

### A THOUSAND HARVESTS



*Photo by Art Holt*

*Sometimes the best way to understand the present is to re-examine the past, checking history for its lessons...*

Reverend Jim Rosemergy said ‘I like to imagine the results of a thousand harvests when I hold a tiny seed in my hand, because it is all there, waiting to unfold.’ A thousand harvests are within you and me as well. They are the 1000 possibilities, not only for your life to unfold, but the ripple effect your life can have on the world around you, in this generation and in generations yet undreamed and un-conceived.

It’s been said that very few of us live up to our potential. Does that mean our human potential of career and material achievement or our Spiritual potential as partners with God?

The next time you’re in the mall and have a few minutes to spare, look around at the people passing by and try to imagine what life would be

like if every one of these individuals suddenly awakened to the power with them to become all they were created to be. Try to imagine the careers and the accomplishments and the gifts to humankind that would occur if just half of them reached their potential. Then look in a mirror and ask the same question. Whatever you see, whatever you have become, is there even more within the heart and soul of you? I have to ask is there more within me?

As Eric Butterworth said in his book, *Unity: a Quest for Truth*, “The capacity for health and eternal life lies undeveloped within (us).” Perhaps the reason is because we have been looking in the wrong places, listening to the wrong people, or trying to find the easiest and quickest path to personal gain, riches and success, instead of looking within to find our strengths, our talents and our guidance from the highest source there is.

It's easy to see evidence of people who are wasting their lives...or at least wasting their youth, when we observe the high-schoolers hanging around the Mall. If they are the future leaders of our world, we may be in a heap of trouble. And there are some grey haired folks, wandering around in the Mall that could very well be those same teen-agers, only 60 years later.

Luckily, the Mall is only a small portion of the populace. What we aren't seeing are the kids who are working their way through college, the ones who are building intricate inventions for the Science Fair, or those studying art and music and computer science. What we are not seeing are the doctors and astronauts and accomplished writers, athletes and gifted orators who are too busy to spend time in the Mall. What is also missing are the dedicated souls who are devoting their lives to helping others through their work in Hospice, physical therapy, spiritual counseling or any of the other healing arts. There seem to be a lot of people who are working on, or have found, their potential and many who are not.

Could it be that some people simply lack the confidence in them-selves, or have been brainwashed into believing they don't have a chance, or they are the wrong color, or are too poor, or not smart enough? Are there too many who are stuck in a rut and have simply lost their hopes and dreams, or who have been beaten down, are afraid, and have lost their faith?

Many people don't know where to look; don't know how to seek; don't know when to knock; don't know what power lies within them, or who they are in the eyes of their Creator. If they did, would it make a difference? The answers may lie in history. Let's look back and see.

Because a Jewish boy dared to think 'outside the Orthodox box,' we have Christianity today.

Although he said, "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it," his words and teachings, his deep understandings of his religious culture, eventually got him in trouble. Jewish law was strict, and Roman law was lethal. Jesus' acts and messages met with enough resistance from the Jewish and Roman authorities that he was finally put to death by crucifixion. But his works and words lived on.

In the first two or three hundred years afterward, many of the early Christian followers were also put to death for their beliefs and devotion to the ideas and teachings of their martyred hero.

However, in the third century there was a reversal of fortunes for these early Christians that occurred after Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the religious foundation of the Roman Empire. For the next few hundred years, Christian believers were now safe from persecution. Christian churches grew in number and size, slowly becoming dominated by the church leaders in the Empire's home turf of Rome.

The Roman Empire was established and flourished by conquering people in battle and dominating the minds of the defeated with fear, one region after another, from Egypt to England. Roman authority determined life or death for their subjects. Slowly, that 'my way or the highway' attitude filtered into the Christian church leadership as well, only it wasn't the highway that ensued, it became the gallows or burning at the stake. In the middle centuries, anyone who dared to think outside the Christian box, to question the doctrine of the Church, was put to death.

"Anyone studying Christian history must admit," writes Thomas Shepherd in his book, *Friends In High Places*, "we have not always loved our neighbor as we love ourselves. Any

study of the Christian faith that does not face the ghosts in the basement will be unable to point to the angels on our balconies.”

