

## REBIRTH

### INTRO

"How does one become butterfly?' Pooh asked pensively.

'You must want to fly so much that you are willing to give up being a caterpillar,' Piglet replied.

'You mean to die?' asked Pooh.

'Yes and no,' he answered. 'What looks like you will die, but what's really you will live on.'

– **A.A. Milne**

### CLOSING THOUGHT

"Butterflies are beautiful, but the process of emerging from the chrysalis and spreading your wings can hurt like hell. But still, you will survive the transformation (over and over again) and you will fly. Remember this when it hurts the most. This is the metamorphosis, the going down to liquid, and the rising again.— Jeanette LeBlanc

We are a month into the Solstice. We have added and will continue to add about 2 mins each day. A minute at sunrise and a minute at sunset.

Ancient peoples celebrate the end of shortening days and look forward to Spring, longer days, warmer days, the birth of life from under the death of winter.

It's appropriate that the focus this month is on New Birth. New Birth has several cousins...Hope, Forgiveness, Transformation.

There is a very real sense that many people, perhaps in this room, look for and desire some sort of New Birth.

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<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2016/10/31/499762656/hospice-chaplain-reflects-on-life-death-and-the-strength-of-the-human-soul>

Kerry Egan is a hospice chaplain. She has written a book on some of her experience called, paradoxically 'On Living'. In that book and in interviews with her by people like Terry Gross from Fresh Air she tells the story of her first birth experience. During her an emergency c-section the epidural failed. She was given an different anesthesia called ketamine. She states in her book that it's not designed to block pain but rather to separate the mind and the body so the mind does not recognize pain and pain.

The medicine is used on horses, on the battlefield and in raves. But for Kerry it created a drug induced psychotic disorder that lasted for 7 months. She writes as a new mother she was plunged in a world of hallucinations, delusions, dissociations, suicidal ideations and catatonia.

For months she was diagnosed with postpartum depression and told to wait. She writes she remembers nothing of her son's first 6 months of life. She went through 18 months of therapy, drugs and time.

One day as she was visiting a patient the conversation led to the patient to ask Kerry 'so, what's your story'?

Kerry records attempts to avoid the question until the patient challenged her. "You're ashamed"

She writes she could feel her heart in her chest and the ocean in her ears. Eventually this patient told her 'What ever happened to you in your life, whatever hard things you've gone through, you have to do three things: You have to accept it. You have to be kind to it, and you have to let it be kind to you'.

Kerry would latter write that learning that kindness is a kind of new birth.

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A few questions for you to ask yourself.... Do I wish a 'new birth'? Whatever that might mean, is there something about 'me' what wants a 'do over' or a 'start again'. A mulligan, And how do I get 'there' (whatever that there is) from here.

In my mind there are two core elements to answering these questions.

One: What core element is found in the core of YOU. Who, exactly, are you? What is it that makes you tick, what is it that motivates you, lights your fire, what is it that gets you up in the morning and...is that 'thing' central to your life.

Second: Many of you have been wounded. Those wounds do not define you. If shame holds you it defines you. But you can accept it, be kind to it, and let it be kind to you. You and I cannot get to there from here but we can get there through here.

Are we together at the moment?

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The human spirit can be intrinsically lazy. We, you, I may want newness...but it's really really hard to get there from here. We'd really rather skip the in between part and move to the 'new' part as if you have been teleported from the present to some future with an absence of pain.

*My subtitle is 'We might not be able to get to our rebirth from here...but we can get to it through here. It may be that everything we need for a new birth, a rebirth is already in us. What we do with it seems to matter most.*

I titled this message **'It's your spring...use it wisely'**. The point is this.

When you sense that in you there needs to be a new birth, a 'do over', a fresh start then that's the mark of a winter solstice in your life. It won't be the only one but it's the one you are in now. Your days are beginning to grow longer...your heart is suggesting warmer, brighter and longer days. It's your Spring, use it wisely."

The reason why this is important to me...is because this is my story. It may be NO ONE else's story in this room, but it's mine. And I suspect there may be at least one other...

If you are a person that suspects, down in the core of your being, that you are **not** who you wish to be at this time, then you may be open to a new birth, a new beginning. So then this is really important. You can't get there **from** here, but you can get there **through** here.

Each of us, that desires a new beginning must pass through the place in which we are living to get to the place think we want to be. We just don't get to be teleported out and into some other existence.

Beam me up, Scottie, is perhaps the coolest phrase from the 20th century...but it's not yet ready for prime time ... yet.

In a few moments I'm going to try to direct your attention to the you inside of you but you may have lost track of that true you inside of you. You may have misplaced your authentic self.

Here's how we sometimes lose our way to our true self.

