

THE SERVANT OF GOD

A baby in the womb is an embryo attached to an umbilical cord; for the first few days after birth, the newborn still has part of this cord attached to it. Both the embryo and the newborn live in a state of dependency, something which came from somewhere else, relying on something else for sustenance. That little piece of umbilical cord falls off but there is another stage of dependence, the baby still depends on its mother's breast or a bottle to survive. As the child grows, no longer physically attached, there is a degree of separation which brings a kind of independence.

This independence evokes certain thoughts, certain ways of understanding the nature of our existence. Once we lose our dependence we think in terms of individual consciousness, a consciousness in a separate body. It is no longer easy for a child to remember its dependence as it seems to be more independent. When the mind begins to tell us about our independence, a child feels more independent, losing the memory of dependence and attachment.

Here is the beginning of so many problems, arrogance, the arrogance of an independence which has forgotten we came from something else, forgotten we are indebted to something. We have forgotten we are supported by something outside ourself, we are nourished by something outside ourself, we are taken care of by something other than ourself. Now we believe we are taking care of ourself. As this arrogance grows within us we become more important at least to ourself, more important than anyone else around, more important than anything we can think of.

Just because we cannot think of a thing does not mean it does not exist. Most of us limit ourself to the things we can think of, believing what we can think of is all there

is. We do not enter the world of nonthinking, we do not understand the world of nonthinking because we have not been taught to believe that another world exists, that the realm of the heart exists, that a world of experience and understanding exists on a different level. Without this understanding we are left with only one kind of knowledge, the kind which continues feeding our arrogance.

This arrogance leads us to believe in a certain kind of victory, a certain kind of understanding. We use those tools we believe we are limited to, mind and intellect, trying to find answers to every problem without recognizing these tools do not work for everything, some things cannot be resolved with them, they are inappropriate. These are things which can be figured out, although most people fail to recognize that our intellect will not take us on the spiritual path. This means that some people try to use the physical world in their approach to the spiritual, a process which does not lead us to spiritual truth.

Religions can become arrogant in the same way people do, they can be very insistent about their ritual requirements: those who do not subscribe to their demands are in trouble, especially if religion and politics, religion and government are linked. If everyone does go to church in a country because they must, if everyone does go to the temple because they must, there is no true religious spirit. Even though all the people fall in line in required ways, presenting the appearance of belief, the image a religion prescribes, internally there may be nothing more than hypocrisy if no one explains the truth.

When there is no such person, if there are people of intellect alone, we end up with rules and regulations, outer ways to act, a measuring stick as the arbitrator, in other words, what we hear, what we see, what we feel, what we touch. The guide is nothing

more than external experience, there is no movement to the inner, we end up like scientists measuring things. Religion becomes something measured, we pray so many times a day, we recite so many rosaries a day, fulfill so many obligations a day, they are the measuring stick for religion. This is what happens when religion is externalized, when arrogance passes into religion.

In reality, the spiritual way is opposite to what we see, it is hidden because it is not about the connections we make on the outside, it is about the connections we make on the inside. Since these connections made internally are known only to the person making them, they cannot be seen by the rest of the world, they are not noticed by the rest of the world. The real relationship between man and God is hidden in the sense that it is not externalized, hidden in the sense that it goes on inwardly not outwardly. The world of proofs, the world of the senses, seeing things and trying to make them behave a certain way, none of that fits, none of that has any place.

In periods of time when mystics had a place, when mystics were accepted in the hierarchy of things, such times have always been short but illuminated periods in history. Illuminated beings ruled infrequently not merely because they were not allowed to, but also because they did not want to, it would have compromised their situation.

Worldly objectives like desire for power or control are opposite to the truth. The truth is that we have to develop our capacity for servanthood, develop an understanding of our relation to the master; we need to acquire a master-servant relationship in which we are the servant. This inner understanding takes us to the initial stages of the spiritual path—only as a servant can we be aligned with God's will, only as a servant will our true glory exist.

We cannot be anything on God's behalf until we have become a servant of God. If anything comes before servanthood our arrogance is involved. Servanthood is the first step, the first real step, along with the understanding that this first step takes us to the next one where we recognize His will, not ours. His will can prevail only if ours is displaced—it is displaced when we become servants, servants to Him no longer driven by our passions and desires, our mental creations. These things can only be removed as we acquire an understanding of how driven we are by them, then we can be released from them. The beginning of servanthood means breaking with habit, a lifetime of satisfying needs and desires.

Who comes first, God or myself? If we are truly His servant He comes first, if we are our own servant satisfying the cravings of mind and desire, we are slaves to mind and desire, confusing them with ourselves, believing we serve ourselves when we are actually serving them. We should learn to recognize mind and desire as separate entities we appear to be attached to, although in reality we are not. Everyone has this apparent attachment, everyone has been given a tool called the mind to use as a servant. We reverse this by taking the mind as ourselves whose servant we become.

