

## “You are Loved”

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The voice of love within us can get buried pretty deeply. Our inner lives are a place many of us do not go very often. Sometimes it just feels too dark in there. Too risky, too much to let go of and too much unknown to step into. It has been like that for me. Especially in my relationship to my mother. The silence of a mother, when used as punishment, can be deafening. It is potent, powerful and damaging. It can make you wonder if you are loved at all. As a child, my mom would use silence to punish me, withdrawing love to get her point across. Her mother did the same to her. And for the past six years, my mom has remained mostly silent from me. She has never met her granddaughter, and the last time she saw my seven year old son, Andrew, he was ten months old. The words I heard from my mother have not left me; words of denial, disapproval, and rejection. In response, for a long time, my heart hardened, and I became self righteous. I had no choice but to go within to heal, I had to dig deep for that love, buried under a lot of disappointment, shame and anger. I knew if I did not go within, I would live angry. After much digging and dancing through the darkness, I began to see some light. And now, even in her continued absence, my mom is the greatest teacher of my life. I would not know the Love of God, in the way I do now, without losing my mother. The voice of rejection from her, led me to believe that I must be perfect, to be worthy and loved in the world. And it is this voice of perfection that constantly seeks attention. It seeks to be noticed, to be loved, accepted and understood at all costs. Because to not feel those things as a child, felt like death. This voice of I am not good enough, has been so strong, that even as a thirty eight year old woman, I still do many dances to seek attention. And now I ask myself, Can I really live fully in the world, even though my mom rejects me? If she doesn't think I am precious in the world, my own mother, who will? It feels risky to

reach out to something new. I am so used to trying to prove myself, what would it mean for me to not have to? God's love can feel like treacherous territory for some of us, because it requires us to sacrifice what's known, even the old voices within that don't serve us anymore, but are familiar, for the unknown territory of God' love.

In the scripture reading from Mark, the woman with blood lived by the law. As a woman bleeding, and hemorrhaging for twelve years, she was considered by the law as unclean. And, she followed this law for twelve years. She was not allowed to touch Jesus, or he would be considered unclean, until he did the ritual practices required for a priest or rabbi. I imagine after that long, living this law as a way of life, she felt and believed she was unclean, unworthy of love in her world. But she took a risk. She longed for a new voice within. She saw in this Rabbi, Jesus, a new way of defining herself. One defined by the love of God and not the law. She took the risk to go out into her community and to reach out and touch the tassel on the robe of Jesus. When she reached out, she decided to listen to and trust a new voice. She longed to live more fully in the world, beyond what she had known.

To listen to a new voice, we must face the old voices within us. Many of these messages were born out of fear. If we listen to them, rather than avoid, mask or deny them, they can remind us of where we truly belong. John O'Donohue, the late Irish poet, author and champion of the inner life, tells us that we are looking outside of ourselves, rather than within for our identity. The first place we look outside of ourselves for our identity is our mothers. We look to our mother's, in their beautiful humanness, to be the mirror of unconditional love for us. It is an impossible expectation for our mothers to live up to. Some of us come close, but we are human. Our mothers our human,also struggling to unearth the Love within them. To fully be the woman that I am, I realized that I could no longer let my mother be the mirror

that I look into to define myself. It wasn't fair to her, or to me. She was in pain and hardly able to love herself. How could she offer me this unconditional love I was seeking? Losing my parents at the same time, gave me the opportunity to reach out and touch the robe, to take the risk and look into the eyes of God, rather than those of my parents. And when I saw God looking back at me, She said, I have loved before you were born. I approved of you before you were in the womb. Let me be your mirror. It has been what I have longed to hear.

The woman with blood faced her demons too. She had everything outside her telling her for years, she was unclean. This voice was loud. The law was the law. She wasn't listening to the voice within telling her she was not worthy of God's love. She would not have been in that crowd if she had. By walking into that crowd and reaching out, she walked over the bridge of faith that God laid out for her. She touched his robe and she was healed, by a new, unfamiliar voice, one that resonated with the emerging voice of Love within her. One that turned and wanted to see her, know who she was, and tell her that she has been healed. And because she listened to her faith within and reached out to God, she was healed not only in body, but in soul.

