



LESSON 157 Into His Presence would I enter now.

Sarah's Commentary:

In this Lesson, Jesus starts by saying, **"It brings us to the door where learning ceases, and we catch a glimpse of what lies past the highest reaches it can possibly attain. It leaves us here an instant, and we go beyond it, sure of our direction and our only goal."** (W.157.2.3-4) It is an experience of the holy instant, which is free of sin and guilt, with no body or world to intrude on this experience of the mystical. The holy instant is also talked about in the Course as the final eternal instant at the end of our learning process. This Lesson is all about entering an instant of release and then returning to the world with a glow that is brought with us as a result of this experience. It can be a very powerful experience or simply an instant of respite from guilt and fear. It comes as a result of looking at the darkness in our minds, bringing it to the inner radiant light, and experiencing a moment of beautiful release.

In whatever way it is experienced, the intent is to enter for an instant into the eternal *now*, if only for a moment, where the past and future are gone. The reflection of Heaven that we experience in that moment will motivate us to keep going forward on this path. This is what Jesus means when he says in the Manual for Teachers that each step on this journey is heavily reinforced by the development of trust. In the holy instant, we experience true perception, which is beyond form, time, and space. It is the experience of the Self that we are in truth and that has never changed as a result of our imagined sins. It is a Self that we are, currently, but only somewhat aware of. When the blocks to love are brought to the truth, we experience the holy instant. Forgiveness is the means that we are given to experience the holy instant.

Sometimes, when people speak of the experience of being in the *now*, they describe it as being very aware of the sensory world, experiencing the touch, feel, and smell of what is all around them, and of being very present and mindful of it all. This is not what Jesus is talking about when he talks of entering **"His Presence."** (W.157) It is an experience of true perception, outside of the dream, where there is no identification with the image we think of as ourselves in the dream. It is an experience of the perfection of being One with the All, with no words to adequately describe it.

"Today it will be given you to feel a touch of Heaven, though you will return to paths of learning. Yet you have come far enough along the way to alter time sufficiently to rise above its laws, and walk into eternity a while." (W.157.3.1-2) This Lesson is all about experiencing the reflection of Heaven. It is a mystical state where we have an experience of the Christ Self. It is not Heaven, which the Course calls knowledge, for there is still consciousness of something that is an aspect of duality. Jesus attempts to describe what the mystical experience may actually look like to the extent that we can imagine it. This is obviously difficult because it is an experience that goes beyond perception, beyond concepts of all kinds, and leaves us with a new kind of vision that we bring back to the world. He tells us, **"A vision reaches everyone you meet, and everyone you think of, or who thinks of you. For your experience today**

will so transform your mind that it becomes the touchstone for the holy Thoughts of God." (W.157.5.2-3) It is all inclusive, where no one can be left behind because we are One. Jesus teaches in the text, **"And you and he will raise your eyes in faith together, or not at all."** (T.19.IV.D.i.12.8) (ACIM OE T.19.V.d.101) It is a "trans-formation" of the mind that recognizes the Oneness that is shared with all our brothers and sisters. In the ego world, in order for one to get, the other must lose; however, in God, everything is shared and no one loses.

With this experience comes **"another crucial turning point in the curriculum."** (W.157.2.1) Jesus describes it as **"a fresh experience that sheds a light on all that we have learned already, and prepares us for what we have yet to learn."** (W.157.2.2) This is a touch of Heaven where we experience the Love of God. It is a holy place, for we **"have come far enough along the way to alter time sufficiently to rise above its laws, and walk into eternity a while."** (W.157.3.2) Now, we can know the Self we are. Yet we can only get to this place by being vigilant in watching our thoughts, doing the Lessons, and by continuing to bring our misperceptions to the truth. When you ask truly and make Heaven your one goal, **"what you are asking must be given you."** (W.157.4.2) It is all about our desire to join our will with His today. When we do, nothing else is needed except this one Lesson. To come to this place in the mind means that we have been faithful to our practice, which will bring us **"more swiftly to this holy place."** (W.157.3.3)

"This you will learn to do increasingly, as every lesson, faithfully rehearsed, brings you more swiftly to this holy place and leaves you, for a moment, to your Self." (W.157.3.3) This takes faithful determination because the Course is about helping us to unlearn all that we have learned about who we think we are. All the concepts we hold about ourselves, all our beliefs and values, and everything our senses report to us are false. Jesus acknowledges that it has been quite a learning feat to teach ourselves what we are not, **"No one who understands what you have learned, how carefully you learned it, and the pains to which you went to practice and repeat the lessons endlessly, in every form you could conceive of them, could ever doubt the power of your learning skill. There is no greater power in the world."** (T.31.I.3.1-2) (ACIM OE T.31.I.3)

Because we have achieved this extremely challenging task in learning what we are not, he affirms that we can learn this simple Course. **"How simple is salvation! All it says is what was never true is not true now, and never will be. The impossible has not occurred, and can have no effects. And that is all. Can this be hard to learn by anyone who wants it to be true?"** (T.31.I.1.1-5) (ACIM OE T.31.I.1) The challenge is the undoing of what we have learned, which is all false. Fortunately, we are not responsible for the undoing ourselves. We simply bring everything to the Holy Spirit, who will correct our misperceptions. It is a mistake to think that we could fix ourselves because all we would be doing is trying to fix the image of who we think we are.

