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LOST AND FOUND

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.---Matthew 10:39

Has it ever struck you that those who most fear to die are the ones who most fear to live? That in running away from death we are running away from life?

Think of a man living in an attic, a little hole of a place with no light and little ventilation. He fears to come down the stairs because he has heard of people falling downstairs and breaking their necks. He would never cross a street because he has heard of thousands who have been run over on the streets. And of course, if he cannot cross a street, how will he cross an ocean or a continent or one world of ideas to another? This man clings to his hole of an attic in the attempt to ward off death and in doing so he has simultaneously warded off life.

What is death? A loss, a disappearance, a letting go, a saying good-bye. When you cling you refuse to let go, you refuse to say good-bye, you resist death. And even though you may not realize it, that is when you resist life too.

For life is on the move and you are stuck, life flows and you have become stagnant, life is flexible and free and you are rigid and frozen. Life carries all things away and you crave for stability and permanence.

So you fear life and you fear death because you cling. When you cling to nothing, when you have no fear of losing anything, then you are free to flow like the mountain stream that is always fresh and sparkling and alive.

There are people who cannot bear the thought of losing a relative or a friend, they prefer not to think of it; or they dread to challenge and lose a pet theory or ideology or belief; or they are convinced that they are never able to live without this or that precious person, place or thing.

Do you want a way to measure the degree of your rigidity and your deadness? Observe the amount of pain you experience when you lose a cherished idea or person or thing. The pain and the grief betray your clinging, do they not? Why is it you grieve so much at the death of a loved one or the loss of a friend? You never took the time to seriously consider that all things change and pass away and die.

So death and loss and separation take you by surprise. You choose to live in a little attic of your illusion pretending that things will never change, that things will always be the same. That is why when life bursts in to shatter your illusion you experience so much pain.

In order to live you must look reality in the face and then you will shed your fear of losing people and develop a taste for newness and change and uncertainty. You will shed your fear of losing the known and expectantly wait and welcome the unfamiliar and the unknown. If it is life you seek then here is an exercise that might prove painful but will bring the exhilaration of freedom if you are able to do it.

Ask yourself if there is anything or anyone whose loss would cause you grief. You may be one of those persons who cannot bear to even think of the death or the loss of a parent, a friend, a loved one. If this is so, and in the measure that this is so, you are dead. The thing to do is to face the death, the loss, the separation, from loved things and loved ones now.

Take these persons and things one at a time and imagine they are dead or lost or separated from you forever, and in your heart say good-bye. To each of them say thank you and good-bye.

You will experience pain and you will experience the disappearance of clinging; and then something else will emerge in your consciousness, an aloneness, a solitude, that grows and grows and becomes like the infinite vastness of the sky. In that aloneness is freedom. In that solitude is life. In that nonclinging is the willingness to flow and to enjoy and to taste and to relish each new moment of life which is now made all the sweeter because it is freed from the anxiety and tension and insecurity, freed from the fear of loss and death that always accompanies the desire for permanence and clinging.

The Way To Love: The Last Meditations of Anthony Demello. Image Books, 1995,
pp 177-181, ISBN 0-385-24939-X