

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 221

Peace to my mind. Let all my thoughts be still.

Sarah's Commentary:

Our Father comes to us in the stillness of our minds. In this stillness, we meet Him. It is our invitation to Him, and through our trust and faith, He is always there, as close as our breath. Left to itself, the mind continually ruminates on the past and focuses on the future. Thoughts go around and around in our minds until deep ruts develop in our thought processes, and we obsess about things that have happened in the past, or we fear what might happen. This keeps us from the truth of what we are and keeps us from the peace that is ever-present but blocked by our thoughts.

"There is no peace except the peace of God." (W.200) Today, we seek this peace that He alone can give. (W.221.1.1) For us to enter this place of silence and stillness takes a lot of mind training. When we started the Course, most of us were totally unaware that there is a part of the mind outside of the ego thought system. Another way to look at this is to see that our egoic thoughts are like a software program, somehow inserted into our hard drive. Thus, it elicits all kinds of feelings and reactions that seemed "natural." This is the nature of the conditioned mind, where we have learned we are something we are not. In other words, we have deceived ourselves as to who we really are. When our false thoughts about ourselves are changed, our experience in the world changes as well. We learn that changing our thoughts requires forgiveness. We are not exchanging one illusory thought for another, but we are becoming aware of our misperceptions and bringing them to the Holy Spirit. The darkness of our thoughts, when brought to the light of Truth, cannot remain.

This is what Course-based forgiveness is. It is about releasing judgments and recognizing that **"what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred."** (W.PII.Q1.1.1) Of course, this would only make sense in the context of the world's unreality. If everything we see in our brother is a projection of our own guilt and self-attack, bringing those projections back to our own mind is how the healing can happen. With it comes the recognition that we too are as guiltless as our brothers. When we no longer engage with our thoughts but simply watch them go by without judgment, we become the observer of those thoughts. The one observing is not the false self. It is the ever-present awareness. It is a place of perfect peace, perfect stillness, and perfect quietness. When we connect with this place, we rest from the seeming demands of the world and the body. With it comes a feeling of gentle, soft expansion of peace, beauty, and joy.

Jesus waits with us. He has joined us in our meditation time. **"God is here, because we wait together."** (W.221.2.2) Jesus asks us to accept his confidence. Why? He asks this because he says his confidence is ours. We are the same. **"Our minds are joined."** (W.221.2.5) There is no separation. Jesus is the symbol of the part of the mind that has accepted the truth. He says he is like us. The only difference between us is that we do not know we are equal to him. He is helping us to recognize this, as we learn from him to undo the ego thought system through forgiveness.

In Chapter 19, Jesus asks us to forgive him. **"I ask for your forgiveness, for if you are guilty, so must I be. But if I surmounted guilt and overcame the world, you were with me. Would you see in me the symbol of guilt or of the end of guilt, remembering that what I signify to you you see within yourself?"** (T.19.IV.B.6.4-6) (ACIM OE T.19.V.b.65) Why would he say this? He says this because if we perceive that he has something that we do not have, we are acknowledging separation as real. If he is innocent and the rest of us are guilty, it would mean that deep down we believe that he has something special that we do not. If that is the case, it would mean that he must be more special, and thus we make him guilty. Specialness, in the Course, is all about our brother taking something from us that rightly belongs to us. The undoing of this perception is what forgiveness is about. It is the recognition of our sameness with Jesus and all our brothers, without exception. How could there be differences with anyone, except in the dream, if we are all One Self? The process of forgiveness is the process of coming to the recognition day-by-day that we are the Christ Self.

This is how we come to know who we are as unlimited beings of light and love. We do so by applying this teaching to our everyday experiences and the people and situations we encounter in our lives. It is our way back to what we are in truth. Yes, there is tremendous resistance because we are so invested in our individuality and specialness, which we defend vociferously. It is why Jesus urges us to be gentle with ourselves and to take the process step-by-step. Nothing is demanded of us. We can take all the time we need. We are not guilty if we have resistance or even if we need to lay the Course down for a while. But, as we take the steps given to us daily in these practices, they take us closer to the peace we crave.

We can only achieve real happiness through forgiveness, based on the willingness to look at the beliefs we hold. It is all about coming to the recognition that our judgments are always wrong. In fact, we must come to the recognition that everything we think is wrong. All our thinking comes from being deceived in who we think we are. Byron Katie challenges our thinking by asking, "Who would you be without that thought?"

