

PROBLEMLESSNESS:
THE BURDENLESS PEACE

This is the first time in my whole life that I have wanted to give the lecture I am about to give. Now mind you, I have wanted to be assigned to lectures in the past but have never wanted to give them; I have just wanted the recognition. For this one, I was not too pleased with the recognition, but wanted to give the lecture.

Now I think the only reason I can say it has delighted me is because of that Other World chart on the back wall. My first introduction to the Other World literally rocked my life. The most shocking manifestation of that, recently, was when I went to do a consult in Anchorage. My mother and father-in-law live in Sitka, so I stopped to do the quadrenial greeting to them. On the way back I stopped to see my father, who, at seventy years of age, has a new wife. I got the same question from them that I get every year. With a sombre face they say, "I hope you and Dolores are happy in your work." I would always get a pained look and say, "Mother, that is not the question."

I'd go on to talk about the agony in the world, and naturally get into how we ate less adequate meals and lived on a poverty stipend. In the past, I would hoist my own problems on them to make them feel guilty for their style of life. This time, when my Mother-in-law asked, "Are you and Dolores happy in your work?", before I even had a chance to think up all those short courses, I said, "Yes." When I got to Seattle, and got the same question, by then I was delighted with the answer. So I said "Yes" again. On the airplane home, I discovered that that was absolutely true. That I didn't want to be anywhere else doing any other thing, and that I had not dumped my guilt on my Mother-in-law. All this was because of those charts, because of the articulation of what one's life is about that had been veiled to me before.

I first ran into the Other World charts in Japan, while assigned there. I was in a bit of despair for a while. (Of course, nobody in the House knew it.) One night, I got up at two in the morning. I was so angry with myself for having become what I thought I had become. I had images and visions I had of what I thought I ought to be and was not becoming. I was so angry that I went down to the Collegium Room and paced back and forth, and I kept saying in a loud voice, "Morrill, this is not you. You are a warrior, you are a warrior, you are a warrior. You have got to be a warrior!" I did that for thirty minutes, and then went back to bed. The next morning, I was not a warrior.

Then one of my colleagues wandered through with the Other World charts and gave a thirty-five minute context on them. I don't remember the content, but what I do remember is that every state of Being is a received state of Being. In that event, permission to live exactly where I was as a human being, was delivered back in a phenomenal way. It allowed me to say YES to my Mother-in-law the other day. I suppose that's partly what it means to live without problems.

It got more thoroughly grounded for me in Summer '73 what it would mean to live a problemless existence. Summer '73 was the most harrassed time of my entire life. Some of you in this room helped harrass it. I can remember one day, preparation for a Cabaret or Desert Song or something was going on. We had a model for it all built and ready to move. In walked Joe Mathews, with a whole model that got "discombubered." We just had to start all over again. And I can recall, later in the day, the ice had not arrived for the drinks. And here it was, five o'clock in the afternoon, and no ice. I remember that the tuxedos did not arrive. In the midst of the too numerous things happening, I discovered that I was delighted with life. With people coming in wanting to know if you knew the answer to this or that, things happening that you didn't expect or want, Joe coming in, changing the course of your little universe, it was an empowered time!

The sense was that when you are engaged in life, you discover you have no personal problems. I looked up the word 'personal'. It had to do with masks. It illuminated what a personal problem is about. It is a mask that you hold up in front of you to avoid dealing with life. You can imagine that if you hold on to personal problems you don't have any hands to engage in life. I think of those big masks some of the island people have. Some are so huge that it takes two hands to hold up one. What I discovered in that event was that I have spent a good deal of my life just holding up the mask: the personal problem mask, so that I had no hands to engage in the reality of life. I once posed as a pianist. I really never came off as a pianist. I realize now that I never had really engaged with the ambiguity of that. I was always protecting myself by holding up that mask, the mask of personal problems in front of me concerned with how I came off rather than total engagement in the music.

The second thing I discovered in the event of Summer '73 was that you discover having no personal problems exactly in the midst of the most total engagement. It is in those times that you are aware you have no personal problems. I heard people sometimes say, "Well, now, you need to sit aside for awhile and relax." But, I discovered that, in that time in Summer '73, when the model was shifted, the ice didn't get here, and 'what's his name' didn't get the tuxedos, I was relaxed. I don't know what that means, but I do know it is not meant psychologically. I think those charts and what they represent have put an end to psychologism.