People are servants to whatever rules their life. If the dominant thing in our life is satisfying sensual needs we are slaves to sensual pleasure, if the dominant thing is power we are slaves to the need for power, if we want wealth we are slaves to wealth. We are all enslaved by something, we all serve a master even though we think we are the master being served. In the understanding of truth, in reality, we do not exist. No matter what we create as the illusion of who we are, the illusion we serve, we have created an illusory master, something we give obedience to, something we pay homage to. We ought to be

careful about what we give our servanthood to because this is all we have to give. The right to surrender oneself to something is what we have been given; we need to be careful about what we surrender to.

Once we understand the nature of our situation we can make changes. We hear talk of the desire for wealth, for sensual pleasure, for property and land, there is so much desire for these things. What do we do with the things we desire? Whatever we desire we hoard, we collect cars, books, paintings, video games, whatever. If we like women we might have more than one household. This is the way desire translates in the world, through collections of things. Wealth is the collection of money, power collects the ability to control people.

But we cannot collect God, we cannot hoard God, He is not collectable. We cannot put God in a box and say this is my God. The idea that this is *my* God, that I control God, that I can dispense God as people dispense money, favors or dispensations, this cannot be done. We cannot put God in a box, God is, He exists, we cannot carry Him around enclosing Him in something. The only way we can carry God around with us is by being empty enough to let Him flow through us, let Him come and go circulating through us. As soon as we put a stopper on that process He stops coming in, He leaves and does not come back until we are empty again.

If we try to apply the rules of the world to the rules of God, trying to collect the things of God as we collect the things of the world, it cannot be done, this is the stopper on our relationship with God. We need to see things in a new way, an entirely new way, understanding that as we let things go we receive things, as we give things away things come to us, understanding that the force going through us when we give things away

attracts more. This is opposite to what the world says: this force works like a vacuum, as we give out more comes in. We are able to acquire through generosity, we are able to acquire rewards from our Lord through servanthood.

This is quite different from the way we are accustomed to understanding things, a difference we must realize. Only when something has that reality for us do we act on it—words are easy, action is another situation, entering a particular state is yet another situation. Being free of the needs of the world is a state of understanding; understanding that worldly gifts come from the grace of God not from our own effort, this is another understanding. At the same time we should remember that God loves our effort, we must do everything we can with the recognition that our effort is not responsible for the outcome, we must not have any pride in accomplishment.

But this is a problem because we are given awards as children when we do well in school, they tell us how good we are, how well we have performed. This makes us think we are special, a thought which lingers. As we grow older, and this is particularly true for those who have powerful minds, who are used to manipulating the world, we are entranced by our own sense of being special, “Look at what I have done, it is unbelievable! Isn’t what I just did amazing? It really is astonishing!” This does not go away, that feeling of accomplishment is something we seek, yet no matter how much we do we need another goal, a higher reward. “I did this, then I did that.”

Now we develop awards to repeat our grade school success, we have Academy Awards and Emmys, we have man of the year, citizen of the year, leader in this or that industry, the Hall of Fame in sports, in rock and roll, so many awards to immortalize us. We even use words like immortal for these worldly events.

We have lost touch, we have lost touch with reality because we are afraid to look at the actual nature of things, afraid to look at the way things are, afraid to focus on our frailties, our misgivings, our fears and dilemmas. Worldly things distract us, take us from having to look at any of this. If we are given an honorary dinner, speeches, we forget how afraid we are for the time being. Why do we forget? We compare ourselves with others and think, "I'm so much better than he is, so much better off. I may not have exactly what he has, but what I have is more important." When we make these comparisons we use imaginary charts.

The fact is, it is not about comparisons, we are not in competition here, we are here to know our Lord, to form a relationship transcending us and them, a relationship which involves ourselves and our Lord. We need to understand that relationship and recognize ourselves as the servant. We have to go beneath, not above, we have to be small, so small that the world cannot find us, the hypnotic, magnetic attractions of the world cannot pull us because we are too insignificant. Our true glory lies in that insignificance, the light of His compassion shines in that insignificance. When we turn away from the world, when we turn correctly towards Him there is room for Him; as long as we are full of the world there is no room for Him.

A wise man observed what happened once when he saw two bullfrogs fighting. One bullfrog tried to swallow the other, puffing up, expanding, becoming bigger and bigger to make room for the frog it was swallowing. While the first one tried to swallow it, the other bullfrog kept expanding, not allowing itself to be swallowed. They both became bigger and bigger until they were stuck together and died. We keep trying to be larger and larger, devouring everything around us. It doesn't work, we need to disappear,

disappear in Him, disappear through Him so that He will appear in us. When we disappear He appears.

May the understanding of our true nature be clear and may we stop being afraid of it, stop creating a nature which is not ours. Let reality be our truth, let the truth be our path, let His will be ours.