We are now in touch with the Teacher within in the right mind that knows what we are. When we turn to Him, we turn away from the incessant noise of the ego and trust in guidance. We do not look to the brain to figure things out, but turn to the Holy Spirit for His interpretation. How am I to see this person. How am I to respond to this situation. And what am I to do, if anything, with regard to this perceived problem?

We will not hear the Voice for Truth while our minds are in turmoil, but neither can we force stillness onto our minds. Our job is simply to look at our thoughts and feelings without judging them, denying them, repressing them, or projecting them. We bring our thoughts to awareness simply by looking at them without guilt or self-judgment, and then the Holy Spirit does the rest, as we willingly hand them over to Him.

We cannot heal our own minds. To try to do so will defeat us because the ego will never undo itself. We must let go of our way and turn to the One Who knows. It requires surrender, which we may see as a defeat, yet it is to give up nothing to gain everything. We cannot reach the stillness within by our own efforts. We must take the hand of Jesus and invite him to go with us through the darkness. The ego tells us not to go there, as all we will find is the darkness. But Jesus assures us that while we cannot circumvent the darkness, the light is just beyond it. The ego is afraid of this light, as it knows it signals its end.

Our part is to do the work to bring awareness to our thoughts as they come up and ask for Jesus to join us in this process so we can reach the quiet center within, where all truth abides. Forgiveness is easy because it is done for us. Our part is only to bring the darkness to the light, and then trust that everything else will be done for us.

There is no need to do more than this. We do not need to understand anything further about the process. In fact, Jesus says, **"For this is but another way in which you would still try to keep understanding to yourself."** (T.16.II.2.3) (ACIM OE T.16.III.11) And later he says, **"You do not understand what you accepted, but remember that your understanding is not necessary."** (T.18.III.4.11) (ACIM OE T.18.IV.27) We think we need to understand how all this happens, but again, Jesus says that our problem is, **"You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is."** (T.18.IV.7.5) (ACIM OE T.18.V.39) That is why we are told in Chapter 18 VII (ACIM OE T 18 VIII) **"I Need do Nothing,"** meaning there is nothing we can do to change the truth of what we are. The only part we play is to bring to the light the thoughts that block the truth of our Being and to continue to surrender what we think we know.

Today, when worry thoughts occupy your mind, or you feel anxious or distressed about anything, take a moment to step back, look at the thoughts, give up the story of what brought them about, accept the feelings, and trust that when they are given over to the Holy Spirit, you can now rest in God. When I feel upset about anything, or start planning or obsessing about something, I remember this Lesson and find that it is a wonderful invitation to my mind to step back and be willing to accept that I just don't know. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves over and over, as each interfering thought comes to obsessively occupy our minds, that we can choose peace. With practice, we can learn to let these thoughts go. They have no substance, but when we hold onto them, they obstruct our peace. Why would we want to keep them? It seems that these thoughts have value to us, or we would not hold onto them. The perceived value is that they define who we think we are, and they keep us invested in the illusion. That is precisely why we stubbornly insist on working out our own problems in form, instead of turning to the quiet Answer. This is the nature of resistance. We think we know better.

In the introduction to the prayers in Part II of the workbook, we are told that:

"We say some simple words of welcome, and expect our Father to reveal Himself, as He has promised." (W.P.II.IN.3.3)

"We say the words of invitation that His Voice suggests, and then we wait for Him to come to us." (W.P.II.IN.4.6)

It is a prayerful time that we spend in preparation of our minds, where we speak directly to our Father, then wait with silent expectancy, bringing our minds back into focus with the Lesson when our thoughts start to wander. It takes practice, so do not be discouraged by your interfering thoughts. We are still practicing the process of watching our thoughts and releasing them to the truth.

While we still use our structured practice, our dependence on the structure of the Lessons may have diminished by now; but, we must still stay vigilant throughout the day and be willing to continually invite the Holy Spirit in. We trust that He is always there in every situation because He is in our minds. Increasingly, we are recognizing that it is all mind. Everything and everyone we perceive is a reflection of our own mind. The Holy Spirit is simply a symbol of the light within our minds, rather than something separate from us.

And now we are looking at, "**What is Forgiveness?**" (W.PII.Q1) as questions are answered for us in this second part of the workbook, where "**Words will mean little now.**" (W.PII.IN.1.1)

I will comment further on this introduction and the question of forgiveness in the commentaries for the next few days.

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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