The reason why this is important to me...is because this is my story. It may be NO ONE else's story in this room, but it's mine. And I suspect there may be at least one other...

Actually, I'd maintain we lose our way from our true self. If you are not living the loves of your childhood there's a chance you may have lost your way from your true self.

I'm going to suggest, and as really smart and intellectually free human beings please examine this suggestion... your childhood holds the keys to your true self.

What you loved to do, think about, experience as a child holds the keys to who you really are at our core.

However, the process of 'growing up' may have derailed you from that love, the process of becoming an adult may have caused you to have embraced someone else's love, someone else's passion or something else's plan.

Perhaps your life is more like the life your parents wanted for you than the one you wanted for you.

Perhaps the responsibilities of family, home, health etc. have caused you to be derailed from the loves of your childhood.

I am a firm believer that at our birth and during our first 10 years or so we experience our truest self.

Please don't confuse our childishness with being a child. Children can be mean, children can be selfish, self-centered and narcissistic. Mean girls and bullies are not the quality that is the core of a newly forming soul. That may be the product of an environment that's already broken. There's too many moving parts to address here.

But deep inside... some of you danced. And you danced all the time. Male and female you danced. But the voices of the world around you diminished that passion. And you listened.

Deep inside...some of you sang, fell in love with music, tried to create music. Perhaps you dreamed of singing, playing or creating music. But the voices of your world diminished that passion. You know the sort of language.

Perhaps some of you loved, as did I, the natural creation around you. Rocks, rivers, mountains, stars, sky were not just interesting but essential...until the world around you, me diminished that passion. Perhaps some of you painted, drew, consumed what you saw in books and in museums. But the world around you diminished that passion and you listened...after all. You were a child, they are adults...who else should know better.

As I look on this congregation I see a few grey heads. There's not a better time for your new birth than right now. Many, not all, but many of the responsibilities that walked you away from your youth may not have the same hold on you as they did before.

Now, may be the time to reclaim the true core of your spirit. Now may be the time to reconnect your old new birth with your new new birth.

Now is the time to dance, sing, take music lessons, study astronomy, geology, archeology. Be renewed, born again. Draw into your soul those elements that set your soul on fire when you were a child.

Earlier I mentioned that this New Birth has a few cousins. One of them is transformation. It's clear that the potential for transformation is evident.

Another first cousin is Hope. Hope for a new dynamic nature of life. Your true life of your true self.

And forgiveness. Being willing to forgive yourself for losing track and those that may have, even with good intent, led you away from your true self.

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May I return to that small book by Kerry Egan. She is a hospice chaplain and writer. It's title is 'On Living'. You can hear her interviewed by Terry Gross on Fresh Air if you'd like. It was important to me, as you can imagine, and came as a gift from one of my daughters.

There is a chapter in her book titled 'Born, and Born Again, and Again'. Kerry is a grad of Harvard Divinity School and appropriately open minded and progressive.

As a chaplain to all spiritual conditions and theological positions or an absence of them she found that the best way to begin to interact with her evangelical patients was to ask them 'what was it like the day you were born again. And one of the themes that is repeated is the fact that for them the whole world seemed to change, colors more intense, sounds clearer, smells fresher. She observed that their perception changed.

She writes ...

'the radical, joyful, healing change my born-again patients experienced was not a change of circumstance or past experiences, it was a change of vision. A change of insight, of understanding who they really were, a person so beloved by God that they were saved, not by what they did but simply because they were.

And that change can be tangible...leaving an abusive relationship, going back to school, moving down the hallway in an assisted living facility. But it can also be a change in perception...and this, in fact is the harder change.

A change of perception of knowing you are enough, and have been since birth, to seeking a world suffused in love and swimming in beauty, despite loneliness, despite pain, despite illness, loss, trauma, and even atrocity...that that's hard. That seems impossible, Yet it happens again and again...and again.'

I believe the journey through here to a new birth passes back through your childhood, through the early you before you became the current you. And, I believe the journey through here to a new birth passes through the wounds of pain, illness, loss, trauma and even atrocity to allow each person seeking a new birth to experience a change of perception.

As I close I'd suggest that if this rings true to you...invest in your memories, early loves and passions. Interview those who knew you when you were young...or pay attention to the way your heart leaps in the presence of art, music, dance, science...listen to your heart. And as you do begin to weave those first loves back into your life. You'll see differently.

Perhaps the most graphic illustration comes from the work of Mary Oliver. In her poem titled 'Journey' she describes...well...that journey.

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice --  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.

"Mend my life!"  
each voice cried.

But you didn't stop.

You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy

**was terrible.**

**It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.**

**But little by little,  
as you left their voice behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognized as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do --  
determined to save**

**the only life that you could save.**

**Mary Oliver**  
**The Journey**