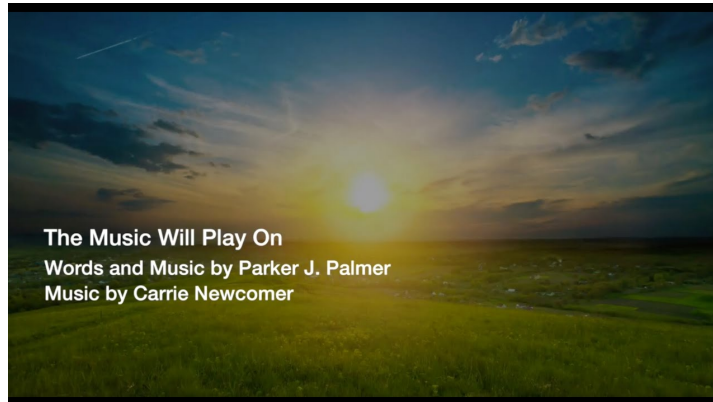


“On the Brink of Everything” — 48-03
PAUSE TO CONSIDER: REFLECTIONS ON SESSION #3

1. A highlight for me last night was the music video featuring Carrie Newcomer’s rendition of Parker Palmer’s lyrics to the song “The Music will live on.” When the



video finished and we returned to the gallery on Zoom, we were absolutely silent. A special moment, indeed.

The music reminds me of the lyrical videos created by our family friend, John Wort Hammon and the lyrics are reminiscent of his song, “Only Love Can,” which offers a similar message to that which Parker Palmer is sharing with us. We hope to hear John in concert on Feb. 12 in Fort McLeod — Dave’s (my husband) 76th birthday.



2. Last week I shared a poem written by Jock McTavish in honour of his wife Bonnae and as a way to celebrate his 79th birthday on the 30th. It honours Christy, a long term member of St. David’s and faithful member of the music program at St. David’s and was inspired by his reading of Chapter One of our book, “On the Edge of Everything.”

what i can see from here

in first attempts to learn
it is answers we seek
asking with plain expectations

no complexity on us
our expectations are simple and direct
our not knowing is but inconvenience

but with learning comes experience
through canyons of complexity
and the difficulties of description

our understanding slowly grows
with harrowing's revelations
and persistence pervades

we are surprised at truth's complexity
and its appropriate hiding places

jock mctavish
31 jan 2

3. What thoughts and ideas might I share from last night's BreakOut Room?

We played around a little with the question of the meaning of life and we concluded that our very lives give meaning — that in our day to day functioning, 'meaning' evolves. As Palmer reminds us, "Delight in the gift of life and be grateful."

For myself, the truck convoy in Ottawa and at the US border is a challenging event that forces me to arrive at a decision about being a Canadian during the time of COVID-19. Like Palmer, I am "a white, straight, well educated (fe)male" and I don't feel, in any way, the **unwarranted** loss of freedom at this time. I have been taught to obey the guidelines of the authorities in my life and and, coming from a perspective of personal safety, I view the mandates issued by those same authorities to be there to protect me, my loved ones and society, in general. We willingly produce our QR vaccination codes and driver's licence (despite how unflattering my picture is) on demand, if we wish to enjoy coffee after our walk in the mall or lunch at our favourite restaurants. Wearing a mask has given us two years of freedom from the common cold or worse.

Yes, we respect diversity and like Parker Palmer says in the first video segment we viewed last night, “Diversity exists... white folk avoid conflict... not all lines are visible.” Until we see folks in Ottawa, crowding together, unmasked and taunting authorities, we can remain in our innocence that we as Canadians are like minded. But the facts clearly show that “Canadians are not like-minded” and we celebrate the view the freedoms we enjoy as Canadians allow individuals and groups to take a stand but do so peacefully. Meanwhile, I watch the news with trepidation.

Parker quotes Dorothy Day (1897-1980) whom he calls a saint in his life said, “Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing when compared to love in dreams.” He goes on to describe a metaphor of us climbing, holding hands, not letting go — for all.”



Curiously, I did a quick little research on Dorothy Day and found out that, like Parker, she was an activist who converted to Catholicism as an adult and online site goes on to say...

“By any measure, Dorothy Day lived a fascinating life. She was a journalist, activist, single mother, convert, Catholic laywoman, and co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement. A lifelong radical who took the gospels at their word, Dorothy Day lived among the poor as one of them, challenging both church and state to build a better world for all people. Steeped in prayer, the liturgy, and the spiritual life, she was jailed repeatedly for protesting poverty, injustice, and war. Through it all, she created a sense of community and remained down-to-earth and humanly approachable. To have known Dorothy Day was to have experienced not only her charm and humanity, but the purposefulness of her life.”

