

**Waiting for a Miracle**  
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**December 13, 2015**

The singer and songwriter Bruce Cockburn wrote of how we often feel like we are waiting for a miracle. "Working for the future like some kind of mystic jewel, waiting for a miracle."

And,

"How come the future has to take such a long, long time when you're waiting for a miracle?"

and I am perpetually waiting  
for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian Urn  
to catch each other up at last  
and embrace  
and I am awaiting  
perpetually and forever  
a renaissance of wonder

We feel this way sometimes, don't we?  
Waiting for a rebirth of wonder,  
waiting for a miracle.  
We feel that life - our own life,  
or the life of society - is missing something,  
or come off the rails,  
or troubled in important ways.  
And we don't know how to fix it,  
or we don't have the power to fix it,  
so we are waiting:  
waiting for a miracle,  
waiting for something to change.  
Waiting for things to become clear.

Waiting for folks to come `round.  
Waiting for the revolution, the awakening.  
For the media to wake up, the president to act,  
the budget to get agreed to,  
the check to come in.

These last few weeks, lord have mercy.  
Waiting — for sanity to break out.  
For the fever swamp of racist politics to be swept  
away.  
Waiting for a miracle.  
I am waiting for someone to really discover America  
and wail.  
Well, some of us are wailing, aren't we?  
Waiting for a rebirth of wonder.  
Of hope.

What I love about [LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI](#)'s poem  
is the brilliant mix of the mundane and the profound.  
We wait in expectation for things.  
Little things and big things.

Sometimes the little things are distractions.  
But sometimes they are practice for the mysteries of  
life.  
Sometimes the big things are abstractions.  
But sometimes they are perspective for the daily  
struggles.

The infinity story this morning -  
folks trying to explain the biggest of big things,  
a concept so large as to boggle the mind of children  
and grownups alike.  
And sometimes it feels like you are waiting on infinity.

Even if what you're waiting for is for someone to notice your new shoes.

For someone to notice you.

We wait for little things and we wait for big things, and they're both important.

One can be practice for the other.

. . .



You know this symbol, right?

How come the future takes such a long, long time when you're waiting for a reply text message . . .

Oh wait, that's not how it goes.  
Waiting for a miracle.

Miracles come all sorts of places.

"Life is laden with opportunities for miracle or beauty," says Liz Lerner,  
"moments of choice that bless us if we size them."

This is the paradox of waiting for a miracle:  
for we Unitarian Universalists, with Einstein and other scientists and mystics,  
believe that miracles are everywhere, and all the time

—

not a unique occurrence from an intervening deity,  
but the presence and wonder of life itself.

So we say, as we will,

every night a child is born is a holy night.  
We say, every moment is miraculous,  
if we open our hearts and minds.  
So we shouldn't have to wait, right?

Or, we think, we don't wait for someone else.  
We are the spiritual decedents of the idea of self-  
reliance -  
that God's hands are our hands, if you will;  
that it is up to us.  
We don't wait for miracles; we make them happen.

But, lord, every day?  
Aren't you just exhausted?  
I am.  
And I've got it easy!  
I'm a well-educated, tall, white male.  
If I want to go a day of my life without thinking racism,  
and classism, and patriarchy, I can.  
My spiritual practice doesn't let me,  
but that's a choice, not a forced reality.  
I've got it easy,  
so if I'm exhausted by waiting for a miracle,  
I can begin to imagine how some of you feel.

Our longing for justice feels like waiting for a miracle.  
Waiting for an end to hate.  
Waiting for an end to violence and war,  
near and far.  
Waiting for an end to stray bullets and bullets in the  
back,  
an end to the neglect of children,  
waiting for a climate deal big enough to matter,

and for peace on earth to be more than a line in an old story.

Waiting for a rebirth of wonder.  
A rebirth of justice.  
A rebirth of hope.

And we're exhausted by waiting,  
and we're exhausted by feeling it's all on us.

It's not just about justice,  
an end to oppression,  
though with the violence in deed and language these  
days that's high on so many of our minds.

It's also about our personal and spiritual lives.

