

## **“Turn the World Around”**

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Enmeshed in what likely is the most imperative debate of the modern age, global warming, we are constantly reminded that this beautiful world is in peril. Whether we stand on one side of the fence or the other, it seems clear to me that we are making one of the biggest mistakes of our lives by debating this and not acting on it.

Human history is littered with grand mistakes only identified in retrospect and driven by greed and ignorance. Things we should have known better than; mistakes as close as yesterday and as far back as thousands of years. I wonder why it is we learn some things so well and quickly and yet others we seem never to learn.

When I look at our western culture and what we have created, even beyond the debates of global warming, we are so clearly out of kilter. It's frightening. Do we have a chance to change the world around and if so, how?

Being a shameless optimist, I do believe we can. But we must first change some of our basic assumptions about who we are. We must learn new ways of relating to each other and to our fragile planet.

We must learn lessons about who we truly are. There is so much about our own ability we never encounter. Take a look at this projection.

Believe it or not, you can read it.

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Now, do you still think that spelling is what makes you understand what you read?

Likewise, do you still think that everything we have learned about the supremacy of the human being makes us understand the world as it is?

In western culture we have a prevailing story, actually a myth, that we have come to hold as literally true (even if we reasonably can't find any evidence for it.) And yet this mythology has created a path of very real devastation never before seen by humans. You can read it in the opening chapter of that book we call the Holy Scriptures or the New Testament, the Koran, and eventually in the book of Mormon. It is the story that we as a human race have been given dominion of the world about us. That our human species stands above and separate from all other life and existence that surrounds us.

History shows this idea as a sad commentary for sure, but yet it endures. Dominion, a concept translated later in the Americas as 'manifest destiny.' And this piece of scripture has been the Rosetta stone on which we key modern culture.

With everything interpreted through this lens, it is easy to see how people came to understand the world as the center of the universe, human beings as replications of God and/or Goddess, with special rights to it all.

So we live in a world of strange juxtapositions and artificial conceptions, a place where tremendous numbers of us actually believe that dominion over nature is in some way even possible. For the most part we have bought into a sense of values that place human beings at the center of it all, the apex or top rather than the heart or hub – has taught us to judge, rather than to be responsible.

We have learned this lesson so well, that for the most part all we do is judge each other rather than be responsible, for each other. Dominion provides justification for all kinds of blind privilege. Seeing one person as more worthy or entitled than another. ‘Power over’ might makes right, and all that follows. This is now become a virtue in today’s world.

This use of resources and people through a lens of dominion may well have been the single most destructive judgment ever marketed to the human species. We all know too well the ongoing

consequences of this leaving us as well as our planet badly broken and possibly unsustainable in the long run.

We need to go back to the drawing board, to revisit all this. For as blasphemous as this is to many, anything other than a sustainable relationship in regard to our nest, this biosphere, and its fragile, intricate tapestry of nature is ignorance and arrogance of the worst kind.

We would be wise to listen to the world around us to gather the lessons within. There are always birds soaring somewhere against a bursting sunset, a blue\gray river singing its water washed smooth rock song, a place of birth, and of youth playing outside this world of concern and worry. We would be wise to gather in to heart this teaching.

When we engage with this world in these ways we can find that life itself, this act of nature is at its core the meaning which sustains us. From there the rest can follow in balance if we let it. It is through this understanding of meaning that our ability to appreciate relationship is born. If we deny relationships, we deny meaning. Sustainability is achievable through the work of restoration.

Within this unique tapestry of existence, we need to find a way to restore the bonds, of interconnectedness, of our relationships. We have the innate ability to understand the importance of restraint, and respect but we must do more.

So how does one break this chain of greed and dominion and still maintain the ties of responsibility and the work of restoration? Can we turn the world around? And if so, how do we turn the world around?

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I believe we can and in some small ways we have, but we need to do better than we do. I have no illusion that what took thousands of years to create will be shifted in any single lifetime. With dominion as our cultural perspective we have become complacent and self assured. When we are told we are at the top, we are the apex. We have no reason to explore what else we can be.