I found that this was "care-less" engagement. There is a sense of being able to breathe deeply for the first time; to discover that the problems people try to dump on you are just what life is; that you can live in that and struggle in that deep engagement. You could not help but be exposed, for when you are thrusting your life, you stand exposed in your frailty. What I discovered was that I was exposed, I mean to tell you I was exposed! I got angry. I got exposed to being angry. I spent half my life trying to pretend I was not angry. I was talking to John Cock about my situation and he said to me, "You really are angry, aren't you." I was delighted. I realized that it was precisely this care-less engagement which allows the freedom to be exposed.

I discovered another thing about radical care-less engagement in that summer. I had always thought I could live my life if I could just get dis-engaged for a while. I have always lived my life in the cracks. I will live after this seminar is over. I will live after this battleplan is done. I will live after that problem is solved. I had not seen that care-less engagement is the problemless

life; that is the life you are living. What you discover in the midst of that kind of engagement is the power: the power to be your own man. You know that day, when people came in and told you to build another model in the next twenty minutes, for the way this summer ought to run, you had the possibility to deal with, interiorly, that hunk of life you have on your hands.

In terms of experiencing internal expansiveness, I found that my life was involved not just in a little hunk of geography called the Spirit Life Room of Summer '73. It was related to the totality of the life of the whole world. That is the interior sense of expansiveness. Even though you have twenty minutes to build a new model, you know you have all the time in the world, and all space at your disposal. You have both hands free to do what you have to do.

Then, what I discovered was strength. I don't mean anything pseudo-spiritual, I mean physical strength, like when you pick up something you have never picked up before. That kind of care-less engagement: to be your own man. You see, what it's about is being your own man, not being your own mask! That is what I discovered in that kind of happening.

I suspect that this world cannot understand that, when you are living out of this world, this world is always trying to put a 'period' on life. It is always trying to wrap it up, always trying to get it organized. The problem-filled life live in relationship to the fact that you have been trying to wrap it up, and find out suddenly that you cannot wrap it up. Therefore, you have to label whatever that is you have been trying to wrap up, a 'personal problem.' In the ambiguity of that horrendously wild day, I became very clear that I would never wrap it up. Again and again in life, the ice would not get there and the tuxedos would not get rented. The model would get shaken. My life was, always has been, and always will be, radical ambiguity.

I discovered something more than that. Something I describe as Burden-less-ness Peace. Mind you, that's not that business of going around about 'finding peace. That day you would not believe is peace. What you discover is the hundred-ton crane. It is not an addition to life. It is life. And it is burdenlessness. A burden is something you didn't have to put on; it was just there. You chose to put it on: on a scout hike, putting on a 40 pound pack. You discover that burden is what life is. There is no other life than the one you have, and that is the problemless life.

We have a lot of ways of talking about 'no personal problems.' It is really delightful sometimes to see how we have been bringing them in through the back door. I haven't any personal problems, but God, do I have missional engagement situations! Burdenless peace is to discover that the trials of life are life! Remember that poetry we read in RS-1? St. Paul says, "I've been stoned three times and shipwrecked," etc., etc., etc. "Apart from all of these trials" (those things go on in life) "I have the burden of responsibility for all the churches." A man with vast interior space, Paul had no personal problems; he puts all these things that would have made a giant of a man collapse. Here is a man of problemlessness who discovered his whole life was to be burdened with the peace of his own life, which he had surrendered to all of history.

That kind of burdenless peace has only one enemy, finally, and it is not personal problems; the only enemy is Satan. Satan is the one who paints the mask he sells us. He is the one who would like to have you return to this mask and hold it up. When one has entered into the Other World in the midst of this world, is when Satan begins to give you, or try to give you, a whole new set of problems. That is where you and I need to be on guard against Satan.

That peace comes from absolute trust: trust that the ambiguity of my life is my life, that the frailty of my life is my strength. It is that trust which allows one to have the kind of burdenless peace, which is what it means to be problemless.

They cast their nets in Galilee just off the hills of brown:
Just happy simple fisher folk, before the Lord came down.
Contented peaceful fishermen before they ever knew
The peace of God that filled their hearts brim full,
and broke them, too.
Young John, who trimmed his flapping sails homeless in
Catmos died.
Peter, who hauled the teaming nets head-down was
crucified.
The peace of God is no peace, but strife closed in the sod,
Brothers, let us pray for the one who gives the marvelous
peace of God.

- Justin Morrill