

# LIFE IN THE MARKETPLACE

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*"Some salesmen on a conference in a busy city were running on their way home to catch a train. The meeting had gone overtime, so they were late. They raced to the station with their tickets in their hands. As they ran through the terminal, one man accidentally kicked over a table holding a basket of apples. Without stopping, they all reached the train and boarded it with a sigh of relief. All but one, he paused and experienced a bit of guilt for the boy whose apple stand they had overturned. He waved goodbye to his companions and returned to the terminal. He was glad he did. The ten-year-old boy was blind.*

*The salesman gathered up the apples and noticed that several of them were bruised. He reached into his wallet and said to the boy, "Here please take these ten dollars for the damage we did. I am sorry I hope it did not spoil your day." As he started to walk away the bewildered boy called after him, "Are you Jesus?"<sup>i</sup>*

As I contemplate life at the moment, I am very conscious of the Marketplace within which I am finding myself. At the close of each day, I usually quietly review, remember, and reflect upon what the last 24 hours have held for me. Was it a good day? Who did I meet and encounter today, and how did I leave them? Am I left with any regrets? How am I feeling now? As I journeyed through these questions and reflected upon my responses, the story from W.J. Bausch and the little blind boy unexpectedly drifted into my consciousness. I love stories and as I recalled this one of long ago, I was surprised that I still remembered it so clearly! Stories, like parables, can whisper so much to us! So, I quietly held this precious gem from long ago and listened...

Jesus was often in the marketplace with his disciples, so it felt like I was in good company.

At the moment I find myself in the Marketplace of Administration and Leadership, two all-consuming ministries. I find myself running from one task to another, often focused solely and intently on the item on the agenda that needs to be attended to next. The ticket in my hand is the next task. The train is the transport I need to take in order to complete and accomplish that task. Time seems to be either very elusive or demanding and stressful – a bit of a 'controller'. As I run from one place to another, from one task to another, I am not really mindful of my body, it is just taken for granted! It takes an incident, a phone call, or an email from an unexpected source or a friend to jolt me and slow me down in my tracks to hear the whisper drawing me in another direction, a new awareness.

Yes, for me the focus is often solely on the task. I do not really see the crowd in my marketplace, I see only what needs to be done. In truth, a lot of what I am doing is good, necessary and important for the wellbeing of those for whom I am, for now, responsible. So, I do have a lot of compassion for the salesmen. However, one salesman was different. The story says that he 'experienced a bit of guilt' a feeling of responsibility, remorse. Somehow he saw, felt, sensed something more than the others. What was it? What made him stop? I wonder if perhaps it was a deep inner energy force of Love slowly arising within him, revealing a renewed inner awareness, a consciousness, of the heart-center of humanity, which then, like a magnet, drew him towards the essence of Love.

I am left with the question, 'What makes me stop?' It is the unexpected that suddenly crosses my path: a friend diagnosed with a terminal illness; an unexpected visitor; an accident; an email sharing good news, the kind words of a significant other when I feel most alone; people's



inner cry of joy, delight, surprise, or the ache of loss, grief, or deep pain. These are the life experiences that make me stop. In many ways it is always something beyond me that causes me to pause and stop. If not for them I would probably just steam ahead, much more self-focused than other-focused. The gift, the grace, the hidden force of God within, is that 'something' which would speak to my heart and enable me to turn around, to go beyond myself, allowing me...enabling me to be drawn and immersed in Love's energy force.

The salesman waved goodbye to his companions and returned to the terminal. I wonder if this image is an invitation for me to wave goodbye to my busyness, which does give me satisfaction, and dare to take some time to turn around, to re-enter and sit in some of the less comfortable places within myself, namely the place of contemplation, silence and stillness wherein I can truly listen and hear. I know that if I do this, I will be grateful. I can then, in the stillness, acknowledge my blindness and perhaps humbly see more clearly the heart of the other. In this sacred space, if needs be, I can be bruised and self-focused before I gently and freely surrender to some personal diminishment in order that the indwelling God of light and love can radiate more intensely through me. By simply owning my fears, inadequacies, anxieties, frustrations, in this place of stillness I can allow the light of life to enfold them as they gently fade away into oblivion.

The song Amazing Grace contains the words '*I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see*'. Who is the blind ten-year-old within me? She is the one who yearns to be seen, to be loved, to belong, like all of humanity. I too long to consciously experience Love's Energy Force and then when it is suddenly, overwhelmingly given, my whole being, like the ten-year-old, would cry out in wonder, "Is this the Love for which I have longed?"

Am I experiencing at last the oneness of Christ through the Christ in the other?

As the man walked away having heard the words "Are you Jesus?" How did he feel? How did he hear those words? I hope he felt good, I hope he felt some joy, inner warmth and delight. I hope he sensed the essence of Christ's love deeply entangled with his own through this encounter. I hope that he was grateful that he had stopped. I hope he sensed the wonder of something greater within him and beyond him.

A lesson that I have learnt from this story is to hold with reverence and ownership the words of affirmation, encouragement, support, kindness, and yes, even love, that are sometimes spoken to me at various moments in my life. In a strange way they are harder to hold than the negative words of criticism, anger, sarcasm, which also at times come my way. Yet, I need to hold that it is the words of love's positive energy that most reflects and channels the Christ in me experiencing the Christ in you. This I need to hold as truth. Namaste!

The man returned to the terminal; how important it is for me to return to the terminal of my life, even if it is busy! The terminal is symbolic of the center, the hub of all of life. It is also the center, the core place of my life in which I need to immerse myself and to which I must return daily. It is the place of inner depth where I quietly unwrap my experiences and then, in stillness, try to listen to the gentle whisperings of Love drawing me within Itself, immersing me into Its essence. It is to this 'terminal' that our CEN group returns to daily listen, be drawn, hear and respond to Life's yearnings in the cries, pain, sufferings, hopes and dreams of the world around us, as well as to our own, and to hold all in Love.



For now, my 'terminal' is both my marketplace and my center of stillness, both exist and are One. As a CEN group we find ourselves drawn and immersed into the Heart of Humanity's Terminal, may we Be there, hold the energy forces around us, listen deeply and above all, love.

In this challenging world may we, this month, like the blind boy, find ourselves frequently 'bewildered' by this energy force of Love flowing through, within, and around us!  
Namaste!

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<sup>i</sup> William J. Bausch, *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, Twenty-Third Publications, 1984