

THE PROFIT MOTIVE

There is competition in this world as we work to earn a living, competition for money, competition in business and among those who are trying to sustain their material existence. This is the way of the world, a state of continuing competition. Little fish eat smaller fish and then they are eaten by bigger fish; everything is in competition with everything else for sustenance in the world. Capitalism includes the profit motive, we go out there for gain, and that gain, that monetary gain which sustains ourself and our family is permissible.

There is competition and the permissible within competition; in other words, as long as we function with integrity, we are encouraged to play the game of the world. Certain things are forbidden, high interest for instance, high interest which can destroy someone is not permitted. In capitalist competition usury is forbidden, although both competition and gain are permissible.

There is the path of the world and the path to God, the path of real human beings, true human beings who are not in competition with each other. The rules of capitalism do not apply to our dealings with each other. When we are competitive with each other, when our mind and our attitude insist we must prevail, difficulties arise. Some people not only need to do what they do, but they also need others to accept what they do and think. If this is a driving force in their life they can go astray on this great path.

We are here to love each other, not to force each other. Tolerance is an astonishing quality which we find in all the great teachers. We need to understand this quality in our dealings with each other, we need to understand the rules of the straight,

true path because the rules of this path are different from the rules of the world. Even if the rules of the world, for the world, are permissible, they are not permissible in our dealings with friends and companions. We cannot be demanding of them, we cannot have separations among us, we cannot have competition among us. We need to be joyous in the joy of our friends and sad in their sorrow, we need to be deeply sympathetic to the lives of others.

We should practice the act of having no act, and that means we come without motive, without agenda, we come to serve others because we are without needs. God has provided for us, we are fortunate, we have seen His grace and know that everything we need has already been given to us. We are without needs because God has given us all that we need. Shouldn't we help those who still have needs, shouldn't we set the table for those who have needs? They have not understood that their needs are only products of their imagination, an imagination which requires feeding until they recognize they can be self-sustaining.

Let us understand what self-sustaining means: to be self-sustaining in truth means we are sustained by our true self. What is our true self? Our true self is our connection to God which alone sustains us, we need nothing else to sustain us. We have problems when we compete with friends and associates. If they say something we think is not quite right, if we feel we deserve praise which they do not give, if they blame us when we think they have no right to do so, all this causes trouble. We need to be impervious to praise and impervious to blame.

We do not take sustenance from the world nor do we take sadness from the world, happiness and sadness are not what the world has for us. We have decided to leave the

way of the world and go a different way, a way which means that our sustenance comes from God, not from the world. Those who look for sustenance from the world need manifest indications of success, they need signs to persuade themselves they are happy, they need proof that what they are doing is correct if their faith is weak, if their belief is weak, they need proof that the world supports them. Looking for this proof, looking to the world for sustenance and indications of worthiness means we need the qualities of the world. What are the qualities of the world? They start with a deep sense of differences, the root of the problems as we look for success in the world.

If we look for success in the world, if we see differences, we create our own image of the way things ought to be; as soon as we take that and our own image seriously, we are in a forbidden realm. Now we have jealousy and resentment. If things are not the way we think they ought to be, we resent the people who are not the way we want them to be, we become jealous of their success which should be ours. Now we have engaged the things of the world, the things which make competition what it is, we add winning and losing to the equation of brotherhood and friendship where they do not belong. We have to bring a different understanding to brotherhood, keep score in an entirely different way. We are not in the business of competition, we are in the business of surrender, the opposite of competition. Competition means we win by overcoming someone else, surrender means we win by overcoming ourself, the self disappears and God wins.

We need to understand this game of surrender, this act which must become the act of our lives. We are all actors and actresses, each of us has an act, and we do have to be careful about the one we choose. We are idol worshipers until we come to that point

which is reality. We should be careful about what we worship, choose idols which come as close to reality as possible, and ask God to remove everything separating us from reality until we do, in fact, worship reality. Even though we might be aware of the separation between what we worship and reality, we have to pray for the separation to disappear.

We have been given examples of the truth, reality and the right way to live; we should model ourself on that reality. We have the example of the prophets, the example of enlightened teachers, of all the friends of God. We know what they went through, the suffering they endured on behalf of others. The profit motive must disappear in our interaction with each other, we do not acquire profit from each other. If God permits it we acquire God from each other, God is our profit, God is beyond profit, a treasure which cannot be described. This is available if we leave the world to its own rules and establish new rules for ourself. With God's help we will be allowed this, in our struggle with ourself we will begin to understand the new way, the path of surrender which is the only way to approach Him, the only way to cleanse ourself, be worthy of approaching Him.

