

SOUL FOOD
reflective moments

Although the world is full of
suffering,
it is also full of overcoming it.

- Helen Keller

JUSTICE
first

Proudly presented by the Baha'i community of Adelaide
The Baha'i Faith celebrates the unity and diversity of the human family,
the essential harmony of all religions and the oneness of the Universal Creator

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Opening Music

JUSTICE

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

— *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Baha'i writings*

A man finds no justice if he carries a dispute to violence. No, he who knows right from wrong, who is learned and guides others – not by violence, but by the same law, being a guardian of the law, who shows intelligence: he is called just.

— *The Dhammapada, from the Buddhist writings*

In the name of God! The Compassionate, the Merciful.

Say: In whatsoever Books God hath sent down do I believe: I am commanded to decide justly between you: God is your Lord, and our Lord: we have our works and you have your works: between us and you let there be no strife: God will make us all one: and to him shall we return.

— *The Qu'rán, from the Muslim writings*

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye. Thus have We instructed thee, manifested unto thee Words of Wisdom, that thou mayest be thankful unto the Lord, Thy God, and glory therein amidst all peoples.

— *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Baha'i writings*

THE GOLDEN RULE

The Golden rule, the teaching that we should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated, is an ethic variously repeated in all the great religions:

Buddhism: ‘Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.’
— *Udana-Varqa*, 5:18

Zoroastrianism: ‘That nature is only good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.’
— *Dadistan-I Dinik*, 94:5

Judaism: ‘What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the entire Law, all the rest is commentary.’
— *The Talmud, Shabbat*, 31s

Hinduism: ‘This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbour which thou wouldst not have him do to thee after.’
— *The Mahabharata*

Christianity: ‘As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.’
— *Luke* 6:31

Islam: ‘No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.’
— *Sunnah*

Confucianism: ‘Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.’
— *Analects*, XV, 23

Bahá’í Faith: ‘He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil.’
— *Gleanings*

Musical Reflection

REALITY CHECK

Driving in my car all alone I am one.
Entangled on the pick-up truck sit another twenty one.
Inside it's air-conditioned, sanitised, the music sounds so sweet.
Other's taste the dust, feel the heat, engine groans and misses a beat.
At home in the cool, we are only four. A room for everyone of us, and more.
Eight are elsewhere sitting all around.
They are by their single room that sleeps them on the ground.
The refrigerator is open revealing supermarket food inside.
Each day a new taste sensation, scraps tossed aside.
Others eating from the garden, only once the rains have come.
The same food daily, only less with each new sun.
The gap is wide, getting wider every day.
It makes me think, it makes me wonder, but can I say.
It's fifty-to-one, fifty-to-one.
That's the difference between us, it's not just a sum.

— *From Malawi Times, publishers Ian and Wendy Dicks, May 2002*

We are tired of the benches,
our beds in the park,
We welcome the sundown that heralds the dark.
White Lady Methylate!
Keep us warm and from crying.
Hold back the hate
And hasten the dying.

The tribes are all gone,
The spears are all broken:
Once we had bread here,
You gave us stone.

— *Jack Davis, Australian Aboriginal Poet*

Soon will your swiftly passing days be over, and the fame and riches, the comforts, the joys provided by the world will be gone without a trace... Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. Pay ye no heed to aversion and rejection, to disdain, hostility, injustice: Act ye in the opposite way.

— *Abdu'l-Baha, from the Baha'i writings*

A WOMAN'S RECKONING

I am awake in a glistening morning ready to write. From the window, the lush green grass, thick with autumn dew, leads to the empty beach. The sea and sky beyond – both blue and unpolluted – are washed clear and clean by the sun. The only sounds are the early dawn chorus and the roaring of the waves.

I sit, as writers and artists have for centuries, labouring unpaid. Yet I am sure this will work. I am sure it is productive, and I hope it will be of value.

But as far as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is concerned, on this late summer day in 1986, it is none of the above.

I consider the hills rising directly from the sea. They were once covered in thick native bush, which must have been non-productive, for it was burned and cleared off. Now thousands of pine trees inch their way to a harvest at twenty years. That will make them “productive”. If the mineral prospecting licences on the hills reveal minerals in quantity, the hills, too, will be productive. As they are – untouched, unscathed – they have no value. That’s what the international economic system says.

My tenancy of this house is unproductive. While its owner will have a market rental value of the house imputed for the sake of the national accounts, I contribute nothing, as I am a guest here. I consume a little water and electricity. Now that has value! If modern plumbing conveniences were not providing water and I walked with my bucket to the foothills four hundred metres away to collect it from the streams there, it would be worthless. That’s what the international economic system says.

