

Go, Tell It to the Wealthy

JAMES HOWDEN



One of Baha'u'llah's most bright and moving prayers prompts me to say this:

“I give praise to Thee, O my God, that Thou has awakened me out of my sleep....[M]ake of what Thou didst reveal unto me in my sleep the surest foundation for the mansions of Thy love that are within the hearts of Thy loved ones...” – Prayers and Meditations, p. 249.

My dreams most often reflect my fears, preoccupations and general mental baggage, but I awoke one morning, months ago, pleasantly haunted by a dream that didn't fade. Maybe it was because I was starting a holiday, and had no plans. Maybe it was just *time*. I wanted to do something about it, so I prayed and wondered and wrote.

Who knows where dreams come from? My wife, that day, was travelling towards an intensive period of meditation – *no talk* for nearly 10 days, *just action* of a still and mindful kind. There's that. Canadians were paying unusual attention to a grassroots movement to mobilize the hopes

and capacities of Native Canadians, many of whom – especially in the North – live in shameful conditions, and the prosperous wider society was being called to account. That was on my mind, too.

In my dream, it was simple. We were many, and we were together at some wonderful congress full of superb talks and workshops, the kind of learning that I normally crave. A few of us, though, gave up this tasty menu and just communed silently together. It might have been an hour, or maybe a morning. It just happened, a sort of flash mob of the spiritual kind. Nobody organized it, or told us what to do or think or not say, but we were clearly mindful of the poor and oppressed. As dream-time passed, more of us banded together in this observant silence, and there was a sense that our united watch was changing things. It did not feel naive or giddy, just deeply *right*.

I wanted to act on it. I pledged to reserve one daily hour (sometimes I fulfill it) for uninterrupted quiet. Meditation. Reflection. Quieting the urgently trivial impulses. Learning (again, and still and ever) to pray, as divinely old-fashioned as that sounds. It involves turning off my mobile phone, my laptop, my music implants, my news of the gossip-ridden world. I worked on remembering: *most of us are oppressed*, for we want truth and justice and beauty and all ways to be confident in the world, even if we routinely bury such bright aspirations to keep the wolf of disillusionment away. I thought of justice in my homeland, and the needy masses wherever they move and dream.



Laozi

I challenged myself, and I renew it here: this week, better sooner than never, *TAKE SIXTY*. Give yourself one hour of detachment from whatever you routinely plug in to, and just be quiet. You might walk (far from the madding crowd), or simply observe your own breath or heartbeat, instead of insistent externals. Maybe you'll return to a neglected practice of mindfulness; "do the non-ado", as the Chinese sage Laozi advised, instead of "much ado about nothing". Then, *TAKE SIXTY MORE*, words this time, sixty words at most to tell someone else about what you did and how it went. You could write a quick comment to this post, or just pass it on. Tweet it, shout it, book it, whisper it, text it, tell it.

Baha'u'llah made this simple, momentous request:

O CHILDREN OF DUST! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. – The Hidden Words, p. 39.

He announced, nearly two centuries ago, that extremes of wealth and poverty represent a global sickness, and must be eliminated. In 2014, more and more people, and not only in the so-called "developing world", are realizing the desperate seriousness of that disease. Dismay at this growing divide must spread, even if the rich person you're speaking to is yourself (or me), even if the poor one's weary sigh is your own. Pass it on. 60-60. Promise yourself a little time to consider the poles of excess and deprivation that exist in everybody's world. Unity of conscience is the essential thing. It is as simple as thinking, *we're all related*. Think of wealth dividing us, and bring to mind Baha'u'llah's promise:

"So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth."

Take an hour just for you. In one way or another, tell somebody about what you did and what it meant to you, for goodness' sake. Take sixty (or more), and send sixty (or fewer). I double-dare you. Let's do a little something together. We can always go back to mindlessness. (I often do.)