This path begins very simply, it starts in our home, it starts in our relationship with our husband or wife, it expands to the relationship with our children, then to the relationship with our companions in fellowship. That relationship of love, of kindness, that happiness in others, striving for the sake of others, doing things for others, this is the path we have chosen, the path our great teachers chose. Think about their profit motive, think how they kept score, what they intended and wanted.

They never took anything for themselves, their intention was always to give, to elevate others. We should help others, be the best parents to our children, help ourself and

everyone we know, all our friends and companions. We have to be the best friend we can be, the best example of sharing, of giving. We do not rush to talk about ourself, we are happy to listen to someone else, we learn to have sympathy. We cannot help someone else unless we become who they are, we have to be there, share everything with them and let them in, then we can react on their behalf.

A sage dealt with a certain situation in an interesting way. It seems a mother came to him asking for help with her child—she wanted him to stop eating sugar. The wise man told the woman in question to come back in two or three weeks. When the woman returned with her child, he told the child to stop eating sugar. The mother asked, “Why did you make us wait until you said that?”

The answer was, “First, I had to stop eating sugar, I had to understand what the child would experience and know how it felt.” We need to understand what other people are experiencing, walk in their shoes, take ours off. We cannot be so attached to our own shoes we have no time to step into someone else’s.

If we believe everything needs to proceed as we think it should, we have taken a step which is impermissible, we are creating the world as we think it should be, and we do not have that right. We have the right to help, the right to assist, the right to use good qualities, we have the right to disappear, but we do not have the right to judge or insist. This path is difficult because it runs against the self-preservation everyone assures us is a driving force. What good does it do to preserve the body if we lose the soul? This is not new, we have heard this before, but now we need to understand the truth of it.

These old maxims embody the reality of our lives; we need to cling to the reality of our lives, tune into things which keep us right, make us clear, united with others. We

should share ourselves freely and easily, not only our goods but ourselves as well. We have to make ourselves available to all those who want something from us, and we should not see it as a burden, we should see it as an opportunity to do His will. Our purpose is to help, the hand which helps is the path we have been taught. It must be the path we choose.

Choosing this path means we have to understand its rules, its requirements, we have to understand the inner cleansing process of the path. Every motive except for His qualities must disappear. Any other motive means we need to keep washing ourselves again and again, like Lady Macbeth who tried to remove the stain of her inhumanity by washing her hands obsessively. We need to remove the stain of the world, a stain which has a vile smell.

We do have to be careful on this path because there are people who cannot be helped, people we should not try to help. We must not impose ourselves, imposing ourselves on those who are obsessed with their own needs, their own way, will cause problems. If we throw a knife at stone it bounces off, there is no receptivity. We should keep to people who are receptive, who want to be receptive. Those who do not understand can be taught if they choose, although those who do not understand but do not want to learn present a different situation. We have to distinguish among them without being naïve. We need to be brave, we need to be warriors, we need to be clear and act with wisdom.

Wisdom differentiates what we can and cannot do, what is available and what is not. Wisdom opens the path showing us how to extend ourselves, how to fulfill our responsibility to God. We still have this body, we still have old age, all the problems that come with being human, and we must be merciful, have the mercy which understands the limits of our own abilities while still doing all we can. We cannot accept the competitive

path the world offers, we cannot have resentment, jealousy and anger, we cannot because that would be surrendering to the world.

Everybody serves someone. People who think they are in a competition have actually surrendered to darkness and evil. All the options have been laid out for people who have thought it through, they know where they are going; but so many have not thought it through, perhaps because they are frightened when they look at themselves too closely. We have to pass through this frightening stage when we see ourself and feel ashamed of what we have done, what we have experienced, ashamed of what we did and who we are. Yet we must also remember that God re-creates us with every breath, that the universe is not only created by God, it is also sustained by Him, sustained with every breath.

Opportunities come with every breath, opportunities continue as long as we breathe, each breath is a new opportunity to walk the path in the right way. We should feel it, know this as reality, pray for that understanding as we pray. If we do our prayers with this intention, each moment of intention takes us away from the self and closer to Him. God help us understand this path, this way, help us grow and be satisfied. May He grant our sustenance so that His love will fill us without needing anything from the world, may we not look for satisfaction from the world. We take our satisfaction from Him, we are sustained by Him alone.