Eric Butterworth describes it this way. “Somewhere after the age of the disciples and the widespread ministry of Paul, there developed a strong machine-like organization that created creeds and doctrines by majority vote of the bishops or cardinals. Once created, these creeds and doctrines became inviolable, whether or not they had any similarity with Jesus’ teachings. In time the ‘machine’ of the Christian church was synchronized with the machinations of the Roman Empire, which then became “Holy.” In other words, religion became the political influence of the day. Conversion to Christianity was enforced and resistance was punished. Anti-Christians were put to death. During the Inquisition alone 32,000 people were burned at the stake “in the name of Jesus,” for little more than daring to think.” Free thinking people were forced to quiet their tongues or still their minds.

Eventually the Protestant Reformation came as a revolt from the authority of the Roman Church. It began as a sincere demand for the right of individuals to worship God in whatever way they chose. While they were successful in breaking the stranglehold of the Roman Church, the reformers soon demanded the same devotion to their religious point of view, and the hangings and burning at the stake continued, this time by the new regime. Freedom of thought and its expression was once again buried under religious dominance.

All those years there was a resistance by the church leaders to allow individuals the freedom to have their own personal relationship with God, because that wasn’t within the strict creeds and doctrines determined by church leadership. The paradox is that it was the personal experience, the personal relationship with God

that Jesus had and shared with anyone and everyone who was interested, that gave birth to Christianity in the first place. Freedom to worship God, freedom to have a personal relationship with God, freedom to pray to God, to listen for the ‘still small voice’ of God in meditation and contemplation; that was the gift and the guidance of that young Jewish man who dared to break free of the personal restrictions imposed by his church.

What Jesus experienced and then taught us is called Mysticism, knowing God personally; to experience God and feel God’s presence directly. It is this drive to have a personal mystical experience that always opens the door whenever it has been closed by the constraints of religious dogma and rigid doctrines.

Ralph Waldo Emerson asked in his Divinity School address back in 1838: “Why should we *all not* have a firsthand and immediate experience of God?” Thinking people throughout the ages have asked the same questions over and over again.

In the very recent years we have witnessed a resurgence of religious community’s efforts to influence the political scene...and politics attempting to form a union with religion. It is a venture that requires caution because it is the freedom to worship independently that has built our nation and attracted respect throughout the free world. To be told what religion to follow and how to worship evokes a chilling reminder of what life was like for very many people, and for nearly a thousand years.

Emerson’s quest for a mystical experience of God requires an open-mindedness to explore a myriad of ways to search for that experience. The Apostle Paul provides us some insight on the subject when he says: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who

inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:4-8). That includes varieties of worship and the freedom to experience God’s presence personally.

In Mystical terms, it is the realization that you and I and God are one. We are a part of God; God is a part of us. We are made in the image and likeness of God; we are all God’s children, and we are here to not only understand this profound idea, but to express it in all that we are and do.

As Reverend Rosemergy said about the thousand harvests within a tiny seed, all there, waiting to unfold, those thousand harvests are within you and me as well. A 1000 possibilities, not only for us to experience, but emanating from us as a ripple effect that our lives will have on the world around us, in this generation and in the generations yet undreamed and un-conceived.

There are four simple ways we can experience our own Thousand Harvests: ***Love; Gratitude; Service; and Meditation.***

***Love:*** Jesus said to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. And like it, to Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love is a matter of choice, as is anger and fear. The good news is that when you choose to express yourself as Love, you cannot be either angry or fearful at the same time. Love is planting the seed. Choose Love.

***Gratitude:*** Being grateful for all of life’s blessings takes us from a negative state of consciousness and gives us a positive expectation. Gratitude is weeding the garden to make room for the seed to grow.

***Service:*** Service is putting love of neighbor into action, looking for good by doing good. Myrtle Fillmore said: “I really feel as if all that is worthwhile in life is serving one another and helping one another on the road to Spiritual

knowledge. We only live as we advance and lend a helping hand to others.” Service is watering and fertilizing the garden.

***Meditation:*** Until we take time to go within, to enter into the silence and open our heart and mind to the loving guidance of the Still Small Voice, we can have no meaningful harvest. The fruit of the vine that we seek is the result of the mystical experience which confirms that God and I are one. There is no end to the harvest that results. Meditation is the way we harvest the fruit.

Jesus words and works and teachings were intended to help all people, not just a select few, to live better lives, healthier lives, abundant lives, and lives in unity with each other, not separate from or superior to anyone. His teachings demonstrated the closeness of God within us all, and does not require a priest or rabbi or holy man to intercede on our behalf. He taught us to pray so that we could experience the Presence and Power of our indwelling Spirit; so that we would feel comfortable turning within to find God’s presence as the guiding light in our lives.