This makes me anxious. Like having learned to ride a bike, or to swim, do you think you could unlearn to ride or swim? Can you teach someone how 'Not' to ride or swim? This is the challenge

and it is no small task. Learning is a one way process for the most part; once you've truly learned something you can't unlearn it.

Although we may not be able to unlearn, we can always learn more; and that is the key. We human beings are a remarkable bunch—because of our ability to keep learning. As the speaking primate with the unique distinction of written language we are the most complex communicators of all life, we can explore where other species can't yet go. We might well be able to reach heights far beyond our self expectations. Our potential has yet to have its surface even scratched. We have much more to learn before we understand what it is we think we know.

We humans on the whole think of ourselves as people having a people time, doing people things fairly mundane for the most part. But we really are remarkable critters that seldom understand this at its depth. We can shed tears of joy at a sunset, at birds in flight and at the same time be taught to hate with no reason. It is our ability to make a choice and to act which gives me hope. We just need to make good choices.

Once there was an old Grandfather, (gray haired with a beard) whose grandchild came up full of anger about some "so called

friend” who had done something to him that in his eyes was wrong or injustice in some way. Something that had crossed that sacred and often fragile bond we call friendship.

So when the grandfather heard all this anger from his grandson he felt sad but understood. He listened to it all bubbled up like acrid and noxious volcanic mud spitting into the air. So he reached out and gently put a hand on the boys shoulder and said “sit down and try and relax.”

"I want to tell you a story," He said “you know at times I have felt a lot of hate, for friends. I’ve felt really mad seeing folks I knew as friends not sorry at all for what they did, or even understanding it.

But what I’ve found was that this wears you down, and doesn’t do much to change things one way or the other. It’s like wishing that a person that has crossed you would die, so you take poison? It just doesn’t work like that.

I’ve struggled with feelings like these many times in my life, and I’ve lived a long life. I found that there are two wolves circling inside me; one that is good and doesn’t harm anything and lives in

harmony with everything around him. It doesn't take offense when no offense is intended. It only fights when it is right to do so and then only in a right way. But...the other wolf, well the littlest thing will send it into a furry of temper. It fights everyone all of the time, for no reason. It can't think because the anger is always clouding its mind, it can't control the hate so it is helpless and sad.

It can be hard to live with these two wolves inside because both of them try to dominate my spirit. They can battle for days on end if I let them but all it gets me is a sore and hard heart.

"The grandchild looked intently into his Grandfather's eyes and asked, "So when they do fight, when they do battle, which one wins?"

The Grandfather smiled and quietly answered; "The one I feed."

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We human beings are able to make the choice to respond. We have the freedom to know which wolf to feed. We can learn to be intentionally in concert with a healthy world and to understand the meaning and value of leaving it better than we found it. This is a

real and profound truth born out of our nature not our training. We can embrace the wider world through both our nature and our hope. Still the birds can't do what we can, horses can't, and trees, rocks, the sea and the winds can't. So it is we who are charged with deep responsibility here on this planet. We must come to know that.

To truly be stewards here we must be free in what we are called by nature to be, we must literally step up and turn the world around.

Be aware though that thinking we can turn the world around before we turn ourselves around is where we most often misstep. We must face our own inner selves, our own wolves. Model a better way so that someone else, like our grandchildren may learn to model a better one too, and so on, and on.

We must always be conscious that we act with limited knowledge and that more information can help us gain a fuller, more comprehensive and responsive perspective. Learn to stay open.

To turn the world around is to remember that our responsibility may originate in our inner life but it grows in direct relationship to our community. In learning there is always a creative power

unleashed which recognizes connections and opens potential to be more than we think we can be. When we can trust in our care for each other and the world we live in, we can create new ways of existing together in balance. If we can learn more and act together, then as stewards, modeling a new way, we will be able to restore our home, this earth. And then, and only then, will we find ourselves connected to a world turning around to a new light and energy which will sustain the human species and all the earth's life for the long, long, long time to come.

Amen.