

This could be the wrong time to talk about gifts. But why worry about that? It's the wrong time to talk about anything. Scarf-Sirky going to offend, I might as well offend talking about gifts.

Not many people know about joy. My Son started to learn something about it the other day. He discovered that joy is a gift. He is not fine yet. Many years from now, if he grows up like the rest of us, he will still be trying to get his joy in some other way than as a gift.

We had set one of those portable ward-
robes up in the rec room. I had to repair the
doors so they would slide. Peter asked
if he could play in it. We said he could
so he stepped inside and slid the door closed.

Seconds later our 13yr old son and I heard
the little one call from the dark interior of
the ward-robe - 2nd floor -- the door

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opened and he looked out - slid the door
closed again and called "8th Floor". We
were astounded - we called our other son -
The three of us roared with laughter and a
little pride.

The next morning the little one was impatient to
leave breakfast and play again in his
elevator. At last he finished and we let
him go. Down stairs he went, and my wife
and I heard "2nd floor" - - - "8th Floor"
And then "Daddy - 8TH FLOOR" - -

OK OK - Good for you" - I called - "Daddy
8th Floor - you're supposed to laugh - remember"

I am 42 years older than that
little fellow and I still haven't really
learned to let my joy in life come as
a free gift. I still try to find eggs
in last years nest. I still hope, that by
carefully writing the script, I can insure that
my little has joy.

(5458c)

Funny thing - Taking a life time to learn something doesn't stop it from being true. If I wasn't so afraid of risking everything, I'd have learned by now the lesson that life has been trying to teach me - probably since I was four and even younger - joy is a gift that surprises - and not an accomplishment that can be planned-for.

Every bit of rippelling joy I have known has come as a free gift. So why don't I take this in? So I'm stupid.

But if you can get to the root of why I am stupid you will be at the root of the human problem, you will have your finger on the original joy killer.

To get old fashioned - You of how your finger on original sin -

The whenever that won't let me accept life as a gift, but insists that I be my own creator,

I'm still talking about gifts. This time I am going to get clergy and talk about THE GIFT. LOVE that is. Only I don't want to sound clergy. I don't want to sound pompous warnings about how we all must be made to realize that there are important distinctions to make between the kinds of love. Any kind of love will do for what I have to say, right now - The kind of love you like best. The kind that grabs you. The love that you are loving with. - whether in a big way - or just longing to in a big way.

First - I feel real safe in taking for granted that this is the best thing in your life. I didn't say it was painful.

I just said - "I'd bet it's worth it" - I'd bet it's what makes everything else worth it. It makes the wilderness a fantastically just - right - place to be.

(54582e)

If you're knocking love you're in deep trouble. If you don't find loving and being loved worth while, I can't imagine what you will find worth while.

But not all of us who love loving and being loved get with it all of the time. To put it mildly ~~There~~ ~~are~~ some bumper cards appearing on the ^{University} campus saying "Make Love not war" - While I am sure this is highly desirable I am not sure that it is going to happen for the urging.

Here's the problem - we love loving and being loved but don't do it or get it much. I think I know why. It's because love is a gift.

* I can't love by an act of will. It happens to me - and I either let it happen or I stop it. Loving is a gift.

* And being loved is a gift. This one you can't get around. If I again my loves love, if I conquer her, if she

loves me in response to demands that I make
or ultimatums that I deliver. Then she is not
loving me. Love is love only when ^{it is} freely given.
I can be loved - only as I have this as a
free gift.

It's this gift business that's the
problem. And I don't think the biggest problem
comes from the fact that the gift of loving & being loved
isn't offered very often. It is that we turn
down the gift. We don't
like the risk of having what means most to us
come our way, only as gift and never
as accomplishment. It means trusting for
what means most to us, instead of managing
for it. And trusting is a risky business
It's like throwing your life away, or
losing it. It appears that we must
throw life away to have it the
greatest. If Love & being loved is
really living, then we have to lose life
if we are to find it.

(54589)

You may not be interested in my talk - but
you are interested in what I am talking about,

Wait till I tell you, I am talking about
your justification. [→] Maybe I should find a
better word. - But I've got the right idea.

Who are you are - whenever you are - I
am betting that you are interested in
justifying your existence

The only way you can not be interested
in justifying yourself is if this is going great
with you. But let anything happen to the way

you justify yourself and then see how
interested you are. Let any one criticize

you about the things you think you do

best. Let failure threaten you in

the thing you are doing to prove to yourself

that you count. Then watch the alarm

signals flash!!!

Look - it's how we all are.

