

Monday Morning Teaching by Cynthia Bourgeault:

*Exchange in the Teachings of Jesus; Introduction to Conscious Work*

Kanuga March 2018

Robbin: Good morning. I hope everyone found everything they needed and had a good night's rest, and here we are, the full first day of Wisdom School. I have just a couple of quick announcements. You probably saw on the foyer out there, there's a basket with questions for Cynthia. It's probably the single best way to reach Cynthia to ask her a question as anything arises during the week. You can write it down, put it in there.

She takes them back with her every night and reads every one of them. That's a great way to ask Cynthia a question. In our evening time, she pulls from those questions as it relates to the theme, as it relates to what's arising as well as, we'll be some questions too.

I'm sorry I forgot to mention, we have two staff members, Becky McDaniel and Elizabeth Combs who are offering early morning yoga at six forty-five every morning in the gym. That's six forty-five for about 30 minutes in the gym, which is just out the front doors and down the steps to the left.

Let's see, and then we also have for you as a gift for the week, spiritual companioning with Heather Ruce and Porter Taylor. They're two of our staff members. Your small group leaders ... You'll meet in your small groups today later, much more about that. But, they have the information that you need. I'll also put a handout on the same table as the questions for Cynthia so that if you'd like [00:02:00] to speak to someone in a companioning capacity during the week, they are available for you.

We also have someone, Marcella, who is offsite, who is another one of our beloved community members who is also available. So, please take advantage of that gift and offering. I think that's it. Thank you.

Cynthia: [00:02:30] Well, good morning to all of you. As we get underway ... Hi Andrew, welcome, welcome. I think we had a rousing good start last night in many ways and a rousing good start this morning. I know a few are just joining us this morning. The beginning of this morning is going to be at transitions and logistics in a while as we meet for the first time in your [00:03:00] smaller groups and you begin to understand and start to segue into the piece of work, conscious work.

We know that's coming up and we've all sort of figured out how to get it all moving smoothly. I'm going to take a little bit of time toward the end of my talk this morning to intentionally transition into that; how are you going to do your work? [00:03:30] How are you going to find your groups? What's happening next? So, be assured this has all been thought through by heads far better than

mine and that we'll walk you through the drill a little bit with patience at the end of the time.

With that, last night I introduced the major theme, the major metaphysical backdrop against which everything in our particular wisdom stream unfolds [00:04:00] and we named it as the backdrop of Exchange. I'll never forget seeing a quote that just knocked me right ... Knocked my socks off, from the South African born spiritual teacher Michael Brown, who wrote a wonderful little book called *The Presence Process*.

In there, he had this one line, giving-is-receiving, [00:04:30] with little hyphens between them so it's all one unbroken motion. Giving-is-receiving is the energetic frequency upon which our universe is aligned. All other approaches to energy exchange immediately cause dissonance and disharmony in our life experience. That's one of the most powerful and profound wagers [00:05:00] I've ever seen.

A wager in a spiritual life is not a doctrine that drops down on you and people say, obey it follow it. It says, "See if this is true. Live into it, experiment with it and see if it works." So, the idea giving is receiving, an unbroken dynamic exchange is the energetic frequency upon which our universe is aligned. [00:05:30] All other approaches to energy exchange immediately cause dissonance and disharmony in our life experience.

See whether that's true or not. I'll give you the rest of your life to find out about it. Final reporting is that the gateway to heaven. Anyway, that was certainly [00:06:00] the view as you look through the Jesus eyeballs. It's almost the only view in which His own radical view of the universe makes sense, and which it holds together. And also, in which it becomes immediately applicable in our own life.

In other words, when we start working through this portal, you can not only comprehend [00:06:30] where Jesus is coming from, but you've got the rudiments laid down for you to come from the same place if you so desire. It's this part that I'm going to unpack with you all today because I promised you yesterday that we were going to look at exchange as of fundamental theme as it plays through the lineage. And when we start with this particular lineage, you can't start much closer to the epicenter than [00:07:00] starting with exchange in the teaching of Jesus. So, that's where we're going to be this morning.

I remember once another story that stuck in me. I forget who told me this first. I think it was some random bishop coming back from, not from ... Coming back from a bishop's gathering, maybe a decade ago now in which they were addressed at their closing [00:07:30] Eucharist by the then Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church in America, Katharine Jefferts Schori.

Katharine had announced in course of her sermon ...Let's see, is this thing ... yeah. It's left my ear already. There we go. Katharine had announced in the course of her sermon that there is no such thing [00:08:00] as individual

salvation. Well, the House of Bishops rocked and reeled. I think that she was barely out of the pulpit before she was confronted with prayer books opened to the pages of personal confession saying, "What has happened to our tradition?"

But fundamentally she's right. Because, [00:08:30] in a religion, in a spiritual stream whose ultimate only mark of integrity is the capacity to love your neighbor as yourself, and that really is the only final measure of whether your Christianity is valid or not, whether it's growing or not. All the rest of it is just icing on the cake. [00:09:00] Are you growing in your capacity to love your neighbor as yourself?

