

LESSON 200 • JULY 19

“There is no peace except the peace of God.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To no longer seek peace from things of the world, but only from God. To no longer wander off the path seeking worldly satisfactions, but take the straight path to God.

Morning/evening quiet time: At least five minutes; ideally, thirty or more.

Again we are not given specific instructions. The goal today is to cement our determination to seek peace only from God, not from the world. We find God’s peace through choosing a new perception of the world, a perception in which “all the world is seen by you as blessed” (5:3). The way to reach this new perception is forgiveness (see paragraph 6). Rather than forcing things to go our way, we forgive them for not going our way. That is how we find the peace of God.

You may want to ask your internal Teacher what kind of practice period will allow you to reach this goal. What form of practice will help you no longer be lured off the path by the siren song of the world but instead take the straight road to God?

Hourly remembrance: One or two minutes as the hour strikes (reduce if circumstances do not permit).

Search your mind for the happenings of the previous hour in which you didn’t get what you wanted. Then let each one go by repeating, “*There is no peace except the peace of God, and I am glad and thankful it is so.*” Realize you don’t want the thing you thought they could give you. All you want is the peace of God.

Response to temptation: (Suggestion) when tempted to seek peace from anything of this world.

Quickly repeat, “*There is no peace except the peace of God, and I am glad and thankful it is so.*”

Commentary

The basic message of this lesson is that every means we use to try to find peace *through or from the world* will fail; only the peace that comes from God, a peace that we already have as part of our created

being, is real and eternal. (Some good sections to read in conjunction with today's lesson are Section 11 in the Manual, "How is peace possible in this world?" and the Text, Chapter 31, Section IV, "The Real Alternative.")

Everything in this world ends in death. This world is hell, because no matter what course we follow, no matter how hard we strive, we wind up losing everything in the end. What a depressing game it is, when the only outcome is losing! This is the source of "the agony of bitter disappointments, bleak despair, and sense of icy hopelessness and doubt" (1:3). If we are playing the game of the world, seeking for "happiness where there is none" (2:1), we can only be hurt. We are "asking for defeat" (2:3).

We may not be fully conscious of this despair, yet it underlies everything we do. Ernest Becker's book *The Denial of Death*¹ is all about the ways in which we anxiously and firmly push the awareness of death out of our minds, burying it in the trivia of daily life, struggling to find meaning in something to which we can attach ourselves and somehow achieve immortality. Becker reaches the same conclusion as the Course, in some respects: that we are all insane, all bound up in denial and projection. The only difference between us and those called "insane" is that our form of denial is a little more successful than theirs. Yet in some ways the "insane" are more honest than we are. They have admitted the emptiness of the world and have chosen to create their own fantasy world in its place, or have become suicidal in despair. The rest of us still stumble along in naive hope that the world will yet bring us satisfaction.

The lesson asks us to give up the futile search for happiness through our bodies and the world, and to relax into the peace of God. If we can simply accept the fact that we will not find happiness or peace anywhere else, we can save ourselves all this misery. If I look at my own life, my most miserable moments have been those in which someone or something on which I had pinned my hopes for happiness failed me: a marriage, a church, a job, a noble purpose, a hope of romance. The lesson is saying these are not isolated events. They represent the whole. The search for peace apart from the peace of God is hopeless, and the sooner we realize it, the sooner will we find true happiness.

¹. Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1997).

“This world is not where you belong. You are a stranger here” (4:3–4). So give it up. Let it go. Stop expecting it to make you happy; it never will. “But it is given you to find the means whereby the world no longer seems to be a prison house or jail for anyone” (4:5). *There is a way out!* “You must change your mind about the purpose of the world, if you would find escape” (5:2).

The Text tells us the same things:

Until you see the healing of the Son as all you wish to be accomplished by the world, by time and all appearances, you will not know the Father nor yourself. For you will use the world for what is not its purpose, and will not escape its laws of violence and death. (T-24.VI.4:3–4)

To change all this, and open up a road of hope and of release in what appeared to be an endless circle of despair, you need but to decide you do not know the purpose of the world. You give it goals it does not have, and thus do you decide what it is for. You try to see in it a place of idols found outside yourself, with power to make complete what is within by splitting what you are between the two. You choose your dreams, for they are what you wish, perceived as if it had been given you. Your idols do what you would have them do, and have the power you ascribe to them. And you pursue them vainly in the dream, because you want their power as your own. (T-29.VII.8:1–6)

If we can decide that we do not know the purpose of the world, we will be free to receive the purpose the Holy Spirit sees in it. Until we give up our imagined purposes, His purpose will seem dim and indecipherable. It is the letting go of what we think the world is for that allows its only true purpose to dawn upon us. That purpose, in a word, is forgiveness; or as the line in Chapter 24 puts it, “the healing of the Son” (T-24.VII.4:3). Forgiveness is needed in hell, and this world, therefore, must be hell (6:4). Forgiveness offers, to me and to everyone “the escape...from evil dreams he imagines, yet believes are true” (6:5). All the world is good for, we might say, is for us to “learn to look on it another way, and find the peace of God” (7:6).

If the world is such a terrible, depressing place, we might think that logically, the way to find peace is to leave the world. To die. To

get out of this body. But that is not what the lesson says. "Peace," we are told, "begins within the world perceived as different" (8:2). Notice: peace begins *within the world*. It begins with a new perception of the world, not as a prison house, but as a classroom. Beginning here, the road of peace will lead us on "to the gate of Heaven and the way beyond" (8:2). But it must begin here.

In poignant images of a road "carpeted with leaves of false desires," we can see ourselves lifting our eyes away from the "trees of hopelessness" to the gate of Heaven (10:3). It is the peace of God we want, and nothing but the peace of God. In the holy instants we enjoy in today's practicing, we recognize the peace we have sought, and "feel its soft embrace surround your heart and mind with comfort and with love" (10:6).

The closing lines, given us for practice, sum up the whole lesson. Most of us, if confronted with the thought that there is no peace but the peace of God, do not yet respond with gladness and thanks. The message that "there is no hope of answer in the world" (T-31.IV.4:3) seems a dour and bitter pill to swallow. Instead of joy, we feel sad, and a bit resentful. We wistfully cling to our vain hopes that the idols of this world will still, somehow, satisfy us. We want them to, so very much. Only when we have learned to release them gladly and thankfully will we be, finally, free of their hold upon us.

Let me, then, in today's practicing, seek to find that gladness and thanks within myself. The Christ in me wants to "come home" (4:1). There is a part of me that breathes a sigh of relief as I begin to realize the world can never satisfy me, and whispers to me, "At last! At last you are beginning to let go of the source of your pain. Thank you!" Let me connect with that part of my mind that is native to Heaven, and knows it does not belong here; it is the only part there is in reality. The more I connect with it, the sooner will I know the peace that is my natural inheritance.