that we may learn from this story is to nurture an attitude we call non-attachment.

In the Ascension—the disciples are **letting go** of Jesus.

Let go!—and let God do the work!— that God needs to do in every soul.

Jesus was leaving their everyday world and traveling into Deep Heaven!

They were advised to cope with this by acquiring an attitude of non-attachment—which we can learn as well.

Jesus said of himself – “*I am not of this world....and....My kingdom is not of this world.*”

In the Sermon on the Mount—Jesus taught his listeners to detach from their worries by considering the birds of the air who do not store up in barns—and the lilies of the field who neither toil nor spin.

Jesus knew money was important, but he advised to not become attached to money.

Here is an inner way to liberation—Non-attachment.

Non-attachment is **non-reactive** thinking.

Non-attachment means that in the face of the most irritating situation—the most minor frustration—or difficult conversation—instead of REACTING, you create space within yourself by praying to God and saying to yourself:

- I will be led by still waters.
- I will pray for **Thy Will To Be Done**.
- I will think this over.
- I will sleep on this.
- I will wait for more light.

All of you 12 step programmers know this well traveled path.

Detach from your worries! Your fears! Your obsessions and compulsions, and from the people who, as we say, “Want free rent in my head”. Don’t give it to them.

Instead detach with love! Let go and let God!

Non-attachment means detaching from the idea that you must be the command and control center for all matters in your life. You aren't anyway!

Your ego and its wants are like the surface of the ocean—**leaving out the entire depth of the ocean.**

Think of what is under the surface of the ocean of your life.

Just think for a moment of people who have come into your life—for better or for worse, and you will realize how little your wants and your wishes have had to do with how they arrived within the scope of your life.

Then think of the people who have gone out of your life—again, for better or for worse, you begin to see your own lack of control.

Now begin to wonder what God might be doing!—beneath the surface!
Begin to pray to understand what God might saying to you—
How God might be guiding you, loving you, protecting you—

Now you are becoming free— to wait—to watch—to discover what is really happening at the deeper oceanic level of what we call— **The Total Reality of Your life!**

Here is an analogy that will help you grasp the concept ofThe Total Reality of Your Life!

Look at this piano behind me! It's a wonderful piano.

When we were pretty much broke after the 2011 fire, and couldn't afford a new piano, Emily Davidson found it on the internet.

Actually it lived in someone's home in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Now, wonderful as it is, that piano does not include the knowledge of the piano—or How to play the piano! Or even how to tune or repair the piano, much less how to make the piano in the first place.!

So it is with our lives.

Our lives do not include the knowledge of our lives.

—The course our lives have taken!

—Why this or that happened.

—Much less where we go from here!

Our knowledge is partial, surface knowledge at best.

While **deeper within us than we can know**—There is what I call the **Mind of God** swaying our future—Even guiding our present path....just as the deep waters that are contained in the ocean are moving in a way that is not apparent on the surface of the ocean.

In the same way, the Mind of God is working above and **beyond us** as well—
—just as the sky and the clouds
—move far above the surface of the ocean
—to create future conditions on the surface itself
—in the form of storms, winds, gentle breezes
and larger, more massive weather patterns
that emerge to create future conditions on the surface.

So the Mind of God, operating **far above and beyond us and from deep within us**—is a much more significant factor in our lives than our limited vision & wants.

There is a Higher Power, a Deeper Power **at work** in all we do and think, all the time.

This is why, on Ascension Sunday, we say—Ascendance is Transcendence!

To ascend is to transcend!—all our dead ends!

To ascend is to go beyond the mind that you now have.

To ascend is to go beyond the thinking you are now doing.

To ascend is to go beyond the life you are now living.

An amazing sentence in the New Testament says: *We know that all creation is groaning up the present time.....repeat.....*

How prophetic!

Painful, harsh things happen in the world!

They erupt across the earth and nearby!

They erupt in our own lives and the lives of those we love.

Persistent inequalities bedevil us.

I learned the other day of a woman, bearing twins, who died in childbirth, along with one of the twins, because the hospital wanted money she didn't have.

I became a great grandfather the other day. Her name is Liliana Nova Cortez Myers. Bless her mother Andrea and her father Bartolo. I call her the million dollar baby because of the effort that had to be made to bring Liliana into the world and keep her mother, Andrea, safe.

Anderson Cooper, the CNN anchor, the son of one of the richest people in the world, Gloria Vanderbilt, also had a child the other day.

Think of the chasm between all these human beings, a chasm that leads to devastating social inequalities and evils.

As the apostle Paul said, “the whole creation is groaning, right up to the present hour!

For this reason, we also seek outer, physical liberation.
The Beloved Community as Dr. King called it.
Today, we know it as the Beloved Global Community.

Are you ready to become liberated to seek God’s Kingdom first—in your own life and for those around you?

Are you ready to be liberated by giving yourself to the workings of the Mind of God in the guiding and directing of significant matters of your own life?

We pray so.

I will bring this message to a close by noting a small observation toward the end of the story of Jesus’ Ascension. It is said that those who witnessed it experienced “great joy”.

I believe it.

It is a great joy to **transcend** the troubles of this life AND **ascend** to a view of another life.

We tend to think this is the only world there is.
But it isn’t.
It isn’t supposed to be this way. There’s another way.

“The way I am taking is the way.” Said Jesus.
You can find it. Take up your cross daily and follow me.
Become brave enough to help God in being God.
Become faithful enough to let go!

And let God do the work—
That must be done—
In your soul and in this world.

Amen. Ascension Sunday, May 24, 2020