Whatever I do best is usually what I rely on

to prove to myself and ^{to} others that I am
somebody. If this goes wrong I am in
real trouble. And at those times I can see
how important it is to me that I be
justified. At least I find myself expending
some ... frantic efforts to justify myself.
"Look what a good boy am I" is
one of the games. - "Look what a good
president, or look what a good student,
or Mother, sufferer. - you fill in the
blanks. -

Another not so different game is: "Look
what you made me do"

This game has lots of variations.

When another person
is justifying himself, I find this to be
a crushing bore. He doesn't convince me
and I keep wishing he'd quit. But
Funny thing, this doesn't stop me from
inflicting the same thing on others.

(54582)

But there is something funnier still,

Self justification is a bust. I know it even when I still do it. We all secretly know it or why are we so bored with it or others?

I have had half a life time of having my face rubbed in the lesson - You can't justify yourself. All attempts to justify yourself finally make it worse. It's like trying to talk your way out of it after you have put your foot in your mouth. All that can happen is that you talk your other foot into your mouth as well.

If you are hooked on justifying your existence then there had better be some way for this to happen besides, do it your self.

Wouldn't it be remarkable if our justification was a gift?

(5458j)

I'm still talking about justification,
And I have found the insight "Self justification
is a bust," to be a profoundly penetrating one.
Don't let me exaggerate the amount of help
this insight offers. But I hardly think I can.
Brother is the human race interested in
justifying itself. And Brother is the human
race in trouble. What if the one is at
the root of the other.

All kinds of things go wrong with my
humanity, my resolve to improve myself runs
crash into my fear of failure. My longing
to have friends runs bang into my fear
of being rejected by people. My desire
to feel glorious alone collides with my
fear of feeling pain and loss. My goal to
be upright conflicts with my fear of being
discovered unworthy. —

Now this word about

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justification comes along and says "Do you know why everytime you try to handle these conflicts you make a mess of them?"

It's Because self-justification is a bust. Attack these conflicts with a do it yourself method of justifying your existence and you make it worse.

Here's the heart of your problem, so you're a minister. The very thing that will make your ministry a mess is if you think your success at it is what justifies you. Then you will be jumps with every needy person whose problem threatens to prove that you are a failure. The bigger the problem - the more needs the person - the more hostility you will have towards that person. - The less possible it will be for you to meet that need.

So you're not a minister - the insight is still worth contemplation.

Self justification is a bust.

Now this could be more intense than helpful. Like fingering an infected appendix and leaving it there;

But there is a thing called good news

This word is that our justification is a gift. Like love - like joy. which we can have only as gifts. So is our justification.

Try to have it - The work of our own hands - and we mess it up. Try to be our own creators and we push our inner conflicts into destructive war. The only way to be justified is to accept it as a gift. The only way have life is to accept it as a gift.

If it was as easy as it sounds
More of us would be doing it - But
it's a risky business - It demands
a kind of dying, to let life be a
gift.

(5458m)

Now here's an opening line for you -
 "What about present-day morals?" This
 might be worth listening to if I could deliver some
 good gossip. I'm a University chaplain. Where
 better than a university to observe the disastrous
 undermining of our morality.!

But it wouldn't take long for this to get boring
~~either~~ and you would start watching your gossip with
 me. They would all be bored.

And that is just it. Hardly any of us
 can talk about the moral situation without getting
 dull. And every body is talking about it.

Certainly there is lots of misbehavior going
 on. Betrayal of public trust. irresponsible exploitation
 of others etc etc.

But the most striking thing about present
 day morals is how frightfully uprightness we
 all are. This uprightness is everywhere.
 It is the "here is what needs to be put right"
 attitude. The "People must be made to realize"
 attitude. The "Why isn't something done about it"
 attitude.

Parents have it. Teenagers have it.
 Cops have it. Junkies have it. People who
 want free sex and people who want none.
 Kids who are out to get the stupid adults
 and adults who are out to put the kids in
 their place. Pacifists and defenders of
 the world against communism. It's everywhere.
 The attitude that everyone ^{needs to be put right} who differs from
 me. If uprightness is morality - Then
 Brother - one we moral.

And is it ever a bore. Someone else's
 uprightness is finally a bore.

And more important - This kind of morality
 is not very helpful. We don't need any
 more people trying to make over the rest
 of us to look like them. We've got all
 this kind of people we have room for

They aren't doing us much good. Merely
zero by as many as you like and you're
still got zero.

Do you need any more people telling
you how to run your life - what to buy, how
to vote, what to like - whom to hate - what
to smell like. You've heard so much
of this you have enormous built in resistance.

But there is a kind of morality that
is much more scarce. It might be
some help to the person who is lost. Much
more help than a confusion of people wagging
their fingers and shouting directions.

