

An abridged and more spiritually-extemporized form of this segment was presented to the the Creative Life Church congregation in Hot Springs, AR, on Easter Sunday, April 4, 2010. Your comments are welcome; please feel free to contact me through my website: www.creationspirit.net. (Previous commentaries about The Inward Way can be found in the “Free Monthly Presentations on The Inward Way” section on the left-hand side of the same website.) Succeeding presentations regarding other aspects of The Inward Way will be made on the second Sunday of each month at the 10:30 AM service of the Creative Life Church, 229 Bayard Street, Hot Springs, AR. The public is invited. In addition, meetings of The Aristotle Group, formed for purposes of metaphysical exchange, are held on the second Saturday of each month from 10AM-noon at the same location. April’s meeting has been shifted to Saturday, April 4 at 10 AM at the Church itself. These meetings and services are open to the public and participation is encouraged.

A New Thought Easter

Happy Easter to one and all. I hope this day, like every day, brings you inspiration and renewal, an endless stream of personal resurrections of your very own. Some of you may be visiting our church service for the very first time, or perhaps even if you’ve been with us before you aren’t quite sure what Creative Life Church stands for. So, before I share some pragmatic examples of how what we know in our heart of hearts makes a difference in our lives, I’d like to share with you just a bit of the Creative Life Church’s foundation.

The Creative Life Church was founded and chartered in 1982 with the Divine Science Federation. A year later, and until 2007, Reverends Andy and Mesilla Kress led the church in its independence from Divine Science into the International New Thought Alliance, a worldwide organization of New Thought churches that includes Religious Science, Divine Science, Unity, Religious thought and other independent groups.

As defined in our church directory, New Thought stands for growth, development and perpetual progress with the ideal of limitless and eternal search for Truth through worship of the omnipresent God, the indwelling God in whom we live, move, and have our Being. The Creative Life Church embraces neither dogma nor theory; rather, we embrace the inner knowledge of God on a personal basis. The application of this inner knowing as a way of life says that God is ALL: One Presence, One Mind, and One Power. This One that is ALL, is Perfect Love. We are One with God and One with this Perfect Love. This is our practice and our way of Being.

We bless all loving teachings and works that are life-affirming and, when applied, demonstrate God’s Love in our lives. We gather in love, not fear. We interpret the Bible and other religious literature as inspiration that must be understood spiritually and utilized in affirmative, life-supporting ways.

Our mission is to serve as a vehicle for disseminating transformative ideas that empower and connect individuals. We serve people who are seeking to help

themselves and others to experience and express wholeness and embrace our differences. We are distinctive in that we honor and bring together the common thread of all inspired thought. We believe in the intrinsic goodness of each individual, whom we help to discover and draw upon the power of God within them to live fully. We honor God in all and strive to be an ever-widening circle of loving goodwill and constructive influence.

That is a brief overview of our church's foundation. I'd like to take the remaining moments to suggest a few ways of looking at Scripture from a spiritual basis, just so you get an idea of how the inner knowing we speak of can function. Understanding Scripture from a spiritual point of view refers to how we are demonstrating our inner connection with the voice of Christ consciousness, Wisdom, the Kingdom within. Living spiritually offers us endless opportunities for discerning whether we are connecting with the still, small voice heard only inward for our spiritual guidance, or whether we instead fall blithely into the trap of abiding outer influence as a way of fixing our daily lives. Scripture is not—I repeat, *not*—about how we are to improve our lot through striving and seeking answers from our limited beliefs and opinions, garnered largely from others.

As you have seen, one of the basis principles of our church of New Thought, The Creative Life Church, is that we look at Scripture as inspiration that must be viewed spiritually, that is, from the deepest aspects of consciousness, not in a physical or literal sense. And when we follow the inward thread faithfully, we find that Scripture deals with how we live from a spiritual basis. Once we learn how to listen inwardly for the still, small voice we call Christ consciousness, we demonstrate that rich texture of wisdom throughout our physical lives. We thus live from the inside out.

Many of us live this way already, although we may not think of it this way. Many of us follow our “gut,” our intuition, the inner calling as we go from moment to moment, only for the most part we're not aware that we are living this way. If we stop for just a moment and reflect on our daily lives, I think you'll agree that this is true—we *are* in contact with inner guidance, and we follow it more than we may give ourselves credit for doing. So if you already do that, feel good about yourself and your path; certainly, you're moving in the right direction spiritually.

Well, the story of Easter is a reinforcement of living this way—from the inside out—in a way that loves the Truth so much that we get out of our own way in order to hear and demonstrate it. The story of Easter is here with us to reinforce our innate goodness by bringing to our awareness the glorious voice of Christ consciousness.

I'd like for us to look at just a few examples from the story of Jesus' last days, including the crucifixion and resurrection. Actually, I'd like to start at the Resurrection and work our way backwards, so you can see how the deepest, loving Wisdom can guide us as we demonstrate our love under all circumstances.

Jesus' resurrection tells us about Jesus coming to the disciples and others after his death. We can either get caught up in the literal view of the Resurrection or we can look at it from a spiritual perspective. This is not to deny the physical, nor to separate ourselves from the physical. Rather, what is being said here is that when we let go of the emphasis we give to physical life and instead tap our inner Source for daily guidance, we provide a life that surpasses how we've become accustomed to living it. This is no different from looking at the definition of insane—following the same path day after day and expecting to obtain a different result—and when we become aware that if we want to change our lives we must change our perspective *on* life itself. And when we do, we are resurrected to live anew. Let's give ourselves some credit here: we move from over-thinking and worrying unnecessarily about insignificant details to simply "going with the flow." We stop blaming others and look inward to discern how we are seeing a particular relationship and how we're contributing to it. We stop feeding ourselves sugar-laden foods that we know are injurious to our bodies and instead gain our nourishment by going inward during meditation and practicing yoga to make both our mind and body more flexible. Bravo for us! The main element about resurrection is that we aren't to worry about physical life; we're only to go inward so we can live according to the direction of Christ consciousness, thus fulfilling Wisdom's path for us. We start anew each moment as we ask and listen—and then follow. This is how we live the story of the resurrection—very personally, every day. Sit for a moment, now, and find a few ways in which you have already shifted your perspective on life and feel better—much better—about how you're living it.

