

Take A Chance Before You Miss Your Chance—to Dance!

Psalm 13, Psalm 86:1-10, Matthew 9:35—10:4

*Take Your Chance!
Before You Miss Your Chance!
To Dance!*

What is the most important thing for you to do in your life right now?

Do you have a decision to make?

A chance you need to take?

A habit you ought to break?

A serious conversation to undertake?

A relationship to repair—or remake?

Is it time for you to—AWAKE?

I have a surprise for you today!

Four stories!

Then you pray—past your perplexities—to find and climb an upward way!.....

“Nikolai wanted to be a good person!”

“I can always be good’, he thought to himself, “if I can answer three questions”:

When is the best time to do things?

Who is the most important one?

What is the right thing to do?

Nikolai asked his best friends—a heron, a monkey and a wolfhound named Pushkin—how they would answer those questions.

“Always run in a pack.” advised Pushkin the dog.

“Stay close to those who fly high in the sky.” counseled the heron.

The monkey, on whose head a coconut had just fallen, said, “Stay with those who know how to heal your injuries.”

“Hmmh...thought Nikolai, “I think I’m going to ask someone else.

Soon, finding his friend Leo the Turtle digging a garden, he asked the 3 questions.

Leo—surely named after this story’s author—Leo Tolstoy— **smiled.**

Nikolai noticed that Leo was tired—and offered to help him dig.

While digging, a storm blew up!

Amidst the thunder & lightning, Nikolai heard a cry for help.

Running down a path, he spotted a panda whose leg had been injured by a falling tree branch.

Nikolai picked the panda up and carried her to Leo’s house and made a splint for her leg.

The panda slept, but then at the sound of a thunderclap, the panda awoke and shouted: “Where am I?... and “Where is my child?”

Nikolai ran from Leo the Turtle’s house, and soon found the baby panda shivering on the ground.

He carried the bear back to its mother and fed them both.

Now Nikolai himself was tired and cold. Leo gave him soup.

“This soup is good, Leo, but you still haven’t answered my 3 questions.”

“You answered them yourself.” replied the turtle.

If you hadn't stayed to help me dig my garden, you wouldn't have heard the panda's cries for help.

So the most important time was the time you spent digging the garden.

The most important one at the moment was me!

And the most important thing to do was help me with my garden."

Later, when you found the injured panda, the most important time was the time you spent mending her leg and saving her child.

The most important ones were the panda and her baby.

And the most important thing to do was to take care of them and make them safe.

"So," summed up Leo, "remember that there is only one important time, and that time is now.

The most important one is always the one you are with.

And the most important thing is to do good for the one who is at your side.

These, my dear boy, are the answers to what is most important in this world.

And that is why we are here."

What is the most important thing for you to do in your life right now?.....

A Saint's Story!

In the Lincoln bedroom of the White House, Martin Luther King and his spouse Coretta Scott King, are talking quietly.

In a nearby the sitting room— President John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy.

At this moment, in **my stage play**, *JFK: A Ghostly Evening*—the lighting is dim.

Then the Ghost of Medgar Evers, recently murdered for working to register voters in Mississippi steps out—downstage— and begins to speak:

Here is a royal quartet I never expected!

A pair of kings and queens!

A pair of pairs!

The one pair in power!

The other pair preparing a path to more perfect power!

Meanwhile we're all dying swiftly of too much hope.

The cause of our death is a silent army of dreams deferred.

Jack Kennedy has even asked himself!— what he can do for his country!

The answer is now filling in—yet remains largely unknown.

I do have affection for this President —even if he's not entirely cognizant of my people's misery....and their might!

“Just turn us loose! Let us go!”

We've shown we can hold onto the plow!

A larger tree-of-liberty' seeds, we sow now!

Martin! Martin! I am still striding toward freedom alongside you!—and within the hearts of my children!

And my wife, Myrlie! I love you, Myrlie!

I'm getting awfully hot though!

I'm hot enough to melt a bomb before it explodes!

I'm hot enough to melt hate—before this nation implodes!

Still, this gathering is a precarious place to be.

The collective exercise of creative reason

Coupled with disclosing hearts

Is delicate!

And dangerous!

I wonder if these rooms are bugged!

I wonder whether these walls are listening!

I wonder why I'm getting so hot!

Coretta--Sing to me!

Jackie--Show me that smile!

Let me stay here and mingle with some folks—who are really living—for awhile!

I have no more fear of evil days.

Frankly, I never did.

But I reject this manner of death as a path to become fully free!

Jesus! I'm hot! You can die of this kind of heat, you know!

Will someone please give me some cool water to drink?

Will somebody put me on the prayer list?

Are you willing to do anything to correct the larger fate by which I have been—to my grave—untimely drawn!

Say Amen, somebody!

Is that?—that raggedy ass Saint Peter ringing those bells?

Mercy!

Sit me up!

Turn me loose!.....

