

Seeking Peace in Times of Frenzy

Frenzy can destroy the fruitfulness of our work.

The Chinese word for “busy” is composed of two characters: “heart” and “killing.” Do you get so busy sometimes that you are killing your heart, the centre of your life, the centre of your capacity for care and compassion?

In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Thomas Merton writes: “To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is itself to succumb to the violence of our times. Frenzy destroys our inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

This is not about neglecting or denying the need for community and giving up our responsibilities. As Denise Levertov states, “The self will surely suffer if egotism leads a person away from the experience of the Human Community. And the commonweal as surely suffers if those who wish for its betterment are hollowed-out self-neglecters.” (*Light of the Cave*)

Where is the busyness in your life that is possibly killing your heart?
Have you become a hollowed-out self-neglecter?

Can you name times when:

- you are carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns?
- surrender to too many demands?
- commit to too many projects?
- want to help everyone in everything?

How do you nurture the root of your inner wisdom?

How do you protect your heart?

How do you tend to your own spiritual health?

How do you hold together your commitments to community and your personal need for inner nurture and growth?

What biblical stories or images symbolize the need to find peace within the assault of frenzy?

What biblical characters demonstrate the wisdom of caring for one’s heart in the midst of a busy and demanding life?

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