In this kind of morality you would be
affirmed and supported while you found your
way. While you found what you could mean
with your life.

In this respect I guess we are not very
moral today.

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I'm still talking about morality. About the kind we could use more of.

I don't know about you but I know a little bit about university students and maybe they are not so different from you.

They are mixed up people. They don't know what to believe in, They don't know what to live for. They don't have any firm basis for deciding what is right and what is wrong. They know the human race is in trouble, but they have the usual resistance against anyone - especially an adult - telling them the solution to the trouble $\rightarrow$ Plus in this they $\rightarrow$ every reason to believe that no one has the genuine solution. They are rebels - like all of us, and like all of us they have no reason to trust the in-group, - either that it is wise, or that it is free of vested interest.

They are mixed up people - They are longing to have their lives mean something, They would like to have their studies mean something, their student government mean something - Their sexual pleasures mean something. But they can't mean any of the pompous phony pretensions some people seem to be identified with.

They are in a wilderness. and it is not much fun. They may go to some extravagant length to prove to us and to themselves that they are having fun. But it is no fun to ache for meaning in a world that offers only a violent confusion of poor meanings.

Did you lose track of the fact that I was talking about University Students? If this bit about a mixed up person who is remaining uncommitted or purposeless - sounds like it is about you - then you can deal with the question of what kind of morality will help here.

If you are in a wilderness is it any help to multiply the number of people who come

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Shouting directions at you? Part of the reason the wilderness is so deep in our present day world, is that everyone is shouting directions. We don't need any more uprightness.

But supposing you could be upheld, supported, counted somebody while you sorted out what you really meant? What if there was a kind of moralis that liberated you so that you could explore life for what was worth-while to you. A kind of moralis that affirmed you - which you found out who you were. This kind of righteousness we could use more of. It looks like the kind of righteousness that would create people, rather than destroy them.

To change the name but keep the meaning. This looks like it would be God's righteousness.

(54589)

All week I have been going out with God talk but I used the word only once. Could be that I'm chicken. Could be that I want you to listen and have finally caught on that God talk won't flood me with listeners.

But I'm hoping so for another reason. I'm hoping it is because I have found out that for a lot of people today the word God means bad things or nothing.

If the word God brings to your mind a snoopy authority person to scare kids with then I don't want to use the word. The same goes if the word God brings to your mind a rewarder of good. If you have to be rewarded for being good I can't see that you have been good - you have been careful. If the word God is the name? you give to the private image you are trying to stamp on the rest of the world, then it's a bad word and we'd all be better off if you didn't use it. Or if the word God brings to mind a sort of rescue machine that does your thinking for you - then I can see you may get to the place where God is a not OK word.

But a bigger thing for a lot of people today is that the word God just doesn't mean anything. When it is used in a sentence - that sentence comes out meaningless. Nobody's mad at any body. Nobody's trying to prove God doesn't exist. That sentence doesn't mean anything. It's as if I said SHMERD doesn't exist.

You don't want to listen to me try to account for how this come to pass. It wouldn't be very helpful anyway. But I am interested in whether you already feel some of this. When the word God is used

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does it go right by you without ringing any bells?

Funny thing. I think this can be true and at the same time God-talk still be very meaningful to us. That is I think the creative thing that God-talk has been trying to get at all these years is still worth our trying to get at.

I think we are still interested in the question of what is creative of life - not death. I think we are still interested in what we can mean with our lives - in what is truly worth giving our lives to. I think I still worry but I throw my life away on what is in fact worthless. And I find that when I do find something of such worth it grips me rather than I it. It has made me somebody - not I made it something.

So its been called

A word that makes me somebody - is
God Talk.

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I am a chaplain at a University. I am all the time engaging in God-Talk with people for whom God is not an O.K. word. When the word doesn't ring any bells, there's no point in using it.

But a lot of people are on what can be called an identity pilgrimage. Who or what do they want to be? What are they going to do to make a living? Are they going to like it, are they going to be good at it? Is anyone going to want them? But even when all this is settled - either because the choice is made or because they had no choice, there remains an even more gnawing question, Can they give their lives to it? What are they going to give my life to? What is my life going to be like? How am I going to take place as a centre of meaning and decision, with an identity of my own. That is - How do I become a human person, in my own right?

This identity pilgrimage is not a small thing. If I don't have an identity of my own but have all this decided by people and forces outside myself - how I come to pass as a person at all? But if I take on the job of deciding the kind of person I am going to be I've opened up a agonizing question.

