

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



Lesson 340 **I can be free of suffering today.**

Sarah's Commentary:

What would the day look like if we accepted freedom from suffering today? What would be present in our day, and what would be absent? Jesus speaks to us about this today, but it is no different than any other day. It is just that when we give reality to time, we put off until tomorrow what we could accept today. We think that maybe if we do enough work, the day will come when we will be free of suffering, but why not now?

In the movie, *Groundhog Day*, the main character relived the same day over and over again until he got the lesson; and we are doing the same thing. We relive our trials each day and will continue to do so until we learn the lesson that there is no need for suffering. We need not delay. We can welcome the Loving Presence at this very moment and experience joy and peace instead of suffering and pain. For this, we are told to be glad today. A day of gratitude can be chosen now. ***"Thanks for today, my Father. I was born into this world but to achieve this day, and what it holds in joy and freedom for Your holy Son and for the world he made, which is released along with him today."*** (W.340.1.5-6)

Until we accept the truth of what we are, we repeat the same mistake daily by believing in what we have made, believing in the separation, believing in sin and guilt, and fearing punishment in the future. What keeps us from the truth is the belief that we are unworthy of love. Yet Jesus says that this is impossible **"because you are the treasure of God, and what He values is valuable."** (T.8.VI.5.13) (T.8.VI.46) He goes on to say that this is because we did not make ourselves. All we have done is held onto a belief in unworthiness; but now we can make another choice, which is to release what we hold against ourselves and give it over to the Holy Spirit. We can simply side with the truth instead of our false beliefs. We can stop searching for what we already have. We are all the same, and we all want to know our innocence. To see a brother as guilty only hurts us. The light of God is shining in us now, but if we do not experience it, we are actively choosing to resist it, which is insane.

We can make another choice. All our suffering comes from the wish to be who we are not. This wish gives rise to our thoughts, which bring our experience of suffering. We develop strategies and defenses to protect ourselves from suffering. While we hold onto these defenses, strategies, thoughts, beliefs, and stories, we continue to feel like victims of external events. But there are no victims and victimizers. This Lesson helps us to realize that the cause of all suffering starts with our false beliefs that we cling to. We are now invited to look at them and allow forgiveness to shine them away.

We increasingly see that investing in our egoic thoughts only brings more pain, suffering, and guilt. The question is, why do we so persistently hold onto guilt and resist forgiving when we would be so much happier if we let it go? We resist forgiving because of our attraction to guilt and our determination to be right about the way we see others. We are still attracted to guilt because we don't associate guilt with pain. We think that projecting guilt and seeing it in others is our way out of pain. We think judging others and holding them guilty is how we maintain our own superior position of innocence. We see guilt as attractive because it maintains our separate self. Thus, as long as we see guilt as our salvation and love as our damnation, we will be unwilling to give up this false self.

We live in a split mind where on one side we want what we value, which is our own thoughts, and yet on the other side, we want peace and love offered to us through this practice. The continuing attraction to guilt, pain, death, victim, and victimizer keeps us rooted in the illusion, but this need not be. It is time to side with truth and refuse to listen to the ego. You are totally innocent now. You are the Christ. You are One with God and with every brother. Accept that as the truth. Don't wait for tomorrow. Choose peace now.

When we can see what we are doing to ourselves, our motivation increases to let hurtful thoughts go. As we see how we hurt ourselves, we become more willing to take ourselves and others off the cross. When we experience the joy and peace that come from bringing our unforgiving thoughts to the truth, we develop more trust in this process. Think of a difficult relationship you have and look at the resistance in your mind to let that person "off the hook" for what you believe they have done. This is an example of resistance to forgiving and attraction to guilt. Or think of someone you have elevated as superior to you. Your feelings of unworthiness in relation to that person are another example of this attraction to guilt. You are choosing to believe thoughts that are not true and maintain the gap with your brother.

Jesus reminds us, "**Babies scream in rage if you take away a knife or scissors, although they may well harm themselves if you do not.**" (T.4.II.5.2) (ACIM OE T.4.III.28) They think that their pleasure is in playing with what will hurt them. We are like those babies, believing we know where our pleasure comes from, how our judgments serve us, and what will bring us happiness. Jesus reminds us that our sharp-edged toys, which we think are the source of our pleasure, actually cause us pain. He invites us to look at how we hurt ourselves with what we think we need and want.