And so, if you have a religion, if you have a spiritual stream that takes that as its core principle, as its core metric or algorithm, any idea of individual salvation is an oxymoron right? Because, it takes two to tango. [00:09:30] You can't love your neighbor as yourself if there's no neighbor. Sorry, we'd all be enlightened if you could.

So, this is the bottle with Jesus. It's about exchange all the way. Everything takes place against and in a backdrop, a dynamic relational field in which [00:10:00] exchange is its life blood. And the final end product of this continuous vortex of exchange, of giving, of receiving, of dynamism, the final product of it is abundance. A sense of the graciousness, of the fullness pressed down and running over [00:10:30] of the Divine love, of The Divine mercy.

We saw last night that the word mercy comes from the same root as the word exchange. So, we see it's a ... In a universe, in a world, an ancient Greco-Roman way of thinking about things that tended to feature God as related to changelessness, [00:11:00] static qualities, eternal principles, Jesus already had what you might call the quantum supervision where everything is moving, everything is flowing. I wrote in that little piece that you have in your handouts.

From top to bottom it's all about exchange. Exchange is at the heart of everything Jesus is about and is in fact, a fundamental [00:11:30] leitmotif if not the fundamental leitmotiv running through all His teaching. You can really see it as the master key that unlocks everything else. It's significant to realize how many of his parables are built around some form of exchange and how often they feature merchants, landlords and tax collectors, the money handling sector as their chief protagonists.

You'll hear exchange as [00:12:00] the operative metaphor in many of his most celebrated parables. The laborers and the vineyard, the man who discovers a hidden treasure in a field and sells everything has to buy the field, the shepherd who leaves his flock to search for the one who is lost. And most of all, in the parable of the talents, which we're going to be looking at this morning.

You'll find it also as a fundamental rhythm in the Beatitudes. As a matter of fact, even a structural principle; [00:12:30] blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the ones who give for they shall receive. I mean, it's set up. It's right into the structure of the language.

And in the Lord's Prayer, that some people argue was never a set of words in the first place, but a dance with the exchange. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come. Vertical exchange, which we're going to see. Your kingdom come down on [00:13:00] earth. And then horizontal exchange; give us this day, our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. In other words, there's this living breathing flow, which is not only a moral principle but a structural principle in Jesus's most beloved gospel teachings.

And you just can't go sailing through that. His [00:13:30] teaching doesn't work in a fixed hierarchical universe. You even catch it in his most profound vision that I'm going to return to on Wednesday. But, in that beautiful piece of mystical poetry in John known as the farewell discourse, basically John 13 to 17, the final teachings [00:14:00] with his disciples before His crucifixion. You have these beautiful lines, "I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me as I in you." In other words, this kind of inter-abiding. And then, "The glory you have given me I have given them so that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you and me, that they may be completely one."

[00:14:30] So, Jesus' oneness is not a matter of a static return to a source. It's not a state that one obtains, but it's a dance of continual giving is receiving, and that we become one because we're all changing places within a greater whole. That makes sense? So, this [00:15:00] is the kind of metaphor ... I would say His vision is pretty close to what the Buddhists would call interdependent arising where you can't pull a single straw out without the whole thing toppling.

Everything is wedged in this great relational field who's living, giving, receiving, breathing the depth and [00:15:30] breadth and force of the exchange between the parts is the measure of its health. And anything that goes in the direction of increasing exchange, increasing this field of relationality and interactivity and flow is going in the right direction. Anything that works in the direction of isolation, of cooping things [00:16:00] up into disconnected, discrete C-R-E-T-E, separated, boundaried, autonomous particles protecting their autonomy. Any of that stuff is decreasing the overall flow of the abundance of the mercy through the system.

Thank you. And so, once you begin to see that, you really understand [00:16:30] what Jesus is looking at. You may not get right away why he's saying it. We're going to come back and fine tune that, but I think we can pretty much determine that that's what He is indeed saying. To start a very simply with one that's a very familiar teaching, we have the wonderful image that begins [00:17:00] His perhaps most beloved discourse of all of Luke 12. The one that has the lilies of the field in it.

That whole thing starts with a parable that goes like this. The land of a rich man produced abundantly and he thought to himself, "What should I do for I have no place to store my crop?" But I should have such a problem? Then he says, "I will do this, I [00:17:30] will pull down my barns and build larger ones. There I will store all my grain and my goods and I will say to my soul, soul you have ample

goods laid up for many years. Relax, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "You fool, this very night your life is being demanded of you and the things you have prepared, who's will they be?"

