

## Friday Grind 7/22/2022

Sunday was National Ice Cream Day. But don't worry, the celebration continues, thanks to a proclamation signed by President Ronald Reagan nearly 40 years ago declaring July as National Ice Cream Month. Last Sunday though,, my iPhone did some surprise videos for me and what a delightful surprise to see pics I didn't even remember from years ago along with pics of very special people no longer on this side of paradise.

And Jack's golf addiction had me single minded for much of the weekend. The Open Championship played at The Old Course at St Andrews (Fife, Scotland), also known as the Old Lady or the Grand Old Lady, is considered the oldest golf course. Golf has been played on the Links at St Andrews since around 1400 AD and the Old Course is renowned throughout the world as the Home of Golf.

And a little trivia for us non-golfers... Golf was clearly becoming too popular in the middle ages as the game was banned in 1457 by King James II of Scotland, who felt it was distracting young men from archery practice. This ban was repeated by succeeding monarchs until James IV threw in the towel and in 1502 became a golfer himself.

Always try to leave people better than you found them. Hug the hurt. Kiss the broken. Befriend the lost. Love the lonely. I want to live in that kind of world. But this is my confession: some days (well, too many days), I wonder if it's possible. (I can hear my spirit say, "A tenderhearted world? Yeah, right.")

My cynicism rears its obstinate head, hoping to take root in my heart and spirit. And despair is often not far behind. (Is it okay to admit this? Of course, I'm shaking my head as I write these words, because I'm

not sure whether I am more afraid of the despair, or the fragility and vulnerability in a world where tenderness is real and can still give us hope. And why would I be afraid, and why would I see both of them as weaknesses?)

So, it comes as no surprise that I would look for ways (give time and energy) to armor (safeguard) my heart. An armor sadly, marinated in fear.

Ram Dass talked about this wrestling in his reflection: "how do you keep your heart open in hell?" You see, when I assume life is "either / or" (in other words, there can't be tender open hearts, and pain and suffering too), I try to distance myself from the pain because in my mind, both cannot co-exist. But here's the deal: when I see the world this way (as either / or), I always miss something.

I miss the strength (yes, our enoughness) in fragility and vulnerability, and the power to embrace what is there.

I miss seeing the humanity that is alive and well (yes, hearts open in "hell"), the capacity for compassion and redemption.

I miss the invitation to make a space to embrace what is authentic, and the gift of being beloved even in our brokenness.

I miss the capacity for regeneration.

This week I took hope in a lovely story [from *Throughline of NPR*] about seeing our world as "both / and", and the emotional significance of reparation.

In *The Well Gardened Mind*, Sue Stuart-Smith tells the story of the book *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (The Child and the Spells) by Melanie Klein.

The plot, based on a story by Colette, starts with a little boy being sent to his room by his mother for refusing to do his homework. In his banishment, he embarks on a rampage of fury, reveling in destruction as he trashes his room and attacks his toys and pet animals. Suddenly, the room comes

to life and he feels threatened and anxious. Two cats appear and take the boy out to the garden, where a tree is groaning in pain from a wound he inflicted on its bark the day before. As he starts to feel pity and lays his cheek against the tree trunk, a dragonfly whose mate he recently caught and killed confronts him. It dawns on him that the insects and animals in the garden love one another. Then a fight breaks out when some of the animals he has previously hurt start to retaliate by biting him. A squirrel is injured in the fray and the boy instinctively takes off his scarf to bind its wounded paw. With this act of care, the world around him is transformed. The garden ceases to be a hostile place and the animals sing to him of his goodness as they help him back to the house to be reunited with his mother. As Klein described: he is restored to the human world of helping.

Children (and the child in all of us) need to see positive confirmation of themselves in the world around them and they need to believe in their capacity to love, a capacity fueled by embracing vulnerability even in pain and suffering.

Yes, and amen. Even in cacophony, we are still connected to one another. We still make a difference. A human world of helping. No one of us is on this journey alone. And maybe, the armor can come down.

Anthropologist Eleanor Leacock spent a lot of time with the Cree Indians of northern Canada. She went on a hunting trip with a Cree name Thomas. Deep in the bush they encountered two men, strangers, who had run out of food and were extremely hungry. Thomas gave them all his flour and lard, despite the fact that he would have to cut his own trip short as a result. Leacock probed Thomas as to why he did this, and he finally lost patience with her.

“Suppose, now, not to give them flour, lard,” he explained, “just dead inside.”

I get the feeling dead part. And that’s the last thing I want or need to be.

Here’s what I believe: Like the little boy with the animals, every one of us has the resources to feed and to nourish one another. To bring another back to life. To make us all more and not less human. So, what is it that allows us to live from our heart, to contribute, to mend, even in a broken world? [*from CBC Ideas*]

Speaking words of courage in frightening times with her column “My Day,” Eleanor Roosevelt spilled light. And she admitted that her indefatigable service for us to be our better selves was an antidote to loneliness, anxiety and the periods of depression she called “Griselda moods.”

So yes. Wholeheartedness flows even from the broken places, from places where we may feel fragmented and vulnerable. True, my mood often tells me otherwise. My mood tells me to guard my heart.

But what I’m learning is that the easiest way to take care of your heart, is to give it away. Taking off my scarf, to bind wounded paws. Go figure.

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So. Today I am glad for any reminder that we are connected.

Today, I am glad for any reminder of the capacity to be fully human, tender, vulnerable and kindhearted.

Today, I am glad for any reminder that we are connected to something larger than our fear or anxiety or our ego.

There’s a good deal of conversation about what to believe or stand for, these days. And yet. When discussion or debate turns into argument meant to divide, we miss the opportunity to be human with one another.

Savor your days my friends.