Jesus says, **"I am teaching you to associate misery with the ego and joy with the spirit. You have taught yourself the opposite. You are still free to choose, but can you really want the rewards of the ego in the presence of the rewards of God?"** (T.4.VI.5.6-8) (ACIM OE T.4.VII.93) Our ego thoughts torment us with their dark stories and fanciful wishes. With each forgiving thought, we experience more and more of the world of love, the real world beyond this world of illusion. We have taught ourselves that we have to compete and get for ourselves by taking from others. The ego's counsel continues to keep us in deep misery, although we may not be in touch with the depth of the pain; we have covered it over so thoroughly and continually by distracting ourselves from it. The only way out is to be willing to consider that there

is a world, beyond this world of illusion, that we can experience if we are willing to look at the darkness and release our blocks to love.

If you don't feel that you fit here, don't feel that you belong here, and don't feel at home, be happy that this is so. It is our suffering that motivates us to find another way. It has motivated us to pick up this Course. You have a higher calling than to be invested in this world. Now, all our special relationships can be used for healing. They are the basis for our special function. **"Your body will be sanctified today, its only purpose being now to bring the vision of what you experience this day to light the world."** (W.157.6.1) When the body is used in this way, it is sanctified because it is put to a holy purpose. We then experience ourselves as being in this world but not of this world.

No matter how many accounts one reads of the mystical experience, it can only be known through our own experience. It is totally transformative, but it is not just for ourselves. **"A vision,"** as a result of this experience, **"reaches everyone you meet, and everyone you think of, or who thinks of you."** (W.157.5.2) It is like the passage from the Section, **"The Test of Truth,"** in Chapter 14, where he says, **"You have one test, as sure as God, by which to recognize if what you learned is true. If you are wholly free of fear of any kind, and if all those who meet or even think of you share in your perfect peace, then you can be sure that you have learned God's lesson, and not your own. Unless all this is true, there are dark lessons in your mind that hurt and hinder you, and everyone around you. The absence of perfect peace means but one thing: You think you do not will for God's Son what his Father wills for him."** (T.14.XI.5.1-4) (ACIM OE T.14.VII.63)

What Jesus is talking about here is an experience that goes beyond the realm of learning. It is beyond the perceptual realm and beyond the body, time, and space, where we experience the true Self with no sensory input. There are many accounts of the mystical experience, although everyone struggles to put it into words. You have probably read about this experience described in various ways, but words always fail in spite of the effort made to describe the indescribable. Here is one such anonymous account.

"Here is my experience to the best of my recollection and vocabulary: Again, everything was connected---God, humanity and the Universe---were all one. I had the sense that my heart was the place of the Immaculate Conception, I had given birth to the Christ Child within my heart, and I was like Christ, all at once. I had the sense that all human beings at the deepest level were also Christ. In other words, the Christ experience was not just a historical story, but a reality that each soul can experience in order to understand life's purpose and God's divine plan. I regret not having the words to describe this experience as it actually occurred. Only those who have had glimpses of this level of consciousness will understand. Again, I saw that all living things came from the exact same source of light, divine love, and immeasurable compassion. Also, that deep within each soul, there is an innate desire and ability to heal the world. Of Course, each soul is unique in that it possesses different gifts and aspects of the divine source.

"I have tried to write about this experience for years, but words do not convey the magnitude of it. In the midst of this experience, I was gazing at the sky and I heard a voice that seemed to come from somewhere deep within. The voice said, 'You are the Earth Star.' When I heard this voice, I had a sense that I was being crucified with Christ. It was as if the entire Universe swept through my body. Yet I had the sense that I was also part of the Universe simultaneously. As all of this was occurring, I felt as if

my body were going to die. Because of my early Christian training, I called out, 'Jesus, save me.' At that moment, I felt a gentle breeze and again, from somewhere deep within, came a fragrance that is beyond anything I have ever experienced. It was the most beautiful combination of flowers, incense and perfume one could imagine. This experience lasted for 12 or more hours. By daylight, I had returned to my normal conscious self. It has taken me many years to understand that this was, indeed, a mystical experience that brought with it some knowledge of the meaning and purpose of life. It was as if I had walked through a doorway in my mind that led somewhere beyond my little self. This doorway led to a place of divine love, deep compassion, and truth that is currently present but not realized and acknowledged (not by most people, anyway). Also, I believe the part of me that was being crucified signified the fact that each living soul, in some way, must die to the 'shadow side,' for lack of a better word, or the ego, or 'false self' that is actually only an illusion and not eternal." [Anonymous]

Whatever level of experience we have of the holy instant, our learning still continues. It is not an experience that can be given to anyone directly. It is intensely personal, yet it has an impact on everyone.

You can see why it is beyond anything we can imagine or dream about, yet Jesus says it has been dreamed for us by the Holy Spirit; therefore, when our readiness is there, we will enter into **"His Presence"** (W.156) by remembering what we always knew and then taking this reflection of His Love back into the world. That is our ministry. It is certainly not about preaching and teaching anyone about the Course, or about spirituality. The important thing that we communicate is His love coming through us. It is a transformation of our own minds and with it **"all goals but this become of little worth."** (W.157.7.1) Notice that Jesus is not telling us that we will no longer have goals in the world but only that, as our experience of the holy instant increases, the importance of our own goals diminishes. He recognizes that it is still a process for us, but the value given to the world decreases with our increased investment in the undoing of the ego thought system.

"Into Christ's Presence will we enter now, serenely unaware of everything except His shining face and perfect Love. The vision of His face will stay with you, but there will be an instant which transcends all vision, even this, the holiest. This you will never teach, for you attained it not through learning. Yet the vision speaks of your remembrance of what you knew that instant, and will surely know again." (W.157.9.1-4)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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