

The Law of Mental Equivalents

July 10, 2016

I was going to write today's sermon about free will, conscious volition, and in fact had most of it written.

But then I heard that my young cousin died. On Thursday night, after a 2-year battle with ovarian cancer, and a mere 9 months after her wedding, she left us for the spirit world.

I'm filled with contradictory feelings, and that's what I want to talk about today, if I may.

I believe in healing. I believe in miracles. I believe that I was bending the universe to my will. I know, as you've heard me talk about on several occasions here, that we inherit our creative ability from God.

We were made by God, out of the only stuff available -- before anything else was created -- which was the stuff of God himself. We don't need to earn His love, or His favor or His grace. We don't need to earn forgiveness. We don't need to pay back for sins. We don't need to earn health.

Three weeks ago my cousin was admitted to a hospital in Massachusetts where she lived. We were told she wouldn't be leaving the hospital and were informed she had two days more, maximum.

I refused to believe it. Every day with the power of my mind and my faith I applied my creative ability. At times it felt like slowing down a speeding train by digging my heels into the sand. Slowing it down and slowly, slowly, bringing it to a stop. Turning it in another direction so it could gather speed that way, towards health.

Well, it worked for a while. My cousin lived past two days, she went home to her parents house, and almost three weeks later she passed away. Thursday night. Partial success.

I didn't know it was possible to hold two feelings at the same time, which seem to contradict each other so neatly. To feel hopeless, disappointed and angry, and to feel also safe, and confident that God's promises are always fulfilled. Still faithful and trusting.

I wonder in one part of my mind: is this all total bullshit? This creative inheritance; this promise that everything Jesus did I can do, and more? Didn't I believe enough?

I remain convinced in another part of my mind that I did everything in my power, and though I failed to save her, some greater healing, on some level I can't yet imagine, has taken place because my cousin died.

When she lived past her original 2-day prognosis into 3 days, 4 days, one week, two weeks... I felt victorious, I grew in confidence, I believed more fully than I that miracles belong to all of us.

Yet here, somewhere, is that nagging voice that says “You always knew you didn’t have the power. That’s what you get for thinking so highly of yourself.” And that voice speaks from my mind, my ego, and my personality. This part is familiar with and comfortable with shame, with derision, with mockery and sarcasm. This is the part that says, “Who the hell are you?”

That ego voice is like an undertow dragging ceaselessly at my spirit’s voice, which says, “You DO have the power. You ARE divine. You are a holy child of God. Pay attention to this voice, not the other one.”

So I hold these two voices simultaneously, the voice of my faith and the voice of my mind. Both are equal in volume. And as I bounce between the two of them, first indulging one and then the other, another, third part of me broke away to observe this process.

I have a client in Israel whose healing modality is something called Somatic Experiencing. We often exchange services; and I am astonished after each SE session. She taught me about this third part, the witness or observer: she coached me to observe from this vantage point without judgment, and just with curiosity. She tells me it’s very normal for the sensation meter in the brain, the very oldest part of the brain, to flip flop between what she calls the trauma vortex and the health vortex. Uncomfortable sensation and comfortable sensation. Negative voice and positive voice.

Since my cousin’s death on Thursday, I’ve observed myself flip flop between these two vortexes and because of my client’s coaching, I’ve been able to do this without judging myself. Without saying, “I should be stronger in my faith,” or “I should’ve known I didn’t have the power to create a miracle.”

It’s an interesting place to observe oneself from -- this vantage point. When I could be there I began to understand at a deeper level the real meaning of the Law of Mental Equivalents.

This Law states that we can demonstrate to the level of our ability to know; beyond this we cannot go.

In other words, I can create a miracle to the degree which I believe I can. If I could create the mental equivalent of walking on water, in myself, I could walk on water. If I could create a mental experience in which I actually know myself to be able to walk on water, physically I could. A mental equivalent is like a mental bucket: it can only receive as much as it can hold. We create these mental buckets subjectively; each one of us does it in a unique and personal way.

But it *must* begin in the mind.

A Mental Equivalent is not force of will. It's not the Law of Attraction. It's not affirmations or visualization. It's something beyond conviction even. It's knowledge; total acceptance, utter belief.

