

# The Sun

Have you ever seen anything in your life more wonderful than the way the sun,  
every evening, relaxed and easy, floats toward the horizon and into the clouds or the hills,  
or the ruffled sea, and is gone—  
and how it slides again out of the blackness, every morning,  
on the other side of the world, like a red flower  
streaming upward on its heavenly oils, say, on a morning in early summer,  
at its perfect imperial distance— and have you ever felt for anything  
such wild love— do you think there is anywhere, in any language,  
a word billowing enough for the pleasure that fills you,  
as the sun reaches out, as it warms you as you stand there,  
empty-handed—  
or have you too turned from this world— or have you too  
gone crazy for power,  
for things?

— [Mary Oliver](#)

Have we? Have you, have I gone crazy, turned from this world, gone crazy for power, for things?

Mary Oliver asks a powerful question from beyond the grave. One might think she's writing commentary on the current global situation. But she writes ahead of this crisis. She writes as prophet.

It's been a little over a month since our common lives have come to a screeching halt. I am at least that long past my scheduled hair cut. It won't be long before Cousin Itt and I have the same look. I have not put gas in my car in weeks. I have bought more frozen vegetables than EVER in my life. And I have purchased NO toilet paper. I have finished several small projects around the house which of course has created the opportunity to fix all the issues I created with these projects. Monday I will have my first telehealth conference with my doctor.

There are two projects I'd like to begin this morning. They seem to me to be core issues in growing a spiritual life in this Covid 19 world.

1. Self Care
2. Cultural care

### Self Care

Isolation, distancing takes its physical toll. Most of us are not built for this. Acknowledge that. And care for your physical well being by taking advantage of both primitive technology, like pen and paper and write your friends and loved ones. And 21st century technology that lets you enter visually the lives of your loved ones. I'm still working on Zoom, but FB, Skype, google chats are helpful. Maybe not for you but give it a shot. And listen to your mother. Eat your vegetables and drink more water.

Take care of your mental health. If there was ever a time for the spiritual practice of meditation or prayer or stillness it's now. Take advantage of the

instructions that are available to you on line or by talking to members of this congregation that are studied in these practices.

Take care of your soul/spirit/inner you. Of these three self care areas this one is probably the least attended to. A few suggestions.

- Review your sense of meaning and purpose, self esteem, a sense of our own worth.
- Loving and being loved.
- Tapping into inner peace and joy.
- Being of service to others.
- Generosity of spirit.

And as you look inside yourself for peace we are uniquely positioned to look outside in historic ways. We are having the painfully unique but extremely positive opportunity to e asking our culture, society and country “is this the way we should live”.

And that question is growing stronger each day...just this morning I read the open paragraph to this article in the NYT

*Many Americans have demonstrated heroic strength during the coronavirus pandemic, but the society itself has revealed profound weaknesses. Widening gaps in income, wealth and opportunity in the years before the virus hit left everyone more vulnerable to the disease. It undermined the nation’s defenses and weakened its response. Yet the devastation of the*

*pandemic has also created an opportunity to begin to put things right, to ensure that the America that ultimately emerges is more just, more free and less fragile. Its time to ask basic questions about what the government owes its citizens, what corporations owe their employees and what we all owe each other. America was ailing long before the coronavirus reached its shores. Now we have the chance to make it better.*

And last week an article written by Julio Vincent Gambuto made it's way around the internet. Perhaps you read it. It's heading was "Prepare for the Ultimate Gaslighting" Gambuto is a writer and producer in NYC so his reference to the 1944 movie Gaslight makes perfect sense. It's the story of a new husband who marries but soon learns he cannot keep secret his dark side so he uses the light from gas lighting to make his wife think she's losing her mind. Hence the term.

Gambuto strongly speaks into this current global crisis. And his insights seem accurate.

In that article Gambuto argues that an enormous push will soon be coming from powerful marketing giants that will be doing two things. One-urging us back to normal and two-convincing us that both the horrific and beautiful outcomes of 'The Great Pause' didn't really happen. This message will be endorsed by the Marketer in Chief. And the selling agents of this world will use all their knowledge of the human condition to convince you that YOU need to get back to normal. However many are looking out their windows and seeing a new normal. Cleaner air, slower life style, people learning how to care for each other from a distance.

He writes *“What the trauma has shown us cannot be unseen. A carless Los Angeles has clear blue skies as pollution has simply stopped. In a quiet New York, you can hear the birds chirp in the middle of Madison Avenue. Coyotes have been spotted on the Golden Gate Bridge. These are the postcard images of what the world might be like if we could find a way to have a less deadly daily effect on the planet. What’s not fit for a postcard are the other scenes we have witnessed: a health care system that cannot provide basic protective equipment for its frontline; small businesses — and very large ones — that do not have enough cash to pay their rent or workers, sending over 16 million people to seek unemployment benefits; a government that has so severely damaged the credibility of our media that 300 million people don’t know who to listen to for basic facts that can save their lives.*

*The cat is out of the bag.”*

But those in power and those who make vast quantities of money (3 men have more wealth than 150 million americans total) on the backs of the poor and the wealthy need us to unsee those new normals. They need us to consume again.

Gambuto goes onto suggest that there is an even larger problem than the marketers and the Administration. It’s in us. We, as a culture, have become addicted to the frantic pace of life. We are, basically good people, who have bought the lie that frantic life styles are more important than the

compassion many feel but cannot act on due to the freneticness of life. But The Great Pause has given us a new reality...and we should take this chance to make changes.

In an article posted in the site OpenDemocracy the writers suggest “This is a time to ask important questions – what is important to us when our very lives are under threat? What have we found that actually, we can live without? Where have we found meaning, and connection? What do we realise we have taken for granted and what can we live without? What do we need our economy to deliver so that we can all live meaningful and fulfilling lives?

“We are a good people. And as a good people, we want to define — on our own terms — what this country looks like in five, 10, 50 years. This is our chance to do that, the biggest one we have ever gotten. And the best one we’ll ever get.

The Great Pause has given us a chance to look out into a better future, a future that makes a difference for our planet, a future that includes radically different ways to offer healthcare for our poor, elderly and marginalized who are dying in disproportionate numbers. A future that insures basic protection for health care providers.

Gambuto goes on to write...”From one citizen to another, I beg of you: take a deep breath, ignore the deafening noise, and think deeply about what you want to put back into your life. This is our chance to define a new version of normal, a rare and truly sacred (yes, sacred) opportunity to get rid of the bullshit and to only bring back what works for us, what makes our lives richer, what makes our kids happier, what makes us truly proud.

When each of us chooses to take sacred truths from this Crisis and apply them to our lives we experience a deeper and deepening spirituality than ever before. And when each of us finds ways to gently share those changes with others, then the spiritual revival moves further forward one more step.

And when we do, when we turn back to the world in which we live, give up on power and things, we may begin to have an answer to the question Mary Oliver put to us...

*“and have you ever felt for anything  
such wild love– do you think there is anywhere, in any language,  
a word billowing enough for the pleasure that fills you,  
as the sun reaches out, as it warms you as you stand there,  
empty-handed–*

Closing words.

**Pandemic Lynn Unger”**

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath —  
the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel. Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world  
different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life.

Center down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart.

Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.

(You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives are in one another’s hands.

(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands. Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words. Reach out all the tendrils  
of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love — for better or for worse,  
in sickness and in health,  
so long as we all shall live.