

From the Pastor's Desk

The Lunatic Is In My Head

Let your imagination run free for a moment and picture yourself, your personality, who you are really, as a house. Any kind of house will do, just so it's yours. For some it may be a huge castle with lofty turrets and banners waving in the breeze, a place that is safe and secure. For others, it may be a rustic cabin tucked away in the woods, a peaceful and quiet refuge. For others still, it might be a nice little retirement home with a rocking chair on the front porch, a shade tree in front and a nice warm breeze stirring flowers blooming in front.

Now, move in closer and imagine the front door of that house. Picture someone pushing the doorbell, clanking the knocker, or rapping on the door. If someone came to the door of your house, who would they find inside? Who lives in you?

Author Eckhart Tolle states, "I was seated on the train and a woman in her early thirties sat opposite me. One could not help but notice her. Although the train was full, the seats on either side of her were unoccupied, the reason being, no doubt, that she appeared to be quite insane. She looked extremely tense and talked to herself incessantly in a loud and angry voice. She was so absorbed in her thoughts that she was totally unaware, it seemed, of other people or her surroundings. Her head was facing downward and slightly to the left, as if she were addressing someone sitting in the empty seat next to her. Although I don't remember the precise content, her monologue went something like this: 'And then she said to me... so I said to her you are a liar, how dare you accuse me of ... when you are the one who has always taken advantage of me. I trusted you and you betrayed my trust' There was an angry tone in her voice of someone who has been wronged, who needed to defend her position lest she become annihilated."

"As she got up to get off the train, I thought: I hope I don't end up like her. The man next to me looked briefly in my direction, and I suddenly was shocked when I realized that I hadn't just thought those words, but mumbled them aloud. 'Oh my God, I'm already like her,' I thought. Wasn't my mind as incessantly active as hers? There were only minor differences between us. The predominant underlying emotion behind her thinking seemed to be anger. In my case, it was mostly anxiety. She thought out loud. I thought, mostly, in my head. If she was insane, then everyone was insane, including myself. There were differences in degree only." (Eckhard Tolle, "A New Earth")

Do you hear voices in your head? "No", you say, "I don't hear any voices in my head!" Well then, what was going on that night you stayed awake until 2:00 AM staring at the wall unable to sleep? Maybe not "voices", but certainly a conversation of sorts was occurring.

Today we call this "Negative self talk." It all happens in our minds and can go something like this: "Boy, that was really stupid. Why did you say that? People really think you're an idiot. Remember when you did _____? Shame on you! What's wrong with you? You should have never done that! People think you're stupid. You

have really screwed things up.” Do any of these sound familiar? Can you add some others? Most of us experience this at one time or another. Maybe more often than we would like to admit.

One thing is for sure, much of what comes rumbling through our minds is not true. Mark Twain said, “I have been through some terrible things in my life, some of which actually happened.”

So, again the question: “If someone came to the door of your house, who would they find inside? Who lives in you?”

Saint Athanasius (298-373 AD) said, “God became man so that man might become God.” Bold words that make us a little uncomfortable. Yet, we must remember the words of Saint Paul, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” Galatians 2:20 And also, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” I Corinthians 6:19 Not to mention Pentecost, the often forgotten Festival, where God sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. We need to remember that our humanity has been divinized, then act like it.

Becoming aware of this has been called Salvation, Enlightenment or Awakening. Tolle puts it this way, “The initiation of the awakening process is an act of grace. You cannot make it happen nor can you prepare yourself for it or accumulate credits toward it. There isn’t a tidy sequence of logical steps that leads towards it, although the mind would love that. You don’t have to become worthy first. It may come to the sinner before it comes to the saint, but not necessarily. That’s why Jesus associated with all kinds of people, not just the respectable ones. There is nothing you can do about awakening. Whatever you do will be the ego trying to add awakening or enlightenment to itself as its most prized possession and thereby making itself more important and bigger. Instead of awakening, you add the concept of awakening to your mind and then try live up to that image. No, it happens by grace. (Eckhart Tolle, The New Earth)

We must be careful that the primary definition of ourselves is not “A Sinner”. That’s where those troubling voices in our heads come from. Defining ourselves primarily as sinners can become an excuse to mope around perceiving ourselves as powerless. We can become comfortable with this definition of ourselves and it can hinder the process of transformation. We never quite get to Resurrection.

Indeed, Luther proclaimed, and rightly so, that we are simultaneously both Saint and Sinner. When do you celebrate your Saintliness? When do you own it? Ever? Or is sinner the old shoe that fits so well that it has become your primary identity and an excuse to never really enter into the Joy of Resurrection? March 31st is Easter Sunday. Are you going to get there or are you going to stay camped out at the cross?

Own your divinity. It is far more important than your sinfulness. Together we proclaim: **“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”** Let’s put this on our bathroom mirrors.

~ PB