We're waiting for a rebirth of wonder -  
perhaps your soul is running low,  
and you're craving a sense of being centered,  
grounded;  
things feel out of control for you -  
and you've lost your way.  
So you want it back,  
and you might be told,  
be patient, the universe will unfold.  
And you think, screw that.  
I need to be centered now!

We laugh, but this is a real feeling, and not an easy  
one.  
When we feel spiritually lost,  
to wait for that miracle is very hard;  
we lack the confidence that it will come.

Or, perhaps, our waiting for a miracle,  
or waiting for love, or freedom, or hope,  
is about our relational lives.

In the last few weeks, as I've had conversations  
with friends and colleagues of mine,  
I was struck by the similar feelings that they are  
having,  
though each reality is different.

One of them separated from his husband a few months  
ago.

It's been a rough year, and the separation has been  
tough.

My friend is ready to move on, the husband not so  
much.

And I keep saying, this takes time,  
and one day my friend understands;  
other days, he's looking for the next partner.

Friend number two is starting a new relationship.

It's very exciting, and we're all happy for him.

He's a planner, though, and he's got a whole story in  
his head about how this relationship will go,  
so we say, slow down.

His new girlfriend says slow down too,  
which is hard to hear -  
but she's right.

There's no hurry.

Things have to develop at their own pace.

But he doesn't like waiting.

Friend number three,

she's about to hit one of those significant birthdays.  
And she realized that she wants a different life.  
She knows exactly what she wants:  
no more fooling around with life -  
time to nest, make a family.  
And now she wants it right away.  
It doesn't work that way, and she knows it,  
but she wants to act, not just wait.

I could tell relationship stories and life stories like this  
all day.  
The divorce that you wish would be over.  
The new job you wish would be routine.  
The graduation you can't wait for.  
And so on.  
We could tell stories all day.

Our theme is expectation.  
And of course, it's advent.  
So we're talking about literally "expecting."  
Mary, I mean.  
She's expecting.  
That's the story.

If you've known a person in their ninth month of  
pregnancy, then you know that expectation isn't easy.  
It isn't always comfortable.  
You're excited for the future, but cherishing the  
waiting, too.  
Sometimes.  
Sometimes you just want the waiting to be over!  
You can't sleep at night,  
though you know you should.  
So many things to do,

and yet, so much is just busy-work, distraction,  
from the real thing to do: be ready in your soul.

So what to say about all this waiting?

Waiting for justice,  
waiting for spiritual healing,  
waiting for a relationship to begin, to change, or to  
end,  
waiting for what you long for that isn't ready yet.  
What to say about this?

We can say trust the seeds.

Trust the seeds.

When the planting's done you must trust the seeds.  
Some may wither  
and some may grow grander than you can imagine.

Trusting the seeds is vital.

Wendell Berry writes,

"not by your will is the house carried through the  
night."

We are not responsible for everything.

We're not.

We plant seeds, we water, we trust.

We hope.

We act on faith.

There isn't enough oil, but we light the candles  
anyway.

Hanukkah is the commemoration of a delayed religious  
festival: Sukkoth.

Sukkoth couldn't be observed because of the  
occupation, and they still didn't have enough oil,

but they finally stopped waiting and just trusted that it would be OK.  
It was, according to the legend.

It doesn't always go that way.  
But I think you have to trust anyway.  
What's the alternative?  
Despair, or burn-out; egoism or alienation?  
I think you have to trust.

But while we are waiting -  
while we are trusting the seeds, the universe, the ways  
of love,  
the moral arc of the universe in its bending toward  
justice -  
while we are waiting,  
what shall we do?  
How shall we live in expectation without making  
ourselves crazy?

I've been struggling with this sermon, I'll tell you.  
I couldn't figure it out, exactly.  
Distracted by the political drama,  
personal stuff, this and that, I couldn't get my head  
around it.  
So I waited.  
AKA procrastinated.  
It's a fine line.  
And "wasting time" on twitter,  
I saw a link to an interview with Bell Hooks.  
I love Bell Hooks - she's a writer, activist, philosopher,  
teacher - so I clicked on it.  
She says,

Well, I believe whole-heartedly that the only way out of domination is love, and the only way into really being able to connect with others, and to know how to be, is to be participating in every aspect of your life as a sacrament of love

And she says:

When we engage love as action, you can't act without connecting. I often think of that phrase, *only connect*.