It is in the Silence, in that moment when we turn within and give ourselves fully to listen for the Still Small Voice, that we begin to hold the seed of a thousand harvests in our hands. That harvest is more beautiful than anything we have ever imagined, and it is ours for the asking.

And so it is...

*Art Holt*



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# UPWARD BOUND J\*O\*U\*R\*N\*A\*L

## ADDENDUM - (BONUS FEATURE)

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### *Something to think about...*

Do you remember the story of Moses leading his people across the desert, from Egypt to the Promised Land? It was a forty year saga that included the revelation of the Ten Commandments emerging from the Presence of God in the burning bush on the mountain. It was a time of spiritual infidelity as the Hebrew people melted their plundered gold to make false idols. And finally after forty years of struggle, as they were at the edge of Canaan, God told Moses he would not be able to enter the Promised Land, only his sons could go on. There, in sight of the new land, Moses life came to an end. Do you remember the story?

The story was not only a tale of historic events; more than that, it was a metaphor intended to teach a valuable lesson. It is highly unlikely that their journey took exactly forty years. But, it was from such a story that the metaphysical symbolism of '40 years' was revealed, as the time it takes for something important to reach completion.

Metaphorically, the old had to die away before the new could take hold; old thinking, old ideas, old beliefs, old fears, old and out-dated ways had to be set aside, to make room for the new. Moses' story represents the opportunity of the Jewish people to enter a new land and have a new start.

Many of the elders resisted everything associated with the journey and the changes they would have to make. The best way for the resistance to end was through the death of those who found it impossible to let go. Forty was very symbolic because it was the average life expectancy during that period of history.

A forty year journey across the desert meant that most of these who started would not be around at the finish. The people of that day recognized it as such, so the symbolism contained in stories like this one, was not lost on the people. They knew that the old had to die away in order to make way for the new.

Does this story of Moses and the understanding of forty years as a time of completion bring anything to mind for you today?

Well, it does for me; and it is what we have just

witnessed. From an historic perspective, it very well may be equally significant to the story of Moses. In case you are wondering what I'm referring to, it is the election of Barack Obama as the next President of the United States.

I think that the overwhelming election of an African-American as President of the United States of America is a singularly monumental historic event in American history. But that by itself is not what equates it to the story of Moses and his forty year journey to the Promised Land. The significance and the symbolisms are in the many details, the related events. One candidate was old, and represented old ideas, old thinking, and a determination to maintain that position no matter what. Not willing to let go.

The other candidate was young, with new ideas, new style, a whole new approach to the campaign and to the future. The young candidate advocated and promised change, the other certainly appeared to represent a continuation of the status quo. But, in his concession speech, Senator McCain, finally ceased his attacks on the young Obama, and conceded it is time to work together. Political observers acknowledged that the time has come for the Grand Old Party to re-invent itself...the time has come for the old to die away and a new and healthier direction to be established.

Adding to the significance is the fact that it was 45 years to the day, from the inspiring "*I have a Dream*" speech of Martin Luther King, Jr. to the acceptance of the Democratic nomination speech of Barack Obama, and only a few months later to election-day. It certainly was a time of completion of that dream...(forty is not intended to be an exact number, but a symbolic one. Forty-five is significantly close enough.)

Many changes and new possibilities await us. Let us embrace and welcome them as opportunities for all of us to work together in a global effort to make the world just a little bit better than when we entered it.

Blessings,  
Art

# M E D I T A T I O N

Take a moment now to quiet your mind of busy thoughts, to relax and sit comfortably, and focus on your breathing - easily and completely. Fill your lungs and then let go. Now, let these words be as your own – and affirm... *“As I come to the many crossroads in my life, I trust that the indwelling Christ will guide me with the infinite wisdom I need for right decisions and good judgment.”*

Our journey through life is to get to know the loving Presence of God, guiding us from within and providing us with infinite opportunities to experience our lives, however we choose. Each day, each moment we make choices and decisions that redirect our lives.

Life's *pathways* are filled with turning points and new directions; with moments of excitement, or confusion, or just questioning. And each turning point is like a crossroads. Before I choose whether to turn to the right or left, or continue straight ahead, I take time to go within.