If I were to take commercially-prepared, pre-packaged food from the fridge, I would be economically consumptive. But I choose to eat feijoas, tamarillos and apples from the domestic garden, items of no value.

All in all, I seem to be having a very worthless sort of day – like the beach, the birds, and the clear and unpolluted skies.

— *From Counting for Nothing by Marilyn Waring*

Musical Reflection

THE WISE MAN

There was once a very pompous and conceited wise man. He was very proud that he had devoted all his life to theology (the study of religion) and could explain and debate the most difficult questions that anyone could ask him on this subject. He became so famous that a king, far away in a country across the sea, sent for him to share his learning with the king's own wise men.

The wise man was much flattered that his learning had become so well known and took a ship straight away to visit the distant king.

When the ship had been at sea for several days, the wise man was on deck walking to and fro, enjoying the warm sun, the gentle breeze, and the calm sea, and feeling very pleased with himself. The ship's captain passed by and asked if he was well and enjoying the voyage.

The wise man was so full of his theology and of his own importance that he replied: "Tell me, my good man, do you know anything of theology?"

The captain answered that he did not.

"Then," declared the wise man with all his pompous pride, "you have missed much, captain. Half your life has been lost!"

The captain did not reply but looked hard at the man and continued with his inspection of the ship.

Several days later, a great storm arose. The ship was blown and tossed about, the sails were torn, the ship began to leak and was in great danger of sinking. The poor traveller was in his cabin, wretched and ill with seasickness.

The captain went down to see how his proud passenger was fairing.

"And how are you today, sir?" he asked. "Tell me, O learned one, do you know how to swim?" The man replied regretfully he did not.

"Then," roared the captain, "you have missed something in your life, sir, and all your life is lost!"

— *Star of the West*

I noticed the son of a rich man, sitting on the grave of his father and quarreling with a dervish-boy, saying: 'The sarcophagus of my father's tomb is of stone and its epitaph is elegant. The pavement is of marble, tessellated with turquoise-like bricks. But what resembles thy father's grave? It consists of two contiguous bricks with two handfuls of mud thrown over it.' The dervish-boy listened to all this and then observed: 'By the time thy father is able to shake off those heavy stones which cover him, mine will have reached paradise.'

A dervish who carries only the load of poverty
Will also arrive lightly burdened at the gate of death
Whilst he who lived in happiness, wealth and ease
Will undoubtedly on all these accounts die hard.
At all events, a prisoner who escapes from all his bonds
Is to be considered more happy than an amir taken prisoner.

— *Sheikh Muslih-uddin Sa'di Shirazi (1258)*

What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasures, on the diversity and the cost of ornaments with which ye deck yourselves? If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches. Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it!

Nay! By Him Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of the entire creation! Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God, your wholehearted observance of His laws, your resolution to see that they do not remain unenforced, and to pursue steadfastly the right course.

— *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Baha'i writings*

Musical Reflection

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A small minded man weighs what can hinder him and fearful, dares not set to work. Difficulties cause the average man to leave of what he has begun. A truly great man does not slacken in carrying out what he has begun, although obstacles tower thousand-fold until he has succeeded.

— *Indian Wisdom*

As the old man walked the beach at dawn he noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth he asked him why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun. But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish countered the other. How can your effort make any difference? The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and threw it to the safety of the waves. It makes a difference to this one.

— *Author Unknown*

Compassion is not simply a sense of sympathy or caring for the person suffering, not simply a warmth of heart toward the person before you, or a sharp clarity of recognition of their needs and pain. It is also a sustained and practical determination to do whatever is possible and necessary to help alleviate their suffering.

— *Sogyal Rinpoche*

If you sit down at set of sun
And count the acts that you have done,
And, counting, find
One self-denying deed, one word
That eased the heart of him who heard,
One glance most kind
That fell like sunshine where it went –
Then you may count that day well spent.

But if, through all the livelong day,
You've cheered no heart, by yea or nay –
If through it all
You've nothing done that you can trace
That brought the sunshine to one face –
No act most small
That helped some soul and nothing cost –
Then count that day as worse than lost.

— *George Elliot*

Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature: look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath enveloped the whole earth and all who dwell thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and the ignorant. Stranger and friend alike are seated at the table of His favour. Even as the believer, the denier who turneth away from God doth at the same time cup his hands and drink from the sea of His bestowals.

— *Baha'u'llah, from the Baha'i Writings*

Musical Finale

join us for the next program

Sunday the 19th September, 11am
*Radford Auditorium,
Art Gallery of South Australia*