

"WEARINESS"

The Long March is simply the path that authentic humanness truly is. To know the signs of the Long March is to know its path and where you are in relation to that path. The path of authentic life seems very complex these days which is probably why dropping off the path seems more complex, too. Humiliation is the very essence of the election to sonship; so, if you are not experiencing humiliation, you are off the path. Weakness is the very essence of election to sonship; if you are not experiencing weakness, you are off the path. Resentment is the essence of election to sonship; if you are not experiencing resentment, you are off the path. The same of course, is true for suffering.

Man's imagination has endless means for conjuring ways to dream of the sufferingless life. He continually imagines that somewhere, a sufferingless life will one day arrive. Even in giving a lecture of this nature, I have noticed the temptation to subtly spin out some kind of dream that would not serve as an honest witness to the way life is. The Long March is the Kingdom; it is the way life is. That was introduction Number One.

Introduction Number Two is that I have grown to hate buffoonery both in myself and especially in others. Buffoonery means great big wonderful images that cover up the truth one is trying to talk about in the first place. Imaginal methods are to help you tell about life. If the choice is between telling about life in a boring way and telling about it in fuzzy impressions in an imaginal way, then by all means take the boring course.

There is also a third introduction. One has to do his own thinking. This is especially important in the realm of the Spirit. Doing your own thinking means putting brackets on everything you hear that does not issue from the deeps of your own being.

Now, introduction Number Four. What in the world is the Long March? It is the march out from the Center Tranquil back into the mundanity of this world. Yet, one never leaves the center if he is on the Long March; and to go to the center, he never really leaves earth in the first place. I am always on the march from where I never left to where I have always been. Nevertheless, there is a Center Tranquil, there is a journey to it and there is a return from it.

The tension of the journey to the center is the tension of giving up this world. The first step is coming to terms with the fact that you are going to die. After that realization, the steps get even harder; for you become one who lives in the midst of a world you are already dead to. When the silence finally arrives in the Center Tranquil, the same day the world utterly dies. The anticipation is like a wonderful, tranquil two-person family suddenly aware of the fact that they are pregnant. Perhaps more accurately, it like a couple who are very much in love and suddenly, the man is called off to war. He is taken prisoner, then report comes back to the woman that he is dead. For two years, she struggles to detach herself from this relationship and then finally decides she will marry someone else. Then the war vet shows up. He never really died. And she finds she is married to someone from whom she has become utterly detached.

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You are married to a world you have utterly given up. You have given up a world to which you are utterly vocationed. In the play "Amahl and the Night Visitors" three kings come to the home of Amahl, the cripple. In the play the three men are going to visit the Christ Child. Amahl, having become intrigued with their description of what the Christ child is, decides to send his crutch with them as a gift. As Amahl hands the crutch to the three kings, his mother cries out, "You can't, you can't, you can't." But he does and he walks. "I walked, Mother," he tells her. That is much like the trip back to grab the Other World. Everything in you, everything everywhere, says, "You can't, you can't, you can't," and you walk. You walk that which cannot be walked.

You are no longer at home in this world. You are not longer at home in the Other World. You have no home except the march and this homelessness is your home. This homelessness is the Kingdom of God. This homelessness is the East that all religions have sought.

In the midst of this march, weariness occurs. It is strangely true that when life is taken from you, you become keyed up to a fever pitch of desiring life. When life is poured out on you in abundance, weariness fills you. Weariness is the responsibility for marrying the whole world when you just spent ten years turning loose of it. That is weariness.

One winter, after the Academy was over, I realized I had gone about two months without catching up on my rest. We finished at about ten in the morning and at about eleven, I went to bed. I slept through lunch, through supper, and did not awake until the middle of the night. I was vaguely hungry, but too tired to get out of bed and get something to eat, so I slept until the next morning. That is not the weariness I am talking about. You get over that kind of weariness.

You never get over the weariness of the Long March. It does not even necessarily come when you are tired. It comes upon you anytime--at ten in the morning or after you have had a good night's rest. You will be bouncing along and then it happens--you are weary. Your body is not tired; your mind is not especially overworked; but way down in the center of your life, someone pulled a plug on your spiritual bathtub. All the spontaneous drive runs out and suddenly, you are simply drained. Your mind is no more tired, your body is no more tired, you are simply spent. It is something like this: Your mind is spinning loose then suddenly your arms and legs begin to ache. There is nothing wrong with them, though. Your eyes burn a little and you are tired out. I begin to sigh at this point. "Oh, Jesus," is the sigh I find myself sighing.

Weariness is part of the deep spirit relationship that is your real life. There is no escape from it. The weariness is never absent. Sometimes, it overwhelms you more than at other times. I remember one particular incident. An impossible sequence of events happened to lay an impossible sequence of responsibilities on me all at once. I was extremely weary in response to it. I was carrying a pitcher of hot tea up the back steps of the Program Center and I fell and scalded my hand. In reflecting on the accident, I realized I was suffering from the death urge. I wanted to go to bed with a burned hand. That incident made me much more suspect of myself as one who is capable of death urges.

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A week after my accident, a young woman who was planning to get married came down another set of stairs. She stumbled and fell. I grinned to myself and said to her, "Watch out for those death urges." She was shocked at first that someone would make such a remark, but later she grinned. Time after time, life's little demands come to you and you cannot muster the energy to add them to your list. You are too tired to resent them; too weary to get angry about them.

Rebellion against weariness is not getting angry about it; you are too weary to get angry about weariness. You rebel against weariness by going to sleep, rather than by staying up and being weary. Remember the story of Jesus and his disciples in the Garden? All of them were weary as they faced their awesome responsibilities in Jerusalem over the next few days. Jesus stayed up all night praying. Meanwhile, the disciples could not stay awake for thirty minutes. Jesus came back to them time and time again. "Can't you stay awake for one hour?" They kept falling asleep again and again. The grief and horror of the responsibility was too much for them. They got incredibly tired and fell asleep. Jesus lived his weariness. Living weariness somehow means telling your death urge to go sit in the corner and behave while you get on with your work. Living your weariness does not mean going back to bed for the rest of your life.

Listen to this poem:

Sometimes weary with life's endeavor

I would like to sleep forever and ever.

But then this thought my longing allays--

I shall be doing it one of these days.

Isn't that great? If I did not see that time is running out, I think I would go to sleep for the next thousand years and rest up for the following thousand. But time is running out. I only have perhaps twenty or thirty or forty years to be weary. One better stay awake and be weary, for weariness is the Kingdom of God. Weariness is authentic life.

Do you know what happens to weariness when one sees that weariness is authentic life? Why, it goes right on being weariness. Why would you want weariness to go away when weariness is the Kingdom of God? Thank God weariness is the Kingdom for if it were not, I would be a long way from the Kingdom. Oh, weary ones, praise God, thine weariness is the Kingdom. Thine weariness is the promised land toward which you are headed.

--Gene Marshall