Now, what about the crucifixion? The crucifixion as portrayed literally speaks to how Jesus was crucified by others, because they didn't agree with Jesus' way of living. His teachings dealt with how to live spiritually, not by the law, or a literal reading of the Scriptures. Jesus' path certainly threatened others, who simply wanted to live the same old way: following the law was simpler to them than going within to discern the Wisdom to live by. I can assure you that if you follow Jesus' teachings to the core, listening inward to discern the voice of Christ consciousness and then demonstrating it, you will make some people uncomfortable. Many of you in our church already make some people uncomfortable, simply by the demonstration of your amazingly loving ways and many thoughtful considerations. Feel good about that! It's none of our business what anyone else thinks about us, anyway, so let's just continue to live lovingly from the inside out.

Besides, the story of the crucifixion is not about others crucifying us; it's about how we crucify ourselves—every day. That sounds rather crazy, I know, but we do crucify ourselves every time we go outward to find the Truth that is available only inward; every time we speak and act from beliefs and opinions we've gained from others instead of listening to the profound Truths found in Christ consciousness; each time we follow someone else's idea of how we can lose weight instead of following the direction of Spirit throughout the day. Here again, let's give ourselves some credit. As I have watched you over this past year, I see more and more examples of how you're living from the inside out: how you're sitting with and

simply acknowledging your feelings instead of letting them overwhelm you; how you're listening inwardly at deeper and deeper levels before speaking out; how you're letting others simply speak their piece instead of trying to fix them needlessly—and more. Bravo! But how I see you isn't all that important. I'm only a reminder. What *is* important is that *you* see how well you're doing. So take a few moments now and reflect on those times when you went inward to find and follow your Truth and lived from that Wisdom alone.

Go ahead and ask the obvious question: how can we live spiritually all the time? How can I demonstrate Christ consciousness instead of feeding my ego all day long? Let's look to the story of Easter for two simple examples that may just help. You will recall that in the waning weeks, Jesus wanted to teach the Apostles something about this very question, so he washed their feet. Peter mistook Jesus' intention, thinking that Jesus was teaching them to be humble in physical demonstration. Such a misinterpretation was not unusual, in that the Apostle's often did not "get" Jesus' main point. But if we remember that Scripture is not about the persons cited but about how we're carrying out *our* lives, we see that we, just like the Apostles, often mistake Jesus' teachings when we take them literally. Symbolically, feet represent the spiritual foundation upon which we stand, the consciousness that feeds our demonstration. In this case, Jesus is telling us that we are to keep that foundation clean—by being vigilant in washing away outer influence, beliefs and opinions not founded on Christ consciousness, and living to satisfy our ego instead of the Soul's calling. In a word, Jesus beckons us still to stand tall and strong in our magnificence!

Again, give yourselves credit. Many of you, if not all, are seeking deeper meaning, wanting to find inner peace and joy, and you seem to be willing to take any course necessary in order to achieve such worthy goals. Now, let's follow Jesus' admonition to an even deeper level: we don't need to strive for anything, we don't need to achieve any spiritual goals at all. To focus our energy on fixing something that doesn't need fixing is to steep ourselves in ego consciousness. All we need do is listen inward while deeper meaning seeks our awareness, and follow that sweet voice we know so well. This keeps things very simple, as living spiritually is supposed to be. So close your eyes now, and see if you can find instances where you have cleansed yourself of beliefs and opinions that had nothing to do with inner Wisdom, how you have cleansed yourself of striving and seeking in favor of simply listening within.

Lastly, let's take a look at the moment in Scripture when Jesus told the Apostles that he would soon be leaving them. Like any master teacher, he must leave them, he says, and they need not be fearful, for he would provide another safe haven in which to find their answers. Actually, Jesus had taught the Apostles how to access inner Source all along, but they kept relying on him for their answers instead, creating an unhealthy dependency. Sound familiar? We, too, rely often on others for many of our answers, for our identity, our validation, and for praise; on it goes. What Jesus was saying to the Apostles is that they are not to rely on *any* outer source—not even him, Jesus—for to do so is to miss the voice of Christ consciousness that informs

each of us about our individual walk among our brethren. You see, life becomes very simple when we do just one single thing, live from just one single Source, abide one Truth only—and that Truth is found inward. To a large degree, I see you heading more and more in that direction. So, one last time this morning, let's look inward and see where you have already begun this simple way of living. Find times when you have gone inward to find your Truth and followed only it. Find times when you have followed your intuition rather than fulfilling your ego. Fully acknowledge the inspiration received during meditation. Bravo, you are indeed on your spiritual path!

Let us commit together here today, on this glorious Easter Sunday—regardless what our religious beliefs may be, even if we claim to have none—to reach only inward for our guidance; to reinforce the glorious path of being at One with our Truth by personal example. Let us refrain from personal crucifixion by listening to the still, small voice for moment-to-moment direction. Let us resurrect ourselves by living anew, much like the flowers that reach to the heavens for the light and warmth that will nourish them into the fullness of the gift they are. The same is true for us: let us reach to the heavens, the One True Source, for enlightenment and spiritual nourishment, that we may be the fullness of the gift we each are to the Universe.

Happy Easter everyone—Happy Resurrection to one and all! Indeed, stand tall and strong in your magnificence!