[00:18:00] Well, that's the fundamental challenge. And then He goes on in that teaching to just heap up metaphor, after metaphor, after metaphor. Behold the lilies of the field, behold the sparrow, behold the hairs of your head. He creates a picture of a kingdom where every single piece no matter how humble in its intense particularity [00:18:30] is known and supported. He ends the whole thing with what's my actual favorite line, one of the favorite lines in scripture. He says, "Do not be afraid little flock. It is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

So, here we are like this chap with his barns trying to build better security systems, better locks, more room to store all our stuff [00:19:00] and all along, the stuff is given to us anyway as we need it based on our ability to dance the step of the abundance, which is giving is receiving. We find throughout the Jesus' teaching an implacable resistance to hoarding. If there's one thing that Jesus is supposed to, it's already. [00:19:30] We're going to look a little bit more carefully at why this is so. Not just from a moral sense, but from a neurological sense.

But, you have to realize that hoarding is not just about physical possessions. That may be the most obvious place, but there are far more insidious forms of hoarding. [00:20:00] The ego is the ultimate hoarder in a way, it hangs on to everything. One of the things we do is, we hoard our entitlements, you know, "I am rich, educated. I am a person of authority. I am a person of position."

You notice that the person's that Jesus tends to [00:20:30] go one-on-one with the most are the Pharisees because what they do is, they basically hoard the story, "We know that no Messiah could become from Galilee." They're so settled and smug in their intellectual and spiritual entitlement that they can make no room for begetters' mind. We hoard our principles, we hoard our ideology, we hoard [00:21:00] our self-justifications, we hoard our resentments.

All of these things, because we use them to line the nest of our fragile sense of selfhood. And Jesus would just set Himself against any kind of hoarding. He taught, you know, if you'd just described [00:21:30] His path phenomenologically, which means without putting any theological values on it but just saying, "Well, what is it? What's he actually teaching?" If you described it scientifically, objectively, how would you name the path?

He teaches the path of radical non-clinging. He says, "Don't go ... Do this." Over, and over, and over He stresses [00:22:00] that. In essence, He's really teaching something that's very similar to what both the Buddhists, the Mahayana Buddhists and the Stoics have taught. Don't hang on, don't hang on. It's not in the nature of life to allow you to grab it and embalm it. That's not how it works. But he's teaching it from a radically different starting point.

[00:22:30] For both the Stoics and I think for the Buddhists in a profound way, that the reason you don't grab onto life, the phenomena of this world, the treasures and trinkets of this world is because they are impermanent or illusory. It's subtle like grabbing onto a piece of big fluffy ball of cotton candy and all you wind up with is sticky [00:23:00] fingers. The language often in these traditions is couched in language of illusion. Don't jump onto the illusion, don't grab it. Of mirage sometimes.

With a general kind of subtext that the world you see before you is not real and not to be trusted. [00:23:30] Well, for Jesus it's not like that at all. He preaches the same kind of non-clinging, but for radically different reasons. For Him, the world is totally real. I mean the world understood as the reality of this field of the great heart of God in which even little sparrows and little flowers are not an illusion, but part of the extraordinary intricacy [00:24:00] and particularly of the love of God. There's no insignificant bit.

So, it's not that the world itself is untrustworthy, but rather that the world is abundant and provident beyond belief. That what flows through it is a coherence, an order, a beauty, an energy, a zoe, [00:24:30] a life force, that is a direct expression of the heart of God. This place is not some sort of illusory limbo. It's not a Plato's cave where we hang out in the dark until we finally are relieved of the burden of our bodies and carried off in our naked souls to heaven.

No, [00:25:00] right here like in that quote that I was reading from Barbara Brown Taylor last night, right here God is making God's heart manifest and you're part of it. And if you touch one single piece of that, you touch the whole thing. There's no kind of I don't have 2% of God's heart. When you get the experience of the heart, you get the whole heart. Dead on, as much [00:25:30] as your writhing little body can carry.

So for Jesus, the world was just suffused with the glory of divine tenderness and providence. The reason that He was so implacably opposed to hoarding is because that's the mechanism by which we dupe ourselves. [00:26:00] That whenever we go into any kind of brace position, clinging, defending, self-justifying, insisting, any of those actions immediately make you essentially spiritually blind. They cut you off from the whole and you can no longer see the abundance [00:26:30] that's flowing right there for all to behold.

Because fear, which is what all these motions come down to immediately clouds the eye of the heart. So, you can't see. You become like in my friend Kabir Helminski's wonderful analogy, you're knee-deep in a river screaming piteously for water. [00:27:00] So, for Jesus the non-hoarding is not primarily a moral tool. It's not a moral injunction. It has to do with perception. And unfortunately, you have to you have to step up to the plate first. You can't say, "Well, I'll believe that God's good when I see it. Come on, just [00:27:30] show me, just show me." Because in that position, you can never say it.