And she tells this story:

The first time that I got to be with Thich Nhat Hanh, I had just been longing to meet him. I was like, I'm going to meet this incredibly holy man. On the day that I was going to him, every step of the way I felt that I was encountering some kind of racism or sexism. When I got to him, the first thing out of my mouth was, "I am *so angry!*" And he, of course, Mr. Calm himself, Mr. Peace, said, "Well, you know, hold on to your anger, and use it as compost for your garden." And I thought, "Yes, yes, I can do that!"

What do you do while you are waiting, and trusting the seeds?

Do you stand back, withdraw?

Sit on the sidelines while the work of justice is done by others?

Distract yourself from your spiritual hunger with all the technologies of the modern age?

Grow bitter in your desire of a new or different kind of relationship than you have?

What do you do while you are in expectation?

Bell Hooks says:

Only connect.  
Love.  
Turn your rage into compost.  
Only connect.

Make your life a sacrament of love.  
That's what you do, while you're waiting for a miracle.

You have to trust the seeds,  
and sometimes the time isn't right yet.  
The time for justice isn't quite at hand,  
the spirit isn't flowing yet,  
the change in your love life, your work life, your health  
- that change that you want  
isn't here yet;  
maybe its coming  
but not yet.  
You have to trust the seeds,  
but what do you do while they grow, underground?

You make your life a sacrament of love.  
You connect.  
You stay connected.

Take each of our examples.  
The work of justice,  
our longing for justice.

Movements for justice happen when people who are  
connected to each other  
work together.  
If there's no connection,  
there's no justice.  
If there's no love, it's just politics,

here today and gone tomorrow.

Build relationships; these relationships will enable  
activists to trust each other,  
to stand together  
when the moment is ripe -  
and more.

If we all lived a life that was a sacrament of love,  
justice would be already happening.

So be the example.

Turn your rage into compost so something healthy  
grows instead.

The spiritual life:

stay connected.

Love.

If you say, I feel off-center, so I'm going to stop doing  
my spiritual practice -

well, that's a recipe for disaster.

You keep doing it.

You try to love as best you can;  
you don't just wait for an intervention,  
you make room for the spirit.

Let every heart prepare a room . . .

You love.

So that you're ready when things start to flow again.

The personal life:

Stay connected. Stay loving.

Maybe the relationship will change the way you want,  
or become, or end, or transform.

Or maybe it won't.

But, by being - as much as you can - a sacrament of  
love, in your own being,  
you learn to live the way you wish,

regardless of who else is or isn't in your life.  
While you wait for what will or will not be,  
connect to your deepest self,  
and you'll be open and ready for what comes.  
Which will be, more often than not, a surprise, anyway.

You can apply this idea:  
trust the seeds and stay connected to the deeper love,  
to anything that you feel like you're waiting for,  
miracle or not.

Trust and stay connected  
as your children grow up;  
as school inches by;  
as work comes again, day after day;  
as your parents age;  
as the world grows more connected;  
as the partisans have their debates;  
as grief runs its course;  
as the story unfolds.  
Trust and stay connected.

This is how we wait for a miracle:  
with spiritual integrity.  
Knowing that we do not carry the house through the  
night.

This is how we wait for a miracle  
while knowing that each day, each moment, each life  
is already a miracle,  
if we choose to see and feel.

This is how the holy fills our empty places  
and how we are truly neighbor and friend to each  
other.  
Trust and stay connected.

So my advent prayer,  
my prayer of expectation:  
that we do not rush what is not ready to be rushed,  
that we open our hearts and minds to the unfolding  
realities,  
that we make ourselves sacraments of love,  
knowing that whatever happens or doesn't,  
this – this - is the purpose of our lives.  
I pray that we are open to the unexpected as much as  
we are patient in expectation.  
That we trust what is larger than ourselves,  
and that we do the wise planting when it is time,  
and we harvest when it is time,  
and that, with love and hope, when it is time to do so,  
we wait.  
In the name of all those who expect miracles,  
which is to say,  
all of us, hopeful dreamers,  
I pray.  
Amen, Shalom, and blessed be.

Let us sing.