Turn us all loose!

Isn't that what we all need right now?

Turn us loose! Let us go!

Unlock this cage of our common woes.....

A Ghost of a Missed Chance!

Once in a dark, dark time long, long ago, there met in a dark, dark cave—**a king!—a medium—and a ghost!**

The King was Saul—“The Man Who Might Have Been”—because of the great promise attached to him early in his life—

—And his failure to fulfill that promise because he wouldn't listen to the prophet Samuels' advice NOT to establish a kingship in Israel.....

One night, before a decisive military engagement—Saul panicked at the prospect of the battle.

“What shall I do?” he worried. Who can help me?”

Then Saul remembered—yes!—a medium, one of the many mediums and wizards whom he, had personally banished from the land when he first became king and was feeling the full flourish of his power.

Saul ordered the horses readied, and as the moon rose into the dark, dark sky, Saul rode for the cave at the village of Endor.

Just before Saul reached the cave, he dismounted, changed clothes in order to disguise himself so the medium wouldn't recognize him as the king who had persecuted her

Entering the cave, he asked the medium, “May I consult with you as to a certain spirit with whom I must speak?”

The medium was suspicious of her bold visitor.

“Haven’t you heard that our King—the mighty Saul—on penalty of death—has banished all the mediums and wizards from the land? Perhaps this is another of Saul’s traps, only tonight I am to be the prey!”

But Saul was desperate! And he promised her—“*So help me God!*”—you have nothing to fear.

“What shall I do for you?” she replied

“Bring me up Samuel! Bring up the ghost of my old friend so that I may seek his wisdom once more.”

And then and there, this medium caused the ghost of Samuel to appear to Saul.

And the ghost of Samuel—who at first wanted to know why Saul was ready to listen to him now when he not listened to him when he was alive—reluctantly began to tell his old friend the awful truth that this was his last night on earth—

—That tomorrow would bring the disastrous defeat of his army—his own death—and the death of his son Johnathan at the conclusion of the battle!—

WHEREUPON!— Saul fell face forward onto the ground, and he let all the regret over all his foolish mistakes!—

—his missed chances!—

—and wasted opportunities—sweep through his startled and feverish brain!.....

A Jesus Story!

From the gospel of Mark!—as translated by Rev Eugene Peterson in The Message:

After a few days, Jesus returned to Capernaum. Word got around that he was at home.

Wow! Jesus had a home!

I don't think I ever realized Jesus had a home. Did you?

Outside Jesus' home, a crowd gathered, jamming the entrance so no one could get in or out.

He was teaching the Word.

They brought a paraplegic to him, carried by four men.

When they weren't able to get in because of the crowd, they removed part of the roof

That's Jesus' roof they're tearing up!

.....and lowered the paraplegic on his stretcher.

Impressed by their bold belief, Jesus said to the paraplegic, "Son, I forgive your sins."

Some religion scholars sitting there started whispering among themselves,

"He can't talk that way! That's blasphemy! God and only God can forgive sins."

Jesus knew right away what they were thinking, and said, "Why are you so skeptical?"

Which is simpler: to say to the paraplegic, 'I forgive your sins,' or say, 'Get up, take your stretcher, and start walking'?

Well, just so it's clear that I'm the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both . . ."
(he looked now at the paraplegic),

"Get up. Pick up your stretcher and go home."

And the man did it - got up, grabbed his stretcher, and walked out, with everyone there watching him. They rubbed their eyes, incredulous - and then praised God, saying, "We've never seen anything like this!"

I wonder if Jesus was thinking: Hey! who's going to fix my roof?"

Bring me up, Samuel!

Sit me up! Turn me loose!

Take him through the roof!

The most important ones were the panda and her baby.

There are things in life we receive only one chance to do.
 There are decisions we have only one chance to make.
 Words we have only one conversation in which to say.
 Moments when the world might escape its permanent woes!

Has there been a time like this consternation—when a door is open to change the nation!
 Let's walk through it. Start a spiritual migration! Change the equation!
 We close with a single application to our current social situation!

There is a great American folk song that goes: *Waist deep in the Big Muddy and the Big Fool says to go on?* It was based on the Ribbon Creek Incident, when a drunken officer ordered Marines on maneuvers to wade into a swampy tidal creek in South Carolina, which led to six Marines' death.

Well, we're waist deep in the Big Pandemic & the Big Fool says—Go on! Go on and end the Affordable Care Act, which, the Kaiser Family Foundation says would drop insurance for 20 million (in Missouri 500,000—in Kansas, 219,000) increase costs for 57 million seniors and disabled people, reinstitute the doughnut hole on prescription drugs, end many essential free screenings, cost at least 1 million jobs.

Instead of going on, let's alter our course. Try truth force!
 Before there's no recourse.

You don't want to meet the ghost of a missed chance.

Wouldn't you rather dance?

Amen.

Rev Scott Myers, June 28, 2020