You have to do the scary thing first, which is to unkink, relax. Remember learning to float when you were a kid? Remember how like me, you turned turtle and you fought for all your worth and finally it wasn't until you did that [00:28:00] you learned how to float? Same way in this life. That any of those constrictive motions, the hoarding, the possessing, entitlement will make you spiritually blind. You can't see the abundance, which is actually objectively there, but can only be seen when the eye of the heart is open.

So, His world is absolutely suffused with the goodness of God, [00:28:30] with the coherence of God. But you have to be there in the right way in order to see that. That's what His teaching hinged on. And incidentally, I think it's not rocket science at this point to say that that insight, which may have been pretty radical 2,000 years ago, we've now got reams and reams documentation from it, from the whole realm of neurobiology [00:29:00] and all these wonderful things.

The HeartPath Institute and stick to it is simply the most popular, popularizing of a whole body of science that that can demonstrate exactly what Jesus was saying. That when we make constrictive motions, what happens is that the processing of our what's going on in the world immediately gets handed off to the amygdala, which is [00:29:30] the basic flight system. So, it's going to look out at the eyes of the world and see danger, danger, danger, and immediately begin to arm itself.

The other thing that happens is when we do that kind of emotion, is that the rhythms of the brain and the rhythms of the heart go out of entrainment. The pattern scatters and becomes incoherent. So essentially, even if you don't want to put any theological language around it all, what happens is that [00:30:00] if you have any kind of a reaction, you have less of your brain-heart body available to you and the only part of the brain you have available to you is your old reptilian brain.

What creative adaptation is going to come out of that? We've got a lot of documentation now to say that the direction He's taking in is good. What makes it so hard is [00:30:30] that before we can start the journey, we first have to step across the chasm of our own fear and keep our heart open. Even when it looks like the only result of that is going to be sure and certain death.

And with that we come to perhaps one of the most interesting of the Jesus teachings, which [00:31:00] is the much misinterpreted teaching of the talents. Now, part of the problem with this great parable is that we take talent too metaphorically. We immediately translate it into my gifts, my inner ... And it can sustain that interpretation to, but it really works best if you just take the [00:31:30] parable and deal with it literally for a while. A talent is a kind of coin a money.

So, here's this merchant. He's going away and he gives ... He calls the servants together. [inaudible 00:31:42] slaves and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off

at once and traded with them, exchange right? [00:32:00] And made five talents. But the one who received one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time, the master of the slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents. See, I have made five more talents." His master said, "Well done good and trustworthy slave." [00:32:30] The one with two talents came forward saying, "Master, you have handed over to me two talents. See, I have made two more talents." His master said to him, "Well done good and trustworthy slave."

Then the one who had received the one talent came forward saying, "Master, I knew you were a harsh man reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you did not scatter seed, so I was afraid and I went and hid your talent in [00:33:00] the ground. Here, you have what is yours." But the master said, "You wicked and lazy slave. You knew did you that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter. Then you should have invested my money with the bankers and on my return, I would have received what was my own with interest. So, take the talent from him and give it to the one with 10 talents for to all those who have more will be given, and they will have an abundance. [00:33:30] But from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

Okay, well this parable was not an advertisement for capitalism, although I frequently see it used that way. I've seen Sunday school classes where they're talking about the little lemonade stands. It's only an argument for capitalism to the extent that you understand capitalism [00:34:00] as spiritual capitalism and understand that what's really being exchanged here and what's really being increased is not money, but the bandwidth of human interconnectivity.

Incidentally just as a funny footnote there, there's a brilliant kind of reformer out in, social activist in Los Angeles. Started in [00:34:30] What's ... . I'm embarrassed to say I can't remember his name, but I met him at a global initiative, Women's Global Initiative for Peace Conference about 10 years ago, who understands that money like paper, dollars and bills will flow immediately as the outcome of creating first and foremost human flow.

Human commerce, connection, creativity, excitement and so that if you want to generate [00:35:00] wealth, you don't start with the dollar bills. You start with the whole creating of a situation in which human energy is generated and put into a relationship in which excitement, curiosity, compassion are sparked and raised. That kind of a system will then generate affluence, wealth kind of as [00:35:30] an emergent property of the whole system.

So, he's tried this again, and again, and again, and again going into small communities and not starting by microeconomics with small businesses or handouts or dolls or anything, but bringing people together and getting them excited around a creative project. Then things start going ... with the sense that

what we're trying to generate is, what the abundance [00:36:00] is all about is not a guy with Barnes, but is a collective abundance that dwells in the whole through human beings being in engaged, interactive and participating with their own hearts and rhythms in the stance of God.

To that extent that there is such a thing as spiritual capitalism, bring it on. But this parable [00:36:30] is really about the willingness to get into the game and what blocks you. You know, sometimes I think that the abundance is like the jump rope we used to play with out on the playground in school. Two people, one on either end and the line is turning, and turning, and turning. How do you get in? You just have to jump into the middle of the moving river. It's kind of like [00:37:00] that in this. You just have to jump in. There's no starting point. It's already moving when you jump in and it'll be moving when you jump out and if you're expect it to stop, you're going to wind up with a leg that looks like mine.

