

Carlos Ollison

PRACTICALIZING THE SAINT
Love Discourse # 7 - Presencing Love

I know a lot about romance, I am not so sure how much I know about Love. But I want to talk a little bit this morning about being in love with the world.

It seems like every time I get ready to make love with the world or have an affair with the Mystery, something keeps getting in the way - some little particular out of his creation keeps getting between, some kind of a warm, intimate, personal relationship going on there. I don't know if you remember, but in the old days, when I started dating visibly, you had a chaperone. It was kind of tough trying to make romance, to make love with a girl - with a chaperone. Seemed like they had some kind of something that told them when to step in the middle and call off that kind of personal relationship. It was tricky, and if you weren't careful you might end up kissing the chaperone. You close your eyes and they'd get right in the middle, so you kissed with your eyes open. But it's like, I discovered a kind of frustration and that kind of ambiguity about trying to love the world directly. I have been concerned about that. It seems that if it's not my wife showing up in place of the world, it's somebody else. Or if it's not my colleagues, showing up in place of the world, it's something else. There is always something else showing up, some other little particular about God's creation that I end up loving, in order to get to God.

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We've been talking in these AM discourses: (I'm not going to put a lot on the board, because I don't know much about love.) But, we are going to talk about Faith, and Hope, and Love as a kind of dynamic. Again, to hold for me what we've been pointing to with this LOVE, this morning we want to talk about Presencing Love. That's kind of personal: If I put it off, I don't have to say much.

Faith comes to me in the midst of my human weakness, or Faith is my human weakness. In the midst of my human weakness, my inadequacies, I show up wanting to love God. But I'm so weak, I'm so inadequate, I'm so unprepared to love God, and love the World, and to love the Mystery. IT seems that Faith has me showing up in my weakness and my wanting to love God is born out of that kind of weakness. My wanting to love God is born out of that inadequacy. It's born out of the darkness, inadequacy of my maleness. I go home and want to love that woman, for all of mankind. What I show up as is inadequate. I show up as a weakling, wake up at 5:30 in the morning wondering whether or not I pulled it off. That my weakness or my inadequacy shows up in my vocation, and the kind of temporality with which I've decided about my whole life. Somehow that illuminates for me the dynamic of Faith - that Faith shows up in my weakness relative to my family. I discovered that it's awfully easy to trade it in, maybe for another one, or trade it in and take the bus or something. Or look at race. My own race, the weakness, the Black is Beautiful is beginning to wear off. And White is Right is beginning to take on a whole new feel in our society. That kind of weakness, that kind of inadequacy relative to my own race.

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But in spite of all that human weakness, in spite of all that inadequacy, as futile as it may seem I still want to love God, with the being that I have. I want to love God, I want to love the world, I want to love God's creation. Faith somehow tells you, in the midst of your weakness, what you were born For. You were born to love God. That's what Faith reveals to you. So in faith you embrace the unique absurdity that your life is and, like Job, you decide to love God with that weak inadequate self. And then, also like Job, you reclaim that spirit of absurd weakness. You reclaim the mundanity of that weak existence, the mundanity of that family, the mundanity of showing up in a particular race having to live out of that particular story, and the mundanity of having to choose what you're going to do with your whole life. Every man has that same mundanity. You reclaim that life and in faith you decide to love God with that life.

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As RS-I says, "You are accepted." In faith, your life is received, approved, just as simple as that.

But then you've got Hope, oh, boy, the Cry, the Care in the midst of trying to love the world as a whole. There's the hope that may be, somehow this insignificant, weak inadequate life is going to make a difference. You see how big that hope is. There's that hope, there's a cry, there's a care that somehow my response to faith is not just some intellectual thing, but it comes out of the deeps that there's a care welling up in my being, and the decision to

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engage my whole life is just there. And at the same time there is the hope that somehow I can participate in the drama, in the dance that life is.

So we have the social mission. I remember the sixties, as being just the human disappointment relative to how it is you go out there and get your life stuck into history. You look back at the sixties and you see the thousands and thousands of crummy human beings who just decided to throw their hope over against the abyss, and then over and over again they ran over against the abyss with their cares and their concerns and their hopes for the future of the world and mankind. That wasn't just some kind of moral romantic, naïve kind of decision, because if you look around you'll still see some of them showing back up. Some of those burnt out, some of those hollowed out revolutionaries that were born out of faith, who, as inadequate as they are, inadequate as their responses were, who still are trying to figure out how to love God, in faith.