Jesus will never coerce us to give up what we still think we want, but he clearly shows us what the cost is to us. He shows us that our way only brings unhappiness. Thus, to release judgments is to serve our own self-interests. Our efforts in this regard are on behalf of our happiness. The ego tells us that once everything falls into place, we will know peace and happiness. Spirit says to choose peace now and everything will fall into place. Choose peace in all circumstances. Everything we experience is what we have called into our lives, and it is all perfect for our awakening, regardless of how we see it. There is nothing that *should* be different. We just need to recognize the perfection of it all. When we accept it all without judgment, we take a giant stride in healing.

In Chapter 29, Section VII "Seek Not Outside Yourself," (T.29.VII) (ACIM OE T.29.VIII."The Lingering Illusion"), Jesus reminds us, we weep each time an idol falls. We invest in idols, which we substitute for God's Love. We hold onto these idols, believing they are the source of our happiness. When the idol is broken, stolen, lost, or leaves, we suffer. We suffer when we don't have it and want it, and we suffer when we have it and fear losing it. Our only true happiness comes from remembering who we are. Any other search for happiness is futile. Until we are ready

to accept this, we continue to look for happiness outside of ourselves and demand things be different than they are. **"For all your pain comes simply from a futile search for what you want insisting where it must be found. What if it is not there?"** (T.29.VII.1.7-8) (ACIM OE T.29.VIII.43) Our attachment to our separate identity, to our specialness, and to special people, things, and events of this world will never bring happiness. As long as we focus on the idols, we will not recognize that the source of pain and suffering is in our own mind. It has nothing to do with how things go in the world. In fact, the purpose of this world is to keep us from the truth.

Jesus acknowledges that we are here because we still have hope that something outside of ourselves will bring happiness and peace. We wander aimlessly, searching for this "something" that we will never find, until we become "disillusioned" with our seeking, looking for happiness where it cannot be found. It is then that we become willing to choose another way. The power of choice is our own. We can take as long as we want. The question is, are we willing to look at our painful experiences and realize that they are of our own choosing? When we do, we can either ask for help to release them, or use these experiences to continue to justify suffering. What was meant to curse can now bless!

We all have this incredibly deep, prevailing desire to go home. We may experience it as a yearning for our childhood home, our desire to return to our origin, a yearning for the good old days, or a yearning for a peaceful place somewhere in the world. It is well described in the very poignant movie, *Trip to Bountiful*, which shows how deep and prevailing this yearning is. An elderly woman does everything in her power to return to her childhood home against the wishes of her family. The music playing in the background is, *Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling*, ---calling all sinners to come home. Another wonderful movie, *August Rush*, provides a similar theme of the pain of separation and the call to return home. When movies tug at something very deep within us by eliciting this longing, it is an indication of how much we yearn to know our Self. It is a longing for our true home in God.

Why are we here? According to this Lesson, it is only to achieve, in this day, a day free of suffering, a day of seeing with Christ's vision. Every day that we are on this earth, this can be our spiritual aspiration until we come to the realization of who we really are. When we experience difficulty in our day, there is such a temptation to feel bad. When we don't meet our own expectations for what we set for ourselves as spiritual achievement, we judge ourselves; but this is not helpful. The truth is that we need do nothing. We are already redeemed. All that is needed is to be willing to look at our judgments without judging ourselves and be willing to let them go. We do not need to fix or to try to change ourselves. All healing is done by the Holy Spirit. All we need to do is look, be watchful of our minds, and simply be willing to look at what comes up. Remind yourself that any pain and anguish you are feeling is a false belief that you hold and is not the truth about you or anyone else. Willingness is all that is called for. Perfection is a standard that the ego wants to set up for you so you can crucify yourself when you fall short. Continue to do the work, but be gentle with yourself.

Finally, we are reminded in this Lesson, it is a day of joy and gratitude. **"Be glad today! Be glad! There is no room for anything but joy and thanks today."** (W.340.2.1-3) With a grateful heart, let us embrace the Lesson and know with certainty that we have help along the way, and we can choose again, in every moment of distress, to be joyful in our day because our purpose is set. **"Miracles fall like drops of healing rain from Heaven on a dry and dusty world, where starved and thirsty creatures come to die. Now they have water. Now the**

world is green. And everywhere the signs of life spring up, to show that what is born can never die for what has life has immortality." (W.PII.Q13.What is a Miracle?5.1-4)

Jesus tells us, "**Make this year different by making it all the same.**" (T.15.XI.10.11) (ACIM OE T.15.XI.112) He reminds us that every situation, person, or event that we encounter in this dream is just another opportunity for forgiveness. And we do it over and over again until we recognize that this all the world is for. It truly is like "Groundhog Day". Instead of treating every situation and event as having degrees of difficulty, realize that they all have one purpose---the healing of the mind through forgiveness. That is what today is all about, as is every day. Make every day the same.

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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