Anyway, notice in these three people, what's very interesting in the first two is that the proportion remains the same. The one they got five [00:37:30] comes back five, the one they got two came back two. That sort of symbolizes that what they're doing is a sort of even giving and receiving. So, it's not a measure of how much you have at the beginning, who's better endowed and who's less endowed. It's really a matter of playing your hand for what it's worth with what goes on the outside being the full expression of what's on the inside. [00:38:00] Numerical more or less does not apply here.

At first the treatment of the poor final servant, the hapless one who buried his talent in the ground seems unusually and even unconscionably harsh. and I edited it so we got out all the talk of hell and brimstone. It's harsh enough just as it is. You don't need to reinforce [00:38:30] the message with hell and brimstone. But you know, you might point out very well that the guy was not dishonest. He didn't steal the talent. He didn't embezzle, and when it was time for the accounting to be due, he brought it back.

So, in a way it seems really, really harsh for Jesus to come down on him or [00:39:00] for Jesus in the person of the landowner to come down on him so hard. But the point is that not how much he had, not how much he made. The landlord was not primarily interested in increasing his assets. At least as this story works as a wisdom parable. He was interested in bearing fruit, [00:39:30] bearing the internal fruit. There's a saying in the Gospel of Thomas that comes exactly from this and if it doesn't put the fear of the Lord in you, you're a stronger person than me.

It says in Logion 70; if you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you fail to bring forth what is within you, what you fail to bring forth will destroy you. [00:40:00] All a lot of people wrestle with that and you can get off on the wrong foot with that one if you think that, "Oh, I have something in me, some God given talent that God has given me and I have to find out what it is and bring it forth. If I don't do it, I'm going to get destroyed." I think that's a kind of overly fear-bound way of going at it.

It's not about the product, [00:40:30] it's about the process. It's not bringing forth something, It's bringing forth as a verb. That if you are actively in the process of bringing forth, if you're willing to engage the jump rope, jump in, live your life in that way of; all right it's a dance, it's an action. It's a field in which nothing [00:41:00] happens unless it's moving. If you're willing to live that way, you will bring forth what's within you.

But you're never going to bring forth what's within you by the usual approved psychological routes today, which is to go to an ideogram workshop or a spiritual director workshop or anything and say, "This is my inner soul. This is my inner gift and I have to force the world to open a space so I can [00:41:30] express myself." Ain't going to happen that way. You're going to get madder and more frustrated and more entitled.

You just jump in wherever the now is with your heart and your soul. That's the game of increasing the talents. Who you are will flow out the back end of it just like a stern wake flows out the back end of a boat that's [00:42:00] moving toward its lighthouse. So, that's the sense. And of course when you see, when you see why and we're going to ... We won't see the whole of this picture until we get to Teilhard on Thursday.

But there is a basic evolutionary principle at stake here that I think that Jesus is more than intuiting and brings us back [00:42:30] to Katharine Jefferts Schori. That all along the evolutionary curve, the next higher level of advancement takes place when units come together to form larger units. Larger units that have in them properties that belong to the whole, they can't be found in the parts. [00:43:00] So, starting very very simply, you know, the two Hs get together with the one O back in that great primordial soup and all of a sudden you have something brand new that was never heard of before, water.

So, it's a new evolutionary unit and all those properties that's allowed this whole beautiful blue planet to get rolling live in the waterness. [00:43:30] If you take it apart back to the two Hs and the O, you don't have the waterness anymore. In the same way for Jesus and if what we see in this "love your neighbor as yourself," this interchangeability, there's the intimation that we human beings are being called to form a new evolutionary unit in which the abundance, the mercy of God, is made manifest in the whole [00:44:00] and not in the parts. And that any attempt to seal yourself off from the greater relational interface is going to result in an impoverishment of the whole system

You can kind of see this playing out just across the cultural wars of our times. I noticed myself just back from the [00:44:30] Caribbean where you got these neighborhoods that are desperately poor in one way, but everybody's together. There's a communal, they're sharing their food for lunch, there's dancing on the street. There's spontaneous interactions.

And then you go across the way to the remains of the gated upscale resort communities that the hurricanes just about destroyed but not quite enough. And all [00:45:00] of a sudden, it becomes deathly still. There's a gate and then

there's more gates before each houses and there are signs that say "no trespassing." There's pictures of guard dogs and there's security cameras going ... and there's no interaction. No neighbor would come and knock on the door of another neighbor's gated door [00:45:30] because you'd probably get shot.

When you realize that what we've really built and the sickness that's spread across this country like a cancer on the face of the heart of God. That in these places where wealth has accumulated, instead of being the fruit of interactivity, it becomes the means to sustain [00:46:00] isolation and there's no energy. There's no throb as all these autonomous little units just repetitively do the same thing. Each one drives their child to their prep school with their own respective chauffeur or nanny. Carpooling, u-huh. So, you see that it becomes a sickness.