This love that Jesus showed to the woman with blood, that He embodied on this planet, is the feminine. Carl Jung, Swiss psychiatrist and a man who gave us a whole new framework for experiencing our inner lives, tells us that within everyone of us there is a need to Be and a need to act, and he calls the being part of us, the feminine and the action part of us, the masculine. The feminine is creating space for your inner life; allowing your emotions and spiritual life to be present in you. Many of us see the act of taking that time as not productive, maybe even lazy or self indulgent. So, we spend a great deal of time busying ourselves further and further away from the feminine. Jung defines this quality of the feminine as a "Love that is a

force of destiny whose power reaches from heaven to hell.” It is simply Unconditional Love. A love that lives within each of us. In Hebrew it is, racham, the womb-like love of God. And in Greek, she is Sophia, the embodiment and expression of this never ending love. Infinitely abundant. Present within us all. No limits, and no destination. She is the circle, not the line. No end, no beginning. And, many of us, where our measuring stick for who we are is of a very linear nature, based on productivity and what we do, the feminine, is more of an obscure concept that is very unfamiliar for many of us. We try to understand this love in our rational minds, even now as I speak. But it is to be experienced, like our young children experience each moment. Because we know so little about this quality of the feminine, it is very hard for us to surrender to and trust our inner lives, our intuition. Marion Woodman, Jungian Analyst who wrote books and books about the feminine, tells us the feminine is rooted in the body. To know our inner lives, we must attend to our bodies. It is in our bodies that we experience her. We cannot grasp our inner lives in our heads alone. When we lose connection to our bodies, we lose connection to our inner lives. We lose connection to our senses, and to the fullness of our lives. And, this quality of Love is Now. Breathe, feel your body softening with breath. We need Her. We need to dive deeply within to build a relationship with our inner lives. We need to be reacquainted with what is within us to be of service to God on this planet. This requires us, particularly in this task driven culture, to open to a new voice, as vulnerable as it might feel, that says, We can trust surrendering to God and we can learn to live from that place. This is exactly what the woman reaching out to Jesus did.

Many have responded to me when I share this by saying, But won't we get passive if we fully surrender? If we become womb-like, will we ever get anything done? If we spend so much time on our inner lives, what about all of the work in the world? We

have so much to do! And I say, yes true, this feminine needs it's masculine counterpart, that desire to act. Jung speaks of how we are consistently seeking balance between the two. The feminine is the being, and the masculine is the action. The feminine tells us, your inner lives are important, and our masculine says, what you do is important. Both are needed. We live in a culture where we find our value in what we do, and not by what is inside of us. Often before we act on something, we consult a professional, or think about for a while, before, if ever, we consult within. And when we do go within, what do we find there? We find love and love finds us. This love within propels us to a service, that is not of our own understanding but of God's. Our deeds are then fueled by the fire of a deep mother's love for her planet and her people, not the by our own desires and Egos.

But what keeps us from going within? What are we afraid of? What are we avoiding? The absence of an unconditional love from my mother brought me to a love within, that was buried deep under a good amount of fear. The rejection by my mother, caused me to long for a love within more deeply. Reclaiming the love within is healing me, and the lines of women in my family. This love transforms. And it has allowed me to love my mother for the woman that she is and to honor the pain that she and generations of women before her have gone through. God's loving voice longs for us to go within. She wants us to turn and look at Her, so she can tell us, You are loved, beyond measure. This big love can be hard to spot in our analytical, rational culture. But we know it when we do. We see this love in the vulnerable, and sometimes harder to reach places within; we experience it when we finally let the tears come, when we sink into a hot bath, forgive someone or are forgiven, come alive in the throes of ecstasy or when we bite into a strawberry and really taste it. The vulnerability of experiencing something, versus conceptualizing it, reminds us of

that soft dark place of movement and creativity, the womb, where we were made, created, and born from.

The voice of Love within waits for us to hear her and experience her. She is a lover of life. Let us not underestimate the power of the feminine, even if we have yet to understand or even recognize her. How do we get to know her? Take a moment to stop, and listen to what is inside. To experience your life. It's worth it. Our inner lives are important. Discovering what is inside and bringing it forth is why we are here. Let's ask ourselves, what are the voices that lead us away from this Love? And, what leads us, on our knees, or dancing with joy, to the hem of God's robe? Do we have the faith to reach out to a new voice, in a culture where the feminine is buried deep under the collective voice of fear? The woman in the gospel did. When we reach out, God will meet us. Jesus turned and look at the woman, and saw her as beloved. He didn't shun her, cast her away, he looked at her and said, you are healed by your faith. Not by him, but by this woman, going within and saying, It's time, I need a new voice, a new identity from which to live. We can all do that. By taking the time for the landscape within. Not only is it possible, it is needed. Now. This is a Love that does not fear your darkness, your insecurities and weaknesses, it is a love that crosses boundaries, it is a love that forgives and sees no lines drawn. It is in our surrender that She becomes known. We know her by turning inward, like a tree in deep winter. We know the feminine by spending time with her, not in our heads but in our hearts. She is valuable. She is within. She is our mother, our birther, our creator. And she loves us, before we were born, now and beyond the day we die. From within, she extends the invitation. Let us take the time to receive it.