

TRINITY NEWS

Lent III Freedom and Flow and Constraints on the Way

“No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it” (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

This is a huge statement of trust from the apostle Paul. He suffered beatings and shipwreck and the reviling of his former allies and friends because he turned to Christ. He knew what it was to be bound and imprisoned like Jesus before him. Like the master he also points beyond self to others as a secure way to prevent turning personal stuff into self-pity and private despair.

In the feeding of the 5000 in John’s Gospel Jesus made a statement that no one could come to him unless it was granted by the Father. The remark of Jesus linked his person to the will of Abba as a sure way of knowing him. For some reason that was too much and some of his disciples left him. Jesus asked the Twelve Apostles where they stood in the midst of other disciples, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter spoke for them: “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to know and believe that you are the holy one of God.”

It wasn’t only the enormous personal presence of Jesus that drew people. It was not only his acts of mercy and compassion laced with transparent love. It was also what he said as well. When he spoke it was with the supple strength of his whole being; it carried the weight of all his character, his innate and learned virtues and the love embedded in his heart.

If we are overtaken by life and false hopes dangle before us we may be drawn by it and suffer for it.

Jesus taught that the best way to find the persistent ‘flow’ of exhilaration to sustain us is to put others above our own needs. This can be gleaned from many aspects of his teaching. It is best summed up in “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This takes the thrust from ourselves to find our deepest respect in the way in which we show respect for others. The Arabic and Persian word *Movasat* means to have a passion for caring for other people, to put others above self. Dr H.B. Danesh, a prominent teacher amongst the Baha’i, one of the gentle Faiths of the world, uses this word in his beautifully insightful book, the *Psychology of Spirituality*. The soundest people that I have ever met are those who have a passion for serving others

above themselves. They make wonderful partners in marriage because their interest is in the well-being of the other person as well as a healthy interest in their own well-being. What is it that gives you the greatest exhilaration in your life? Where does the 'flow' occur, the feeling that you are really lifted above the moments that you are passing through in a way that raises your spirits to a new level? It gives you hope for your identity in the world as a significant person no matter how humble your contribution might be. Without a flow of some kind life can be rather flat and at times without any depth of meaning. What is the most important part of the worship service for you? What draws you into a deeper confrontation with yourself and the face of God? What makes you more conscious of others and draws you away from making comparisons between yourself and other people, and permitting others to do the same to you? What part of your life and mine is given over to MOVASAT, a passion for serving others and indeed for seeing others above self, the deepest way of securing our own identity within us that is available to us on the journey. "If anyone would come after me let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me", said the Master. He had already denied himself and given his life to others and discovered his inner being in such a balanced way that it still touches the heart of humanity. It stands before us as a luminous model of limitless love.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

WEDNESDAY.

- Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS:

Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 34;
2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:11-32