If the real goal of the planet, if the real goal [00:46:30] is the revelation of the heart of God, then the things that increase isolation are going in the wrong direction according to the Jesus thing. And, the use of affluence to increase and enforce isolation and separation is a sin against the heart of God. And I think in a deep and fundamental way, we're paying for that sin.

If you [00:47:00] look at our universe as operating according to some very deep karmic laws, this is not just about political upheavals. It's about our having forgotten essentially our evolutionary imperative. Our having forgotten that we're here to increase the flow of the divine mercy by giving ourselves fully [00:47:30] and unabashedly to the dance. That makes sense? This is all implicit in the Jesus economics.

The final one and that one that I'd just like to make a quick reference to is the beautiful and much misunderstood parable of the laborers in the vineyard. You all know the story of this, that there was the vineyard [00:48:00] owner and he wanted people there working in his vineyard, get his crops harvested. So, he went out and contracted with labors at sunrise, the ones that were just there right on the spot to go work in his vineyard for the usual daily wage.

Then he went out again at nine, and he went out again at 12 and he wandered around at three in the afternoon and saw a bunch of guys straggling along and says "Well, why aren't you working for [00:48:30] God's sake." They say, "Because nobody's asked us." He says, "Well, you to go into the vineyard." And then finally when it comes time to settle up accounts, he winds up giving everybody the same amount of money.

Well, that just drives egoic consciousness nuts. Look at that parable, I think it's without a doubt the hardest one in the whole bunch. Talk about a koan, that one is a koan. "It's not fair!" everybody screeches. [00:49:00] And it won't be as long as you're using the ego grid that's on more or less, and as long as your attention in that parable is got to, well the ones that got there first got a bum deal, you're not going to be able to see the real thing that's working here.

This parable will only work when you assume [00:49:30] that it's basis is not about getting his crops harvested so he can make more money. That the vineyard is as it tends to be throughout Jesus' teaching, a symbol of this relational field, of this dynamic interactiveness. And whatever you may project onto the vineyard owner, for the reason he's bringing people in, what he actually states [00:50:00] is that he's bringing them in because he can't stand to see them just sitting around isolated, "You to go into the vineyard."

And the real fruit of this day in the vineyard is not a bunch of grapes harvested, but is human beings working together doing something that's dignified. You could imagine the songs, and the work and all those tasks that [00:50:30] happen when you're participating in and engaged jointly in an activity. The idea of paying them the same really just invites people to put their attention on what the real proportions are. That when you introduce more and less into the equation at the end, you're just again separating, scattering [00:51:00] what's already there. The bottom line of this story is that everybody has enough.

It's established in the story that enough, that they contract. They said the ones that came in early thought the usual daily wage was fair. That's taken care of. Everybody has enough. The real fruit being generated just like grapes turn into wine, so work together in these circumstances are fermented [00:51:30] and transformed into some fragrance of human interactivity and abundance that doesn't exist otherwise.

So, when you start reading this parable with the eye of the heart and against the backdrop of a relational field rather than against the backdrop of individual competition, all of a sudden whole different [00:52:00] elements of it jump out at you. And without that jumping out, you simply can't see where He's going. That's why I always call this particular parable the litmus test of the consciousness you're bringing to it. Just like a Buddhist koan.

When you're trying to work at it with your mind, you'll never get it because your mind will keep coming back to more and less, it's not fair. It's not until you can [00:52:30] start with the fullness of the love and the order that arises on it that you see what's being said and how radical this is.

We're going to keep coming back all week to the fact that Jesus, if we get Him right and if we take Him with full seriousness is that just coming on as a kind of individual, bright spiritual teacher even if He is the Son of God setting up this new religious philosophy, this new teaching. [00:53:00] What He's doing is speaking accurately out of the heart of the earth about an evolutionary trajectory, which takes us irresistibly and irreversibly toward the full expression of the heart of God.

The full release of the quantum [00:53:30] mercy that is implicit and latent into this heart till it's been released and made manifest as the whole fullness of the human condition. Of not just the human, the planetary, the universal. From corals and rocks to some superhuman far beyond us. Until that's all been revealed, gathered up, danced, the heart [00:54:00] of God will not have spoken

its word. That's the only direction things are going. That's the scale of the thing. It's not about Donald Trump, it's not about protecting Medicare. It's about the ultimate, irreversible revelation of the heart of God and the fullness of love.

We get by some inscrutable privilege that who knows where it came from, [00:54:30] the right to be conscious, perceiving units for one nano second of this journey of revelation. We get the invitation to go into the vineyard, to take our two talents and multiply them in the tango of abundance. We get that and it's only in stepping [00:55:00] up and saying yes to that dance in all its uncertainty and all its messiness and trusting the relational field to hold, that we're going to actually be participants in the birthing of this thing that's the only thing the cosmos has ever been about or gives a damn about.

