

April 1, 2020

Wouldn't it be fantastic if we found out that this whole Coronavirus was a big April fools joke? It would be just as fantastic to wake up and find out that all of our losses were just a bad dream. But alas, it is no joke, no dream, and here we are living in this new dreamlike state in this strange and uniquely challenging time in human history.

Each morning as I have my coffee and ponder or pray, I see at least one, if not several bald eagles flying overhead. I live near the Shark River and there are a few new nests in our area. Each and every time I see an eagle, I get a rush of excitement and I feel thrilled. It's almost unimaginable that this species was nearly wiped out not so long ago, - within our lifetime, and within our lifetime they have been saved from the brink of extinction. In fact they are thriving. They are a perfect symbol for what we all are going through right now. The bald eagle, our official American symbol, can now serve us in an entirely new way as a symbol of hope and survival. Of course this was not without effort, or our coming together, or raising awareness, or obeying the laws of conservation that made this miracle of nature take place. But we did it. Now we need to do it for ourselves.

It is quite hopeful to see all the good that is taking place as we human beings jump into action rallying around a common cause that gives us a new focus and purpose. I remember all too well the incredible and inspirational humanitarian response to September 11th. Now we are seeing it again as we face COVID19; we are indeed coming together, which was not happening too much before this crisis, and we are raising awareness about things like social distancing, washing hands, and the suffering of others, and hopefully more and more of us will obey the new laws put into place to protect us from destruction. In order for this to work, however, we all need to put others before ourselves; we need to selflessly think of the consequences of our actions for others who may become infected and ill. I find this to be a pretty big shift in our cultural landscape, as we have been becoming a society that was pretty much 'all about me.' But it can't be all about me anymore; it must be all about 'we.' I find all of this to be a positive element of this tragic event, and there are many more. I love to hear what people are doing around the world to reach out to neighbors and care for one another. We haven't heard much of this kind of news in a very long time. But this is what humanity is really all about. This is why we were created; it is why we are here. This crisis, I believe, will help to redefine us, to refocus our attention from one of self-indulgence to the greater good. I believe it will raise our awareness toward one another and toward those who are suffering, and I believe it can bring us to a new level of being human.

On an individual level, we who are grieving have already been going through much of this catharsis already. We already know what it feels like to have our world ripped apart. We already know the depths of sadness and despair. We know what it feels like to be isolated and alone. We know what it feels like for others to not understand us or to be able to respond to us. In the beginning it feels like none of this will ever go away, that this is a permanent condition. For those of us who have traveled a bit further in grief, it is clear that it all can change and evolve for the better, it of course depends on time and what we do with that time. The experiences of community and love and kindness and compassion are a major source of our healing and moving toward wholeness again both on an individual and

communal level. What we are experiencing in grief is pretty much what our entire world is, or will be going through, for the next several months, even perhaps years. I believe it can, and will, change us for the better. I believe, that like the bald eagle, we will also go on to survive and even thrive. First we must grieve, and there will be suffering for sure, just as there is in all grief. But this is a part of our collective becoming; it is a part of what we call 'the new normal,' even though nothing seems normal any more. This positive hope for our survival and evolving may be a pipe dream, but it has happened before and it most certainly can happen again. Hey, it happened for the eagles so why not for us?

I would like to end today with lyrics from a song written from Psalm 91:

***"You need not fear the terror of the night
Nor the arrow that flies by day
Though thousands fall about you
Near you it shall not come
He will raise you up on eagle's wings
Bare you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand."***

Peace and Serenity, Kevin