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March 20 Readings

An excerpt from Laurence Freeman OSB, ?The Labyrinth,? JESUS THE TEACHER WITHIN(New York: Continuum, 2000), pp. 230-31.

Are we prepared to practice detachment from what we instinctively know is our most precious possession: our separate identity? Relationship with [Jesus] the teacher at this point is of supreme importance. It allows us to risk our own death. By now the *discipline* of the mantra has led to the fortifying sense of *discipleship*which empowers us to let ourselves go.

We can leave self behind precisely because we are in union and are never alone. The words of Jesus become true in our own experience: ?So also none of you can be a disciple of mine without parting with all your possessions. ? (Lk 14:33)

If we are to embrace the eternity of the fullness of being (the ?I AM? of God), we must first face the stark reality of impermanence and emptiness. The temptation is always to reduce the intensity, to sink to a lesser degree of consciousness, even to fall asleep. The Buddha warned against clouding the mind at this or indeed any stage of the journey with intoxicants. . .Jesus urged everyone to stay fully conscious:

Be alert, be wakeful. You do not know when the moment comes. . .Keep awake then for you do not know when the master of the house is coming. Evening or midnight, cock-crow or early dawn. If he comes suddenly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep awake. (Mk 13: 33-37)

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul says that this state of wakefulness leads to the ?spiritual powers of wisdom and vision? and on to *gnosis*or spiritual knowledge. But even with the strongest faith, the sorrowful sense of separateness is not immediately dissipated even when wisdom begins to shine. The wall of the ego can feel like an insuperable obstacle, a dead end leaving us nowhere to run to. But, as the Resurrection reminds us, what seems and feels like the end is not. By facing our entrenched egoism and recognizing its slow dying, meditation helps us to verify our own resurrection in our own experience.

Meditate for Thirty Minutes. Remember: Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything spiritual or otherwise. Thoughts and images will likely come, but let them pass. Just keep returning your attention ? with humility and simplicity to saying your word in faith, from the beginning to the end of your meditation.

After Meditation from Sahajananda, THE BEATITUDES (Shantivanam: Saccidananda Ashram, 1999), pp. 6-7.

The rich young man who had the desire for eternal life observed all the commandments sincerely. But when Jesus told him ?There is still one more thing you need to do. Sell all you have, give the money to the poor and . . .then come and follow me,? the young man became very sad because he was very rich. He identified himself with his riches. . .without them he had no existence. With these riches he could not enter into the kingdom because the door to the kingdom is narrow. Not narrow in the sense of space, but in the sense that only the essential aspect of our being goes through it; all acquired things have to be left out. . . .The kingdom of God is the essential nature of all human beings. . .This treasure can neither increase or decrease. No thief can get there and no moth can cause its destruction.

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