That's the scale of the thing that we're going to be touching again, and again, and again. So, don't see Jesus as just the head of religion. I'm [00:55:30] not even sure that it's useful in terms of really understanding the scale of things. To keep fine tuning theologically, is He the only Son of God? Is he different from everybody? I mean, what's the point? It just locks you and theological riddles. The point is the invitation that he comes as the true mouthpiece and modeler of where this whole thing is going at the right [00:56:00] scale and at the depth of heart. Inviting us to step across that lentil and start dancing.

I'm only going to raise one more point that I want to put in here because I'll pick this up in practice this afternoon and that is that the methodology that Jesus is always suggesting, you know, how do you jump into the dance? How do you participate in the abundance? And the practice [00:56:30] that he brings again and again to show you how to do this, is the practice which St Paul later named kenosis, self-emptying or letting go. The way you jump into it is by letting go of that which you're clinging to in any given moment.

Raimon Panikkar, the great mystical, [00:57:00] interspiritual theologian died about seven or eight years ago has this wonderful line that's right up there with giving is receiving. He says, "I am one with the source as I to act like a source by letting all I have received flowing again." That's what a source does doesn't it? It sustains a nature, nurtures. [00:57:30] There's so many kind of religious visions of, I want to be one with the source, which means I get up there in eternal changeless and just hang on to it? Nuh-uh.

Source is as source does. Source germinates, source nurtures, source engenders, source gives itself away. If you want to be a source, read the job description before you [00:58:00] sign up. So anyway, it's a continuous flowingness and it's a rigorous willingness and honesty to notice where you are getting caught. You cannot notice [00:58:30] that with your mind, sorry. Because, your mind will always compulsively go to self-justification. It will say, "I'm doing this because," and give you the very good reason.

Mind just cannot tolerate. By of mind I mean ego mind, can't tolerate anything that seems to threaten its rectitude because we constantly mistake our identity for [00:59:00] our rectitude. Fatal trap. So, it just can't take it. Emotions tell it a

little bit more reliably, but a motions to our very, very vulnerable to personal agendas and wishes and yearnings. The place where you'll begin to know when constriction is happening is through you're moving center. Through just being tuned in enough to notice when [00:59:30] your body goes into contraction, constriction, bracing and to begin by relaxing that.

Just don't let the body language get tense, and then the mind will relax around it. We're going to talk about that more this afternoon. But the point to flag as we end this morning ii [01:00:00] this section of the morning is to realize that the way in, the gateway for Jesus into the direct perception of this radical abundance, this relational field in which exchange is the lifeblood is through the process of letting go, non-clinging, non-constricting. If we've got that much, and remember that this is not a moral [01:00:30] act but a perceptual one. Its purpose is to cleanse the lens of perception so that we can actually see the whole in which were beautifully and safely immersed. That makes sense?

So, Paulette, are you around? Paulette Meier? Are you willing to be put on the spot? Of course you are, that's what we hired you for. There's a beautiful, beautiful chant about [01:01:00] flow and abundance and I'm going to bring this back a couple times in different contexts this week. The William Robinson, the streams of my Father's love, because it ... This beautiful chant was ... Well, Paulette, tell us the history of this chant, the fine William Robinson who wrote it.

Paulette Meier: William Robinson ... Is it on?

Cynthia: It will be shortly.

Paulette Meier: [01:01:30] William Robinson was a Quaker in the 1600s. He was one of three people who were condemned to death. They were going to be hung in Boston Commons, because Quakers were not supposed to come into Massachusetts. At that point it was run by the Puritans and they were not allowing Quakers in and three Quakers decided [01:02:00] that they were going to go up against that to try to push for Religious Liberty. He was going to be hanged in Boston Commons with another man and also a woman, Mary Dyer. He wrote this in the letter right before he died, the day before.

Cynthia: Sense the flow in this. Why don't you say the words first okay?

Paulette Meier: The streams of my Father's love run daily through me. [01:02:30] From the holy fountain of life to the seed throughout the whole creation. When I sing this, I go back and forth between mother and father because early Quakers were mystics and sometimes they interchanged those genders as mystics.

(singing)

Cynthia: [01:06:00] Thank you Paulette. Thank you William. So, as we begin to move now into the section of the day that has to do with conscious outer work, work in the world and I'm going to explain about that in a minute, we always had invite you

in Wisdom School to take an inner task that allows you to stay in some sense connected with that deeper memory, [01:06:30] what am I here for? Why am I really here doing whatever kind of task I'm going to be doing?

I invite you as your inner work to let this chant play through your body. To consider what would happen if you are exactly where William sees, a point, a riverbed through which this gushing flow of the Father's love or the mother's [01:07:00] love is flowing like the Mississippi, connecting the holy fountain of life, divine source with the seed. Its potential manifestations scattered throughout the con and that river is running right through your being, nurturing, empowering, connecting. See if you can sense that in your body as you're going about your tasks.

