

Mary and Divine Purpose

Our December, Advent series is a mash-up of elements of the nativity story found in Matthew and Luke and Edwene Gaines book, The Four Spiritual Laws of Prosperity. Maybe not the most likely mash-up or approach to Advent but I'm not a fan of boring. Last week we swallowed the big frog first, as Edwene says, and learned the first law of prosperity is tithing—giving to where we are spiritually fed. During a season that often focuses on giving, we explored ideas in the context of the gifts of the wise mean from the East: the idea of giving back to Source; giving our best; and giving as an expression of our spiritual nature with no expectation of getting in return.

Today our nativity element is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Edwene thinks we need to be pursuing our divine purpose for true prosperity to manifest. It makes perfect sense that we are a wider, more open channel for the flow of good when our consciousness focuses on a divine purpose. And it is hard to beat Mary when it comes to divine purpose: “Your job Mary is to give birth to the incarnation of God Almighty and nurture the son who will teach lessons that will endure for all time.” Sounds simple. People have babies all the time. As is often the case with divine purpose, the timing was a little off. Mary was **engaged** to be married but she wasn't married yet. So Mary had to work her way to enthusiasm for the news of the angel Gabriel. Which brings me to how we greet news of our divine purpose.

As I have been working with Edwene Gaines ideas around prosperity two aspects of our human consciousness seem to keep popping up: faith and worthiness. When reflecting on these prosperity ideas I keep asking: what do I believe is possible and do I believe I am worthy? It may be difficult to conceive that me, just plain old me, has a divine purpose. Certainly not a purpose like Mary—giving birth to Jesus. Yet our Unity teaching and the metaphysical or deeper meaning for the whole Christmas story is that each of us carries the divine spark within us and each of us is called to give birth or bring into manifestation the Christ nature of our being. We don't bring the Christ nature into manifestation just once or even just in December. In consciousness, we keep a focus on our divine purpose day by day—every day. As any parent knows, your divine purpose isn't over when the child arrives. That is just the beginning!

Often Spirit helps write these sermons and I came across a quote in the new Richard Rohr book I'm reading, “Just This”. He is talking about the teachings of John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan theologian from the 1200's.

Rohr says, “Each creature is thus not merely one member of a genus and species, but a unique aspect of the infinite Mystery of God. God is continually choosing each created thing specifically to exist, moment by moment.” Let that sink in. YOU ARE a unique aspect of the infinite Mystery of God who this very moment God is specifically choosing to be right here. That news, as I expect it appeared to Mary, is both exhilarating and terrifying. The idea that I have a divine purpose has ego mind responding, “And what if I screw it up?” I mean, maybe that didn’t occur to Mary but it clearly occurs to me more often than I like. Yet how can Spirit pour into my life if I have no containers open and receptive to the good? My divine purpose is a big channel that I am committed to inviting Spirit to pour support and substance and guidance into. When considering my divine purpose, there is an important phrase in that statement: I am committed to. Mary made a lifetime commitment. She was not only at the manger, she was at the cross and the empty tomb. Committing to a divine purpose means we don’t allow the fears and doubts to move us off track. It means staying the course when we wonder if maybe God could have/should have picked someone else for the job. I affirm: there is no fear in me.

I don’t think Mary was the first or the last person to question a divine purpose being revealed to her and through her. Ministry is a calling. I thought that was just a saying until I was called. At first I reasoned with God that it was just not a good time as I had just adopted my son. I was busy with a legal career. It still wasn’t a good time **for me** when my children were still in school but divine purpose is persistent. A divine purpose can continue to knock at the door of your heart until you are willing to say yes. Then commitment means affirming I AM a unique aspect of the infinite Mystery of God here for a divine purpose right now!

In Edwene’s book she asks for **signs** that she is on purpose, maybe as a way to bolster her commitment. There is a pretty humorous story about her decision to decline a lucrative offer to be an associate minister with Jack Boland at Unity Renaissance in Warren Michigan to take a humble congregation just beginning in Knoxville Tennessee. Things unfold and she is driving around Knoxville with a friend and she says, “Moses had a burning bush—I want a burning bush if this is what I’m supposed to do.” The car rounds a big turn and they see a huge billboard for the Burning Bush Restaurant. No one could speak for a while. There are signs in the nativity story. Gabriel tells Mary that her “mature”, over-the-hill barren cousin Elizabeth is already pregnant and having a special baby too.

Sure enough, Mary visits Elizabeth and finds out that is true. The wise men followed a star. The Angels told the shepherds to look for a baby in a manger in Bethlehem. Sometimes the signs for our divine purpose tell us GO and sometimes they tell us STOP: not this, not right now. Edwene tells the story of purchasing her retreat center in Alabama. She had a contract for a beautiful property and three times the deal was thwarted by difficulties in title. After the third aborted signing she drives down a path where she sees a sign, “For Sale by Owner”. The vista is twice as beautiful as the difficult property and it was where she built her retreat center. Once we open to the idea that Spirit **has** a mighty work for us to do and we are the unique expression of the Divine Mystery placed here to do the work, we stay aware of signs to guide us and open to the abundant good pouring forth into our work. We affirm: The entire Universe loves me, serves me, nurtures me and wants me to win. I have wonderful projects for good in the world and all the money I desire shows up to support my work.