In the midst of the Hope there is a cry. There is the cry, the authentic decision that is unchangeable. I was back in Dallas on the way here and I ran into Don Johnson, a young man who started Black Partnership and other alcoholic halfway houses back in the sixties, who said the last time I talked with him said, "I'm getting out. I've been in this 12 years, and I haven't got anything to show for it. Quit, it's not worth it. I've lost my family, I've lost my wife. It's not worth it." And I saw him a few weeks ago and he's back in it. It's an un-reversible decision to participate. That's faith. The drama of life. It is born out of Faith and Hope. Hope that somehow this life is going to make a difference. What you and I know is that we never get out of that Dark Night. That that Faith, that Hope that's born in the darkness somehow is the reality that you and I experience our whole life long. Burnt out or not, you can get burnt out until all that's left is a whimper, and if you hold your ear near what you hear out of that whimper, there is a cry.

And then in the Cry, you discern that this Hope finally is caught in it and I like St. John of the Cross where he talks about the log, the purging, the burning out of the log. We worry about people burning out, but it's finally in that burning out that you discover that this Hope, that the Hope that is the Hope is the No Hope. When you put your faith in Hope, you discover the purging power of the Dark Night.

So you take your Faith, you take your Faith out of Hope and you discover Love. Love is not an emotional love, it's not sociological love. What you discover, even though it shows up sociological, it's not religious love, that you discover, although there's a kind of piety that you might discover in love. It's not a personal love, even though you find there's a personal kind of life given from it. It's just Love. That all, just Love. With no presuppositions, just love, and you know, it's worldly love.

Now, I was taught all my life, there were two kinds of love: there was Christian love and there was worldly love. But there's just Love. In the context of Faith, Hope and Love for the world, for God.

And then, Love is absolution. Love is how it is you come upon yourself as being in the wholeness of being, that love somehow absolves the weaknesses that you and I have accepted as our lives. Somehow Love absolves the inadequacies that you and I heap upon our own lives. That Love is contentless. That Love has no presuppositions. That Love shows up in the midst of every situation. That Love is transparentized action. That Love is action. Love is doing the deed on behalf of all mankind. Love is making "the hit" that you know is not going to be enough on behalf of all mankind.

Well, there are three kinds of action - maybe two kinds and an intensification. But up here, you've got Witnessing Love. Witnessing Love is RS-1 articulates is the secret Yes to all of life. It's the secret YES to all of life. You just wake up one day and you discover that you've already said a YES to life, and that becomes your witness. It reveals to you, in the midst of that happening, the power of the Word of Love. The Call is your authorization. You know when Jesus was witnessing, someone asked him, "Do you speak with authority?" And he was clear that his authority was in the Call. His authority stemmed from the Faith, from the March, from the Light in the midst of the Dark Night. That was his authority. Kazantzakis worked us through the Call being the Witness.

Then on the other side of Witnessing Love, you have Justing Love. Justing love is the awareness of injustices in the world. It's the awareness of the transgression against the will of God in the world. That's justicing

Love. It's where all the blinders are suddenly taken off. The naiveté relative to what it means to live in this world is gone. The suffering of the world gets to you, just looking at TV. The suffering of the world get to you. Just reading the newspaper. The suffering of the world gets to you just participating in the news conversation, that your awareness of the injustices of the world are just there. These mundanity spins we've been participating in are just the acute awareness of suffering, the acute awareness of the Father. (Silence) ?

And it's out of that Father, out of that awareness, you and I get hold of what it means to love the whole. ^{(silence)?} ~~world~~ ^{world} Justicing Love. You have a vision, you have a practical vision, relative to how I'm going to personally participate in caring for the whole world, and alleviating and dealing with the suffering. Then you see in the midst of that practical vision, all of the shadow boxing families, drug addict stumbling down the pavements. You see the winos, you see the white pecking blacks and you see the myth chasing whites. And you know that if you say, "Beans," it's all gone. No, no, it doesn't leave. You become aware in the midst of justing Love, that you and I may never get rid of all the winos, that you and I may never get rid of all the shadow boxing families. You and I might never get rid of all the inauthentic responses regarding love. ~~Presencing~~ Justing Love is about having a vision that allows you to see that every human being has the possibility to participate, in loving this world. Love has no presuppositions relative to the situation that you might show up in. But every human being has the possibility of participating, regardless of their situation, of loving the world. And that's the vision that you lay your life down for. That's the vision that you die for. I used to think that you only died in your tactics. But it's kind of life, you're never going to get to your tactics unless you lay your life down on the vision, on your vision of caring for the world.

Then there's the intensification of these. There's the Presencing Love, the Love that created the world. Presencing Love created the world. Presencing Love created mankind. Presencing Love is a symbol of humanness itself. Presencing Love creates out of silence. Presencing Love teaches with the Silence, Presencing Love speaks through the Silence.

