

## Past the sentinels of darkness

by Margot Krikhaar (Newsletter December 2010)

Let not the world's light, given unto you, be hidden from the world. It needs the light, for it is dark indeed

ACIM:T-31.VII.15:1-2)

The journey to our true Christ Self is a journey towards the light. We *are* light. God is light, and the Light of God and Christ are completely united. For this, the *Course* uses the symbol of a star shining brightly. At Christmastime, and in wintertime this star can serve as inspiration, in which Christmas is symbolically seen as the endpoint of our journey.

Even if in truth you already are in that bright light, you often do not experience it that way. Instead, you feel grim and dark, in a world that you likewise perceive as grim and dark. To reach the light of Christ, you inevitably must first go through the darkness – the darkness *in yourself*, which seems to have swallowed all of the light.

### Looking inside

The ego, however, leaves no stone unturned in its attempt to prevent you from facing the darkness within yourself. With distractions and projections onto others, it attempts to direct your attention outward instead of within. For when you direct your attention within, you in effect become the observer of your own ego. This is not a pleasant sight, and the ego naturally attempts to prevent its true dark nature from becoming clear to you. To go the path of forgiveness of the *Course* means instead that you *do* look at your ego. You need to take a good look at your own darkness, for only then can you choose to let the Holy Spirit shine it away. It is essential in this context that this 'looking at your ego' is done with your internal teacher: with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. For otherwise it means that you try to make the journey through the dark with your ego, which only leads you deeper into the darkness and most certainly will not lead you to the light. After all, the ego *is* nothing but darkness: it is the denial of light, just as it is the denial of love. Therefore the ego can only lead you into an even deeper darkness.

### Into the darkness with your ego

Let's have a closer look at what it means to undertake a 'journey' through the darkness under the guidance of your ego. Unfortunately, there are all too many who undertake such a desperate journey. With your ego as 'guide,' you then wander alone through its own deeper layers. You find yourself in a labyrinth of pain, anger, punishment, fear, and guilt, which becomes increasingly darker. These very intense emotions are subsequently 'held in check' by means of a non-stop thought stream of worries and control-issues. This is the 'solution' that the ego has to offer. But all this milling around and worrying becomes a problem in its own

right, which together with all the emotions again leads to new problems, like sleeplessness, bodily ailments, and relationship problems. This in turn causes new fears, guilt, and fretting, and in this way it seems there is no end in sight to the twists and turns of the ego's labyrinth. When despair takes over, and sleeping pills and anti-depressants no longer work, the ego comes up with a new solution: you could always end your life. Fantasies of suicide bubble up almost spontaneously at that time, and even plans and actual suicide attempts (successful or otherwise) are made.

This ego-journey through darkness does not lead to the light, but only towards false appearances. For that reason, the ego has its own parody of Christmas. As long as nothing within you has been healed, you cannot experience the light in full. From the ego's point of view the light is even threatening. And so, a 'celebration of light' such as Christmas becomes a sham, with a lot of emphasis on external forms in lieu of inner joining and true joy. With depressing 'social obligations,' in lieu of authentic inner joining with loved ones, and with a lot of eating and drinking in an attempt to fill up the body. For the gaping hole in the body, where the lack of love is felt, does not go away (and all the food in the world cannot fill that hole). And after the holidays, when January comes along and the dark winter continues, then the hangover comes and the malaise hits us even harder.

This endless cycle could make you depressed indeed, for the ego does not exactly offer us an uplifting perspective. In the above, you may have recognized the description of depression. The ego *is* depression, as the Course puts it: "Depression means that you have forsworn God." (ACIM:T-10V.1:3). And so everyone will recognize these symptoms in one form or another from an ego perspective, even though that mental state does not have to happen to the degree of a clinical depression.

## **Guarding the darkness**

Neither one of the two solutions which the ego offers – seeking distraction in projections or getting lost in your own darkness – works. In either case you continue to feel guilty and miserable, and no real healing takes place. The *real* solution can only arise from outside of your ego, and that means you allow yourself to be helped by the inner teacher who is always with you: Jesus or the Holy Spirit. They represent the light of Christ in your mind, and only the light can shine away the darkness. That alone is healing. It is very simple to know if you are attempting to take the journey with your ego, or with your inner teacher: if there is judgment of yourself or others, you most certainly have chosen the ego. The ego always judges, the Holy Spirit never.

Even yet you may feel strong resistance against taking this journey with your inner teacher. Our faith in the darkness is great, because the ego is our false self with which we identify strongly. So we cling to this darkness and guard it as our greatest treasure. We think we have to 'protect' it against that intruder: the Holy Spirit. And He will never enter into the darkness uninvited to shine His light there. He waits until you are ready to let Him in and to let go, as Jesus teaches in the *Course*:

Light cannot enter darkness when a mind believes in darkness, and will not let it go. Truth does not struggle against ignorance, and love does not attack fear. (ACIM:T-14.VII.5:1-2)

Moreover, the darkness increases fear, exactly because we are trying to hide something in it. The fact itself that something needs to be hidden, covered up, or relegated to the unconscious gives a signal to the mind: something very dangerous lives here. Something that is unknown seems threatening, and so only too quickly do you follow the ego's advice to run away from it, in lieu of looking at it. For that reason the *Course* speaks of the 'sentinels of darkness,' which guard the foundation of the ego (sin, guilt, and fear) carefully and keep it 'safe.'

What is kept apart from love cannot share its healing power, because it has been separated off and kept in darkness. The sentinels of darkness watch over it carefully, and you who made these guardians of illusion out of nothing are now afraid of them. (ACIM:T-14.VI.2:4-5)

## **Past the sentinels**

Do you want to go *past* the sentinels of darkness with your inner teacher, by looking at what lies past them? You do this by joining with Jesus or the Holy Spirit over and over again in becoming aware of what is going on inside you: your lack of peace, emotions, convictions, and false self-images. Thus you *look* at your ego, and what you now see by uncovering it you can give to the Holy Spirit *if* you choose to let go of this piece of darkness. Everything you give to Him is being corrected and will be given back to you transformed, as truth. Because you are looking at the ego with your inner teacher, you do not remain identified with it. Therefore, this process will never lead to depression, or a drowning in heavy emotions, the way it happens if you wander into the darkness with your ego. Rather, with this process, you feel inner peace, and a loving awareness of being carried. After all, now you always have the healing light of Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit with you, and because of this you continue to be disengaged from what you see. You remain anchored in truth, and only *look*, while you realize that what you see is not your true Self. And then you choose to give it to the light, so that it disappears.

## **The light of Christmas**

Thus the darkness of your ego is dissolved piecemeal, and it makes way for more and more light within yourself, until finally all darkness is gone. Now only light shines in your mind. Christmas is a beautiful and hopeful symbol for our final destination of light. When you undertake the journey through the darkness under the guidance of your inner teacher, this outcome is sure: you will arrive at the light of Christ within. In Christ you will find everyone, for the separation has now been canceled out. Henceforth, you experience a deep, inherent connection and oneness with all. All relationships become holy relationships. And because

Christ is one with His Source, God, there is a continuous stream of love. There is then an experience of oneness and abundance of God's Love and a deep inner peace.

When you have found Christ within, Christmas becomes very *simple* as far as externalities and form are concerned. Everything already is *within*, and everything external cannot be more than a reflection of the light and love that are within all of us, in Christ, forever and always.

You were lost in the darkness of the world until you asked for light.  
And then God sent His Son to give it to you.

(ACIM:P-3.III.8:12-13)

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