If I make a mess of it I can't blame anyone else

And there is not that much to choose from. The stuff that is offered me today to identify-with is not all that inviting. When I commit myself I give it all away!!! It had better be worth it - so I remain uncommitted - partly out of fear - but partly out of interest

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Now I think that the kind of talk we need with one another is the kind in which I find out which I am doing — am I running? — or am I preserving my integrity, am I in flight — or am I called to this delayed commitment, I think we need the kind of talk in which I find out whether or not my integrity — to feel a noble name I have given to my vested interest.

I think that these distinctions matter because some of the most destructive people I know are of the "bloody-but-unbowed-committed-type" — or the "I-am-true-to-myself-alone" type.

And I think that the kind of conversation in which I am able to make these distinctions is God talk. It is talk about what is truly creating of Human being.

(5458 u)

Have you ever tried to do anything to make the world a better place? How did it come off? I know how a lot of kids feel who try to please their parents. A lad came straight home from school ~~one day~~ ^{one day} ~~receiving~~ several invitations to stay and play - but he had promised his mother - On the way he passed some friends who were wading - in ditch water almost to the top of their rubbers - but his mother had told him not to wade in the ditch so he passed them by - If this kept up he wouldn't have many friends. When he got home he remembered, at the last minute, his mother's warning to come in the basement door on muddy days. Altogether this represented quite an effort to please his mother. ~~As~~ he came up from the basement, his mother met him with - How did you get that ink on your shirt? -

I know how a service club found it once. The members worked all fall constructing a skating rink for the community club. They incurred the wrath of their wives by neglecting the ~~storm~~ windows and gardens for several crucial weekends. On the day they presented the rink to the parks Board one of the board members asked "Why did you put it there?" And a lot of people were against war in the 30's. But as the decade drew to a close more & more of them became ashamed of appeasement. They got into the war and were ashamed of what they did.

People join peace-marches and high-minded movements - and ~~even~~ churches - and then are disappointed in what they find.

People try to be good and find that they do harm along with the good. - The most terrible wars one nightmare wars, 1/1/1/1/1/1. Some people I know went to India to try to help with the food problem - One thing was an epidemic of foot+mouth disease among cattle. They got every one angry at

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In India
The cow
is a

them by insisting that all the sick cattle be killed. ^{sacred}
 → Others went to underdeveloped countries to help with ^{animal}
 the health problem, lowered the death rate
 and improved the food problem.

Maybe you think I am just being negative.
 And if I wanted^{to} I could find lots of reasons for
 being positive.

O.K.

All I asked was whether you found that
your attempts to make things better turned sour
 on you.

If this is how you find life - ^{that} When people
 are good - it's a mess - when people are righteous
 it's a mess.

Then you will agree that nothing can save
 us that is possible.

Any really good news is absurd.

V

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Any really good news is absurd.

How can you believe it?

Can we talk about the absurd for a while?

I love it. Perhaps you do too. Why is comedy so enjoyable? The unexpected can be fun.

It is especially wonderful when a person surprises me by revealing a hidden side to himself. I think this is because I feel at last, that I am meeting the real person. The mask that makes us all seem alike, has been penetrated for a moment, and I meet the unique individual.

When a research scientist tests his theory it sometimes turns out to have

all his experiments support his theory.

But this doesn't tell him anything for certain.

When he does an experiment that upsets his theory he learns something for certain. The upset was hard on his theory but good for his grasp of reality.

It is something like this that makes absurd - an O.K. word. When we find the absurd in people and situations it might be hard on our theories, but it is good for our grasp on reality.

But I started out to talk about good news and the absurd.

You see when I am engaged in ~~the~~ talk with people I think I am saying something absurd. I don't think I am saying something nonsensical, and if I do, I don't mind being checked up on it. I don't think I am saying something naive - and if I do, I don't mind being checked up on it. But I do think I am saying something absurd - and don't mind being accused of it.

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It's absurd + to say that our history has redemption hidden within it. That is all right to risk exposing of your self to one another - that the courage to go on facing life, even if it's a wilderness, is a freewill. It's absurd to say that at the heart of the universe is forgiveness, and not a tit for tat kind of pay off. IF reconciliation between people is the highest good to you then it's absurd to tell you that your reconciliation has been accomplished and is there for the accepting.

It's absurd - but it's not nonsense and it's not naive.

Of course they are fantastic claims. And if you have been doing any real living lately you will ~~be~~ ^{see} they are impossible.

They wouldn't be good news if you thought they were possible. That's, they wouldn't get to your basic ache - if they didn't ~~appear~~ ^{appear} as a miracle.

You doubt that it is Love's world? Of course. But watch what happens when you doubt your doubt. -