I want to talk about Presencing Love three ways: Three images that begin to hold for me the dynamic of Presencing Love. One is the Guru. The guru is one who lives out of the Silence, who lives his life out of the Silence, who speaks out of the Silence, who listens to the Silence, and therefore, he's bound to humanness in silence. Sometimes I think that if Malcom X were still around he'd be a Guru. Maybe he was born too soon to participate in Silence. It's out of the Silence that he knows the suffering of the world because when you try to ~~intellectually~~ get an intellectual hand on the suffering of the world, you loose it. And you end up with some kind of moralism, or with some kind of reduction. Because the suffering of the world is not here, the suffering of the world is down here. That's where you experience the suffering of the world, so it's the Silence that allows you to know the suffering of the world. The Guru is a living symbol. He has no personal history. He has no personal problems. He knows once you've decided to be a Presence, once you've decided to be a Presence, that's all there is. All there is is the Presence. Therefore, he has given himself over to being the symbol, symbolic. And there he is the servant - the servant of the world. All hope for another life has left him. The Silence is somehow claiming him.

There's a book called The Chosen. It's about a Jewish family, orthodox Jewish family. The father is a rabbi. They lived out of particular strict tradition. The oldest son was a genius. He discovered that when he was four years old, when he sat down and just digested five hundred and some pages of books in one afternoon. The rabbi discovered he had been cursed with a genius, a son with a great mind, but without a soul; a son who could intellectualize almost every happening that came to him but had no way of participating in the suffering of the world. So he decided that ~~he~~ this son, this genius son, was going to be a rabbi. It didn't have anything to do with what he did in life, what his job was, what his vocation was, he was going to be a rabbi. So from that on, when the son was only four years old until he was a man, the father did not speak to him. It was the Silence that taught him. It was the Silence that spoke to him. It was the Silence that birthed him into caring for the world. The Guru tames the wildness, the Guru disciplines his irresponsibility; and he sustains fellowhood. You know, you wonder how it is in marriage that you can sustain the fellowhood; you wonder how it is that in a Religious House, you sustain the fellowhood. The Guru listens to the silence. He listens to the mundane and he assists others in becoming Saints. He assists others in becoming the Presencing Love.

My other image is the Guildsman. The guildsman performs his deeds in silence, or he's vocated to history and he spends his whole life battling contradictions. Can you image that? All the guildsman is about is doing battle

with contradictions. My image is The Ronin. You know, you throw your beastly being against that rock and the only thing you are is transparency, God's transparency. That's all you're out for. And what you know is that transparency, or the trend in the midst of the contradiction, is never exactly the trend you had in mind. You know that there will always be contradictions. It like when you plunge through the dark wall and you see the light.

So, the Guildsman holds the global, local, and, he is out there to win. I think that one of the demons in the midst of this kind of community is that somehow I was trained that you don't win all the time. I remember one time I was playing games with my kids, my wife (she'd read a bunch of these books on how you raise kids) was upset because I never let my son win. So you are going to win. The guildsman wins. How do you get that said. He wins. You're not out there to do a Local Community Convocation, to win or lose it. You're out to win. It like Patton, you win. Or Papilion. The situation doesn't have a thing to do with it. Both feet, you win. Martin Luther King - you look at that family - you are out to win. They're guildsmen. What's the last one that preached @ first sermon on Sunday twenty years old. He's decided to be the Guild. He's decided to battle against the contradiction. You know and yet, in all the winning, the guildsman knows that he or anybody else might do comes to naught. It just comes to naught; but he does it anyway.

It's an uncommon style to be a Guildsman. It's a style that outfakes every other style. It's a style that outlives every other style. It's a style that outdies every other style. "God damm it, Rommel, you son of a bitch. I've read your book." That's the style of the guildsman. The Guildsman be's the Silence.

And you take those two dynamics: the guru and the Guildsman, and you put them together, and what you've got is Presencing Love or what you've got is the Religious. You take the secular of the Guildsman and you take the Religious of the Guru and what you've got is the Religious. The Religious is a man of faith. The Religious is the Saint. The Religious understands himself to be married to God, to be married to God's creation, to be married to the Silence. It's the second calling. It's the all evoking permission - giving presence in the midst of every situation. An image that comes to me is old Samuel. You know the awe evoking presence. Once you've decided to be the Religious, all you have to do is just be Silence. Being that Silence gives the permission. I think that's what Buddha discovered. That you just be Silence. There was a smell about Samuel. Samuel smelled Religious. You can smell the Religious. He just gives off that kind of awe, that kind of presence. The Religious is born of the Silence (the father.) The utter mundane. You always discover how mundane Silence is. Just how mundane. I went to visit my folks and there are out in the suburbs. I had not experienced that kind of silence in about three years. I couldn't even sleep - just the mundanity of the silence, and the power of the silence. You begin to just listen to God. The religious is born of the Silence, of the utter mundane. He's born of the Dark Night.

What is Presencing Love? Presencing Love is having the faith that the Dark Night is man's companion. Presencing Love is having the faith that the Dark Night is man's life-long companion. God's Hope is that man will do it. That's Presencing Love.