

## The Continuous Joy of Revelation--Message for 14 June 2015

Greeting: Make us pure instruments of the divine, the flutes upon which the Spirit plays exquisite songs. Make us the blossoms of richest hue from which the scent of pure sweet blessing permeates the air. Make us soar to the sun like larks, ever singing as we rise!

First Hymn, no. 187 in the green book "A Garden of My Own"

Jalaluddin Rumi's wife, Kira Khatun, told the story of a flower never seen before, like that in the hymn we just sang that she saw angels present to her husband, the incandescent poet, when she looked through a crack in the door. He gave her the flower to keep without telling her the origins, and she used its petals and glorious fragrance for healing others all her life. Their son, Sultan Walad wrote:

Day and night my father danced in ecstasy,  
Spinning on earth like the turning of the heavens.  
His laughter echoed through the zenith of the sky  
And was heard by beings of every realm.  
He showered the musicians with gold and silver.  
He gave away whatever came into his hand.  
He was never without a singing heart.  
He was never at rest.

There was a rebellion in the city—  
No, the whole world sounded with the cries of rebellion  
How could a great pillar of Islam,  
Hailed as the leader of both worlds,  
Become such a raving madman?

Those who recited the scriptures  
Were now singing with abandon  
And swaying with the musicians.  
In public and in private  
People turned away from dogma and empty rituals  
And went crazy after love!

From Galatians 5: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

That first hymn was about the fruits and rewards of our own garden, and linked to that is the splendor and eternal beauty and power of God's garden.

Hymn 2 with verses 2 & 3 on Handout "The Lord into His Garden Comes" is number 126 in the green book.

### Joys and Concerns

Dear Friends—We seek the wisdom that lies between the wild and the fully tame, we seek the heart that is changing and growing in unpredictable, beautiful, but natural and tended ways. Oh great Spirit of the Earth that lies in the verges, bring us to the sunny edge of the forest, to the garden that is ours and yours, the paradise of the productive and the ravishingly beautiful. Let us imagine working satisfyingly hard for all we need and receiving the surprise of all that we do not deserve. For the strangers and those to come, let us sow love, let us sow pardon, let us sow faith, let us sow hope, let us sow light, let us sow joy. Let all of them harvest the fruits of the Spirit. Amen.

Third hymn is no. 147 "Every Time I Feel the Spirit" in green. Children are free to head downstairs.

## Message:

Dear Friends—I love the joyfulness of that hymn and the message that whenever we feel the presence of the Spirit, we're not necessarily going to go shouting and preaching, we're going to go into our hearts to pray. Contrasting the melody are the tough times mentioned and the contemplation in just that contradiction and balance that is life. We are always between joy and sorrow, between inspiration and doubt, between despair and hope, as the seasons change.

Craig and I were driving the other day and saw a bumper sticker that many of you may have seen: God prefers Spiritual fruits to religious nuts. Yes it had us laughing in an appreciative way. So many of the fruits of the Spirit are quiet, as identified in Galatians: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Joy seems to be the only possibly noisy or enthusiastic one. It's an interesting list for the concept of being filled with the Spirit, just as the joyful hymn makes feeling the Spirit an occasion to pray. The Galatians text then goes on to say a curious thing, that against such things there is no law. What is meant is that when one is living by the Spirit, one is not under the law—one is then not in a rules and regulations kind of existence.

And that's where we get to Rumi and his son's observation that his father helped people turn away from dogma and empty rituals to go crazy after love. Instead of reciting scriptures, they were singing out at any time. As he wrote:

Day and night my father danced in ecstasy,  
Spinning on earth like the turning of the heavens.  
His laughter echoed through the zenith of the sky  
And was heard by beings of every realm.

So, it seems that part of the observation here is that the fruits of the Spirit are always mixed fruits—it's a package of nine, not a selection of those that one desires or is attracted to. Too much self-control can stifle love and joy. It's a balance. When Islam was feeling a little too uptight, Rumi pushed a new direction and the mystics dreamed and the dervishes danced.

In my late twenties and into my thirties, I worshipped from time to time at masjid, the Friday prayers at mosques. I was clear in my identity as a Quaker, but I liked the humility and simple rituals. I also was intrigued that the traditional structure eliminated all church hierarchy and that each mosque is an independent worship community that can and does invite different members to deliver the message each Friday. I also thought, and still think, that Mohammed's observations about Christianity in the Koran are useful. It really was a sort of reformation. Praying five times a day was a nice compromise between becoming a monk or nun or going to mass only once a week—a discipline that could keep one more mindful. A ban on translation—that the Koran remain in one language, Arabic, was a response to all the variations that continuously crop up in Christian texts. Then there is the clear rejection of the blasphemy of the trinity—one example in Surah V verse 171: O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" -Cease! Better for you!—Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that he should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender....O humankind! Now hath a proof from your Lord come unto you, and We have sent down unto you a clear Light.

I stopped attending masjid because of the gender segregation, but I did enjoy those worship communities. The images of Islam are also all about gardens—the cultivated wilderness that is still part of the unpredictable elements. The discipline and the beauty and the partnership with creation, and the work towards goals that might not happen. A gardener is so close to miracles all the time—is working directly with miracles. We can know everything about our garden inputs, about our locally sourced harvest, but we still don't quite know why and how things bear fruit. A joyous mystery.

Maybe with the search for balanced Spiritual fruit, it is inevitable that one also gets some religious nuts. Avoiding the religious or Spiritual part to evade the nuts can also mean that there will be no fruit. It is the silence of our lives that we can fill, it is the combined blessings we can find, it is the support of testimony and sharing in love that can make us a true community of Light, it all comes from within, but also needs to be shared and affirmed, ever in balance, in harmony, and against such things there is no law.

Worship

Closing Hymn: no. 180 “There is Nothing I can Give You”

Closing: Dear Friends—Life is hard. Life is confusing and unpredictable, with injustice and inconsistency. In the complications there is also grace, there is also the sacred and the Spirit. Within it all, take heaven, take peace, and joy, and heaven.

Thanks/Introductions/Announcements/Afterthoughts

Postlude