So if we have a divine purpose, how do we demonstrate our Christ consciousness? Too often we may sit back and say, “OK God/Spirit/Universe, I am open—you choose.” Here is a tricky part of our co-creating nature—the Universe responds. We have free will. If we never ask for anything, the Universe is not sure how to respond. Unity co-founder Charles Fillmore says that desires of our heart are nudges from Spirit about what is possible. Oh, back to those questions: “What do I believe is possible?” and “Am I worthy to receive it?”

Edwene encourages goals as a demonstration of our belief in what is possible and a demonstration of accountability. If you break *accountability* apart you find an **account** of our **ability**. How many of us don’t make goals because we don’t think we can accomplish them? We don’t make big goals because we don’t think it’s possible. And who wants an “account” of our failure? So **if** we make a goal, we keep it to ourselves and we keep it small. We keep it limited to our comfort zone. Remember that funny thing about tithing—when we limit our tithing we end up limiting our ideas about God. Well, that same funny thing affects our goals and purpose. If we keep thinking small about our goals and purpose, we keep a mindset that we have limited access to a limited divinity. **What if** we really **were** a unique expression of the divine Mystery of an infinite Universe, ready to pour through us? What is limited about that? Absolutely NOTHING! So what about goals that are both exhilarating and terrifying? When was the last time you had a goal that stretched you, maybe scared you a little? The choir sings, “What would you do if you were brave?”

Edwene has some funny stories about the power of speaking our goals out loud, out into the Universe, and speaking goals that are beyond what other people might believe is possible. One of my favorite stories about a goal and commitment is the story about Mildred. Mildred is a mature woman who attends a younger Edwene's workshop on goals, and Edwene announces a cruise that she has set up. The total cost is \$3,000 and Edwene needs a check for \$1,000 to reserve your spot.

Mildred says, "I'm going!" and hands Edwene a check. Later Edwene notices the check is for \$100, not a thousand. Thinking the older lady might have made a mistake Edwene approaches her about the discrepancy between \$100 and \$1,000. Mildred says, "I don't have \$1,000 right now but I'm going on that cruise." Edwene backs up and tries to approach the \$1,000 a couple ways and finally gives up. As the weeks pass the cruise fills up and Mildred keeps sending checks. One check is for \$5, one for \$3.75, and so on til the day the cruise is filled. Edwene calls Mildred to tell her that it doesn't even matter that she would need \$3,000 instead of the \$197 that Mildred has amassed, there isn't an opening. Mildred isn't discouraged. She simply says, "I'm still going on that cruise." Edwene sighs and goes on. The day before everyone will be leaving on the cruise a wealthy woman who was one of the first to pay up calls Edwene. Seems there is a family crisis and the woman has cruised enough to know she can't get her money back. So she asks if Edwene knows of anyone who could use her spot. Edwene is excited as she calls Mildred. "You are not going to believe what I have to tell you" Edwene begins. Mildred interrupts her to say, "Honey you don't even have to tell me. My bags are packed and waiting by the door." If we think about it, we all have stories about speaking something into manifestation. We just haven't believed it lately.

One of the first goals Edwene ended up setting was a little different. She had been active in her first Unity church 3 or 4 months and she felt she had quite a bit to contribute. So she approached the minister to explain how someone in the choir was off key; whoever was supposed to vacuum the sanctuary might want to review their job description; they might want to get someone in hospitality who could fix coffee that didn't taste like it was made last night; and they might want to review the bulletin for typos cause there were quite a few. The minister took her hand and calmly said, "Edwene, I think the highest metaphysical law for you today is 'don't complain'." Somewhat taken aback, Edwene did spend some time reviewing how she was using her words and her power of appreciation. She was not thrilled with what she saw.

She set a goal to not complain, even to herself, and to not speak negatively for 21 days. For those who have been around Unity for awhile, yes, this book is exactly where Will Bowen got the idea for “A Complaint Free World.” From Edwene’s standpoint, if we want to put some serious belief and faith behind the words of our goals, we might want to clean up how we are currently using the power of our words. It is surprising how much energy we have to put in a positive direction when we stop putting so much energy into a negative, complaining, unproductive direction.

Maybe fewer people muttering “Bah, humbug” wouldn’t hurt this season. We can’t control all people. I can only change me. You can only change you. But if I change me and you change you and we hang out together, we have the beginnings of changing the world. Right here.

In this holy season we are reminded that the Christ consciousness, the pure innocence of powerful being, is birthed or brought forth in each one of us. Like Mary, we are pregnant with the possibilities of our divine purpose. Through living our divine purpose and establishing goals that stretch us into being more of who we came here to be, we become the empty vessels into which Spirit pours prosperity. When we close ourselves off, not asking to be more and have more, we are like the closed fist, unable to receive. Saying YES to our divine purpose and achieving goals we keep updated in our minds leads us to living extravagantly happy and loving lives, even if we have to persist through a few or more than a few moments of growing through the limits we have created for ourselves.

Next week we get to tackle a kind of big frog, forgiveness. What does forgiveness have to do with prosperity? Better come next week to find out!