If I'm honest with myself, the truth is I didn't have that level of acceptance while I leaned on my faith. I know that my mind's voice, the one that tells me "I told you you couldn't perform miracles," was still a small whisper in the background of my creative practice.

I did not have the mental equivalent of my cousin's miraculous recovery. I certainly had the *desire*, the hope, and the wish. I hadn't created such a vast receptacle, and so I couldn't receive for her.

For a moment I was poised on the threshold of real guilt there, until the voice of my faith reminded me that it's not I, but the spirit of God in me, that fills the bucket and does the work.

And before I set about attempting to heal anyone else out there, I would do better to heal myself by creating a larger home for the spirit of God in me.

Not too long ago I spoke here about the Prodigal Son. I've gone back to that parable recently because it seemed to represent these two voices within me and the observer vantage point.

Let me tell you about it again, but in this telling I'm going to focus on the son who stays home. He doesn't get top billing in this story but his role is as important as that of the prodigal son.

"A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me, give me my inheritance." The father divides his estate between them.

The father doesn't argue, try to dissuade his younger son or try to convince him to make good decisions. We know from the parable that the son goes off into the world and spends it all before realizing he has hit rock bottom and his only choice is to go home, abase himself at the feet of his father, throw himself on his father's mercy, and beg him for the kind of work a slave would do.

Instead, his father sees him coming from far off and runs to greet him, instructing his servants to put on a great feast to celebrate his son's homecoming.

The elder son is working in the fields at this time and soon returns to the house where he observes the preparations and his brother's homecoming, and he gets angry.

He says to his father, "All these years I stayed home and worked for you. I was a good son. I didn't party my inheritance away. Why does my brother get a fatted calf, the best robes and the finest wines in the house? You never even gave me a small goat to celebrate with my friends!"

And his father says to him, "All that I have is yours!"

We know that the Father in this parable represents God, and his sons represent our freedom to choose. What's so beautiful about this story is that as we turn to God (no matter how low it seems we have fallen), God turns to us. He runs to greet us without condemnation, without that voice that says, "I told you so." Neither the Father in this parable nor God the Father requires his errant child to earn his way back into the Father's love.

As the father in the parable says, and as God says to us: "Everything I have is yours. All you had to do is ask."

I see in me precisely this parable. The voice of my faith which says, "Let me have my inheritance now. Let me create miracles, too." The voice of my mind which says, "No, this is actual life in the world: Labor, obeying rules, hardship, earning abundance -- that's reality. Sickness, grief, death -- that's what happens in life." The observer as I call it, is the Spirit of God in me which recognizes that all I had to do was ask -- knowing, not just believing -- knowing it would be given to me.

That's the Divine in all of us, the part who watches us without judgment, knows we have free will and our conscious volition defines our present reality: our health, bank accounts, environments. Never condemns us, warns us, or rejects us.

The Law of Mental Equivalents is the knowing that every single thing we desire to do, be, or have is there, but we need to ask for it to receive it. The "asking for" -- according to this Law -- is the mental state of allowing, of having a belief in our own worthiness that is large enough to accommodate what we desire.

In Matthew 13:12 we read: "Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he has." To those who don't understand this, it seems downright unfair. Those who have a lot get more, and those who have little lose even that. But look at this in the light of understanding the Law of Mental Equivalents -- even the Law of Cause and Effect -- that subtle reality hidden in the creative power of the human mind.

What Matthew is saying is: Unless I conceive of myself as possessing good things, I will not possess them.

Unless I allow on all the levels of my mind that I can create healing, I cannot create healing.

My cousin by her passing has given me a great gift. She's pointed the way to healing with the first -- actually probably the ONLY -- step I need to take.

Maybe we can all do it together in honor of those we've lost to Heaven, all those we couldn't save, in honor of those unfulfilled expectations, non-starters, lost opportunities, and missed chances. Let's keep in mind that the gift of our free will (I knew I'd get back to this topic somehow) is the key to creating miracles in our lives.

We must choose to expand our self-understanding. We must choose to create a vessel in our minds to receive. We must believe we are worthy of all that we desire, and even more than that. No matter how far we imagine we've strayed, God will run to greet us! To say, "Yes! Make room for me!"

God is ready to give us all that we desire. He already has; yet we must meet him halfway and receive it.

Amen.