Consider the metaphor of a single drop of water - crystal clear and pure, descending from the Divine source, and coming to rest, momentarily, on the quiet earth below. From invisible Spirit - to form and dimension. After a brief rest, the drop of water begins to slowly move in the direction of the vast sea, its path ahead filled with many crossroads and infinite possibilities for adventure. Many changes and many new directions lie ahead; at each point a choice and a decision; and each pathway the result of that previous choice.

There are many paths to the ocean, just as there are many trails to the top of the mountain. Whatever the path, the reason for the journey is to find oneness in God's presence. And so without doubt or hesitation, the water droplet begins its journey.

Soon the droplet realizes that a decision to follow a fast steep grade soon leads to a thundering waterfall, thrilling but dangerous; and a choice to take a more gentle slope leads to still waters beside quiet meadows, open fields, and the warmth of the summer sunshine.

The drop has learned the lesson of sowing and reaping; regardless what kind of seed is planted it will blossom and bear fruit; the new direction reaps the harvest based on that choice. For this is the spiritual law of cause and effect.

Is it not the same for me and the choices I make? Each choice I make has the power to alter the direction of my life. Each decision bears the fruit of a seed planted by my thoughts and actions. Seeds planted in rich and fertile ground bear the harvest of sweet and nourishing fruit. For every seed that is sown, there will be a harvest of the same kind.

I have no fears or anxieties. God goes before me, opening all the right doors, and guiding me to my greater good. God is my light in the dark. My path is illumined and I know my way. I know that the Christ within will steer me in the right direction.

I pause now to bask for a moment in this quiet and peaceful place, and breathe deeply to refresh not only my body but my mental well-being also. Peace of mind fills me. I am relaxed and confident. In my heart I know that I am blessed in this moment, just as I am blessed at each turn and every crossroad. And I give thanks for my special blessing, the presence of the infinite wisdom of the Christ Mind within me.

And so I take this lesson, learned from one drop of water, and make a commitment today to let my thoughts and feelings, my words and actions, go forth in goodness to produce good effects for the entire world. Thus I can say, Thank you God, for the comfort and assurance that You are with me always, guiding my way.

I am truly grateful and I do give thanks.

Amen

## WORDS TO LIVE BY

*Our thoughts and words create our reality. Let us acknowledge one thought that will impact our lives in wonderful ways. This time it's*

### **FEAR.**

The Presidential election is upon us and the question is, 'have you been keeping the High Watch or have you gotten caught up in the fear mongering, the lies, exaggerations and half truths being thrown around as if they were facts?'

Fear is a powerful factor, not only in political campaigning, but in leader's attempts to control their members. Fear of death by burning at the stake was a major display of power by the Roman Church to convert everyone to Christianity, especially during the days of the Inquisition. Thousands died for no other reason than a desire to be free to think for themselves.

Fear is always related to something unknown, yet to come, a future event which may or may not ever come to pass, painted as something so terrible and painful, no one could live through it. Think about it; if it isn't going to be unbearable, there is no reason to be afraid. Terrifying fear can be something as simple as walking down a strange street, after dark, alone. Your imagination creates the fear.

The High Watch is free of fear; dismissing accusations as unfounded or irrelevant. It's turning within to the Lord God of your being, the Christ within, for the wisdom, guidance and understanding you need to keep your consciousness above the negative opinions of others, especially those whose voices are driven by their fears. Some might say it's a Pollyanna approach to reality, but much of what we call reality is not factually true, just a predominance of negative beliefs and erroneous opinions.

Someone has wisely said that "When the love of power is replaced by the power of love, we will have peace," and I would add "and we will be free of fear."

Keep the High Watch; let your fear be replaced by love.

Blessings,

Art

# UPWARD BOUND JOURNAL

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### **Issue # 37**

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# UPWARD BOUND J\*O\*U\*R\*N\*A\*L

Photo by Art Holt



Is it a flower or a bird? As we strolled along the landscaped walkway, Dottie stopped and declared, "I can finally see the 'bird' in the Bird of Paradise. A moment later I got out my camera so we could let you see it too. You can almost hear the exotic call of this flamboyant male searching for its mate on the shores of a tropical lagoon.

Dear Friends,

If you are Spiritually nourished by Upward Bound, we ask that you consider a year-end tithe. This year we had to replace both of our computers and some of our software. All donations are fully tax deductible and are the only source we have for funding our ministry. We hold each of you in love and appreciation for all your support.

*Art & Dottie*

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