

Good News



The word “Gospel” means “Good News.”

The reason it’s called the Good News is because—surprise of surprises—mistake, failure, and sin are part of the salvation equation. I want to share again these words from Julian of Norwich, because they are so powerful: “First there is the fall, and then we recover from the fall. Both are the mercy of God!” Even the fall is the mercy of God. How scandalous! We’ve spent all our life trying to avoid the fall because we didn’t want to look bad. Yet spirituality isn’t about perfection. The journey of human and spiritual development isn’t a straight line forward.

The only perfection available to us humans is the ability to include and forgive our imperfection. But the ego doesn’t want to believe that. The ego doesn’t want to surrender to its inherent brokenness and poverty. Yet the truth is, realizing your imperfection is the beginning of freedom and grace. There is such freedom in no longer pretending to be something we’re not.

The only real sin is to doubt or deny the basic axial connection between us and God. Sin is simply any lack of conscious awareness and participation in our union with God. Naturally, we forget or mistrust and “sin” often. There seems to be a dance in and out of conscious connection again and again. It’s the necessary pattern of fall and hopeful return. That’s why Jesus tells so many stories about losing and finding, such as the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (see Luke 15). Indeed, God rejoices over the lost returning home: “There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance” (Luke 15:7).

The ninety-nine righteous people in this parable are focused on the spirituality of perfection. They may brag about what good Christians they are, how generous their offerings are, and how regular their church-attendance. They think they know where their perfection lies, but true wisdom comes from knowing that you don’t know. This is “learned ignorance.”

You have to learn how imperfect you are. Eastern religions call this beginner’s mind. The more mature you grow, the more you discover that you are still a beginner; you still don’t know anything. In other words, this is the paschal mystery of death and resurrection, which is the only pattern of transformation.

The spiritual path is never a straight line, but a back and forth journey that ever-deepens the conscious

relationship of being chosen, of being a beloved, of Someone loving me more than I love myself, of Someone who is more me than I am myself. St. Catherine of Genoa used to run through the streets shouting, “My deepest me is God! My deepest me is God!” That’s what every mystic knows and trusts is hidden inside our imperfect humanity.

– *Richard Rohr OFM (Center for Action and Contemplation, Daily Meditations)*

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