[01:07:30] The purpose of work as we move through this, remember we're using a Benedictine rhythm is to first of all allow your bodies, your moving centers to provide themselves as vessels. To assimilate this teaching so that you're not trying to do it all in your head. The idea is not to go out there and try and think about or remember anything that I said, but as a matter of fact, if you do anything, [01:08:00] don't remember it. Let it go. You may have it in notes or it's all being videoed so you can see it again. Let it go.

Let it flow away like the river moving on and allow yourself to be in your body because your body has received it. Your body is knowing it and your body will create the structure that will help you process and ground-truth it. So, simply that's one of the things to get you out moving, allowing your feet [01:08:30] and your hands and your arms to do it, to be part of learning the teaching. Key piece of wisdom learning.

Second is to practice mindfulness both in its internal dimension of letting go of all those tricks of the attention that try and pull us out of the moment into thinking about what's coming or what was passed and [01:09:00] emotions into likes and dislikes and preferences into saying, "Oh, I'm just going to noodle and coast." It's a constant invitation to refocus your body and brain in the now, doing a job that your ego hopefully won't get too messed up in because you don't have anything invested in it. It's not going to be about how well you did, sorry.

So, it's to allow [01:09:30] that. And also mindfulness in the sense that we are in a relational field and that our work is in and of and for and toward the whole of sentient beings. Too often you flick on a light and you forget all the motions that had to happen in the cosmos to allow that light to be flicked on so that you could check your email. So, it's to increase [01:10:00] mindfulness and finally, to offer you an opportunity for self-observation.

In other words, to notice if you want. How your attention gets stolen, how sometimes just gesture and pacing and timing that you fall into automatically because we all do when we work can steal your energy and can rattle a whole group. Watch well in pattern, relational patterns, behavior patterns, [01:10:30] all that kind of stuff. It gives you a valuable food to see where your egoic system

is leaking energy so there isn't enough recollection left for being. We talk about this more and work with it more, but those are the purposes of work.

The idea is to work in a way that is as contained as possible. Favoring [01:11:00] quiet, it's not like you can't say anything but you're not just there chatting up your neighbors while you're doing some sort of idiot stuff. That doesn't reference the parts of you that are doing the job. It's to be present, to be contained, to be inward, to be there, to exchange language as you need to. Your group leaders may from time to time ask you to stop [01:11:30] for a moment. Remember the inner task. Remember (singing).

Recollect yourself and when you're refocused and recollected, move on. We will work precisely up until the end of the work period, which will end just enough ahead of 12 to let you get finished with your tools and get up there for lunch. And it's important [01:12:00] to end as promptly as you began.

With those as the kind of general protocol of how we do it, I'm now going to invite Jeanine Siler Jones up here who has beautifully organized every detail of our work duty to give you a little bit of a talk about what we're going today and how you're go and find yourself and find your group. Okay Jeanine, over to you my dear.

Jeanine Jones: Good morning everyone.

Cynthia: Hi.

Jeanine Jones: [01:12:30] We were trying to think of some indoor tasks today, so everyone will be inside. Then we'll be doing some outside tasks the rest of the week. About two thirds of you are going to be creating plarn, which is plastic yarn. The plastic yarn will become not by you, not crocheting, but you will create the [01:13:00] plarn that will allow the volunteers at Haywood Street Community in Asheville, North Carolina to create sleeping mats for the homeless population that we are in relationship with. They are finding these very helpful as they are on the streets during the day.

We are collaborating with Haywood Street Community, and we are as they said to me, "You all will be creating [01:13:30] the salad bar and we will create the salad later." And so, know that the plarn that you make will go to make these mats. Your group leaders will teach you how to do that. And the way that you will find your group leaders is, when we adjourn at a little before 11, we will meet in the gym, which is right to my left and your right.

On the gym wall, [01:14:00] there are numbers so that you can begin to collect yourself in your group number, which is on the back of your name tag. So, find yourself collecting yourselves in group numbers. Your team leader will then meet you there. You will get the materials you need. You will be directed to where you will go and go together to begin the conscious work and to remember the [01:14:30] riverbed that we are as we do this inner and outer work.

Cynthia: Thank you.

Jeanine Jones: Did I forget anything?

Cynthia: Is that all clear to everybody? So, by a little before 11, show up at the gym, look for your number posted on the wall and go meet your team leader and your teammates for the first time.

Jeanine Jones: And for the team leaders, the information about where you're going is also in the gym if you have forgotten.

Cynthia: I will meet here with the music team [01:15:00] at 11. The music team will be here in Balthis to get ourselves organized for the feasts. It was pretty neat last night wasn't it? Not bad for a group that had only been together for an hour or so. So, we'll continue the inquiry. Okay, thank you very much for your attention this morning. Take a well-deserved break and we'll see you at lunch time.