



I've heard from several students in the past few weeks who believe that there are "serious evils" functioning in the world today. They see a worldwide pandemic and believe the way various governments are dealing with the pandemic are anti-democratic and tyrannical. I've had people send me quotes from some of Joel's tapes where he states that the United States was nearly a dictatorship under the Roosevelt administration. He believed that the President had Congress in his pocket and the only institution in the United States keeping the country free was the conservative Supreme Court. It's rare for Joel to reveal his political leanings in his classes, but in that class (1955 Johannesburg) he used his politics to illustrate a point – what is the nature of freedom?

That was a very different time, and he was speaking from a conditioning that is not favorably looked upon today. South Africa was an apartheid state. The United States was not very free for Black Americans. America was much closer to losing her democracy this year on January 6th when the party that lost an election by over 7 million votes believed the vote was rigged and wanted to overturn the results through violent insurrection. This was after every court where the election was challenged had verified that the vote was fair and with less fraud than in past elections. The few discrepancies that were discovered in the various recounts would not have changed the result of the vote in any case. The fear that some people are losing their freedom has been an issue for decades, and it is usually voiced by those who have had power and feel that they are losing it. Any time you have majority rule, people who don't agree with the majority can feel that they live under various degrees of tyranny. And is freedom and democracy synonymous?

I was raised in Christian Science. My beliefs and background have always put me in the minority. When I was in school, I was exempt from many of the medical requirements required by the state to attend public school. I was exempted from certain classes that taught about disease and contagion. But I also had to endure the embarrassment of being called out as different. My first experience in public school after three years at a Christian Science grammar school was to be called in front of the class and labeled a Christian Scientist, labeled as someone who didn't believe in doctors. When I went to Hawaii for college, Hawaii did not honor religious exemptions for inoculations, so I had to be vaccinated against smallpox and tuberculosis. In the middle of my university time, I was called in to the military service. Again, there was no exemption and I walked

down a line of doctors getting shots in both arms for diseases I couldn't pronounce. Was my body violated? I never looked at it that way. It was what one did to be part of society.

That experience taught me that medicine and doctors are neither good nor evil. That disease is neither good nor evil. That scientist report on what they discover by examining the human condition, not spiritual reality. Had I lost my freedom by attending college in a state that had very strict public health measures? Had I lost my freedom by serving in the military? In the Coast Guard I was not able to do what I wanted when I wanted, but my service was for a higher purpose. I was serving the greater good. I did not support the war American was in – Viet Nam – but then I don't support war at all. Was I living in tyranny because the elected leaders of my country promoted war?

In today's world, those who don't support the public good, those who feel that they are responsible only for themselves, and do not accept the conclusions of the scientific community, are very aggressive in their language. They claim they are living under dictatorships when in fact they live in societies that regularly hold elections. They believe in gossip and rumors. They judge world conditions through their own prejudices, and often they are deceived by the rumormongers that mine the internet for discontent and then use that information to feed their own agenda, often an agenda that puts money and power above truth and understanding. Twelve of the most vocal anti-vaccine advocates have been investigated by various consumer watchdog groups and found that most of their information is false, based on debunked theories, and that they use the same false information to sell products they promote. One doctor sold tanning beds that he promoted were a way to cure skin cancer.

The bulk of misinformation in the Western world comes not from government agencies, but from private companies who care only for their bottom line. There are news sources that are curated – not a derogatory word – and fact checked to be as close to the truth as possible. Those news sources, whether or not you agree with their opinion pages, need to get their facts straight because they can be held accountable if they do not. The online news sources are not held to that level of accountability. And people who use unverified or misleading information to promote their agenda and disrupt the desire of most of the people to take action to alleviate the effect of a global human catastrophe, demonstrate how selfish they are and what incredibly inflated egos they possess.

If you study a spiritual discipline, especially one based on the oneness of all life, you need to understand the importance of humility. Freedom is a spiritual idea, and experiencing it has nothing to do with your mortal state. It has to do with how much you let go of your personal ego so you can realize the infinity of God. St. Paul was imprisoned much of his ministry. Did he rail at the guards and write letter about the injustice of it all? No. He quietly went into the state he called the Christ, what we would term Christ Consciousness, and experienced his oneness with the infinite. He was not confined by a material concept, so he had no need to fight or resist his incarceration because he knew his freedom was in his awareness of the presence of God.

Jesus gave the world two great principles to free humanity from the tyranny of material belief. They are *judgment* and *forgiveness*. He said, "Judge not and you will not be judged," (Luke 6:37)

and “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with righteous judgement,” (John 7:24). On forgiveness he said that we should forgive seventy times seven, which in mystical symbolism means that we never stop forgiving. For those conflicted about cooperating with society to overcome a public health crisis, I would ask, what are you afraid of? Are you fearful of putting a substance into your body? If that’s the case, examine all the things you put into your body and see if substance of the vaccine is any better or any worse. Or perhaps it’s the fact that someone is telling you to do it? If that is the case, examine your ego. Or is it the disease you fear? Whatever the cause of the fear, whether it’s the disease or the antidote, remember what Joel said about fear – it is atheism.

God knows nothing of this world. He knows nothing about viruses or vaccines. If your rationale is that you are upholding your spiritual integrity by not taking any medicine, you have not yet caught a major principle of spiritual living – to be *in* the world yet not *of* the world. To exercise your spiritual integrity, you would look at all material appearances with the same attitude and withdraw power from them. And at the same time, you would be aware that your conscious realization of the presence of God engulfs you in the Grace of God, a state of being untouched by the conflicting forces of this world, one without opposite, where truth and freedom are fundamental aspects of your being.

The belief that a person can use spiritual principles to solve material problems is false. Spirit cannot be used. Is alone overcomes the world. The truth is, when an individual is in the realized consciousness of God, harmony exists, peace exists, and wholeness exists. It’s that simple. The hard part is overcoming the human conditioning that pits one idea against another, that judges good and evil based on material appearances, and that believes that opinions about right and wrong have any effect on the spiritual reality that exists right here and now. If you are living and moving and having your being in God, the loving thing to do is support your community to eliminate fear and facilitate the freedom that comes when people feel supported and loved.