4. Mike Grammer has sent us his notes of Chapter One. For those of you that have only recently come to know Michael on Zoom, he has for years shared his notes on whatever book we are studying. “On the Brink of Everything” is no exception. Here’s what Mike thinks: He prefaces his notes with “Although I am one of the younger people in the group, I expect the book to have a lot to say to me.” **PS “I’ve taken the liberty to edit his notes for “Pause to Consider.” The uncut version can be found on sduc.ca MINISTRIES/ Adult Spiritual Development/ file attachment.**

The View from the Brink:

*11. use of “brink”. He’s not wrong. Look at the term **brinksmanship**--to incite another geopolitical entity almost into war. Myself, I prefer *my* term. **Blokesmanship**—the art of being a decent human being.*

Mike’s definition of faith — the continuing discovery of the wonder of my humanity.”

15. bottom — the grace of wholeness. Hurray. He's like me. He's not a good person. He's not a bad person. He's a mixed person...which makes him human. That paragraph which starts with Fierce with reality is super.

16. top, we talked in small group about how perfectionism is a true curse. If you can never be satisfied, you can never take stock like he has here. And...you can never find *balance*. I kind of want to illustrate perfectionism in my mind as a super-fast spinning top, spinning ever faster, spinning ever brighter. I *never* want to spin so hard that I risk stopping moving altogether. And he drinks coffee. Oh well, truly, nobody's perfect (grin--- I only drink tea)

16. bottom — Yes indeed—God works in mysterious ways. And God weighs in with some mysterious works sometimes.

It's hard to separate meaning from purpose from destiny. I still think that a personal Mission and Vision statement is really key to grounding yourself —the idea of encapsulating your entire life in a 6-word memoir. Mine hasn't changed. Not in 12 years now. **Lived Life. With Love. Full Cup.**

But my prime alternate is **“Being different and making a difference”**

20. middle, — see—here's where I do take up the challenge---because wondering about those things is what our species is about. Is *that* ego? I'm not saying we wouldn't accrue benefit by being more birdlike, but there is also benefit in thinking about meaning---at least I think so. I do see on page 21 that he does admit he might look at it differently on any given day.

20. bottom – 21. This would be a yes-but-no-but-yes answer for me. I agree with the positive value of walking in the woods or appreciating nature, for sure. But I tilt this somewhat to say that the experience's value is in rebalancing us from the overly regimented and...OK...sterile lives that most of us lead in most parts of the everyday.

Look---**OUR LIVES CAN HAVE MEANING, BUT THAT SHOULD BE ENFOLDED WITHIN THE MEANING OF LIFE.** Where he's saying that the meaning of our lives shouldn't be the central focus of our lives---if that's on the agenda, I can climb onboard with that.

I'm going to excerpt something from a different source this time---from my notes of our small group's book study on Homo Deus, the 2nd of the Harari trilogy (with Sapiens and 21. Lessons for the 21st Century). Sorry to track off a bit, but you'll get a laugh out of my notes!

“234-235, life has no meaning. I could see the ACTS book study group throwing this whole *chapter* in the fire (grin). I am prepared to walk along this path with him only because he is using the term “meaning” in a particular way---that individually, the living of our lives has no impact or meaning for humanity as a whole. I violently disagree that an individual lives her life without meaning for her. Mind, that may be just my conceit..

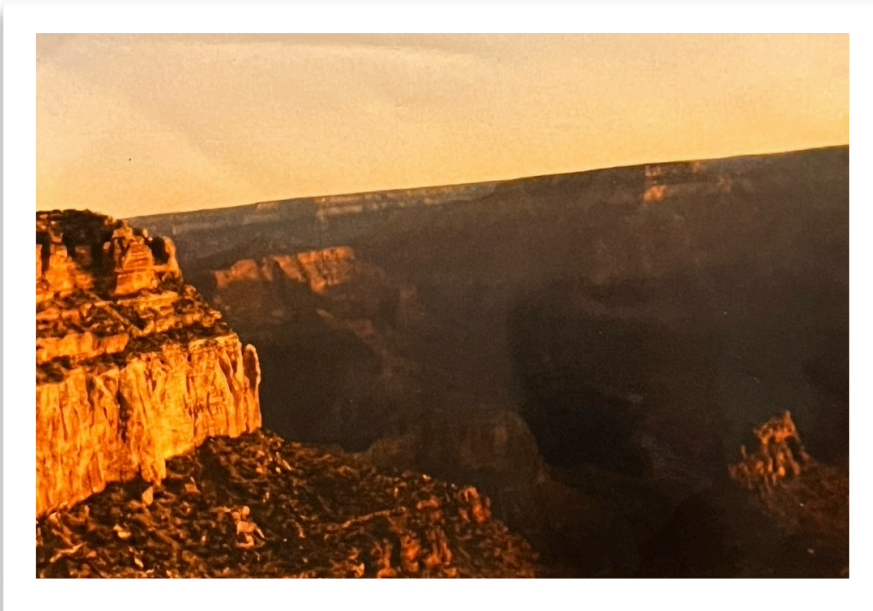
What is interesting is to take his views in this chapter and try to reconcile them with his emphasis on mythology and stories. **Is belief, instead of our management process for what we can't control and don't understand (my definition), instead the coin with which we pay the price of the Modernity Deal?”**

25. “enough” is a really important word these days. It stands directly counterposed to most of societal structure, which is built on a core of an insatiable appetite, of “never

enough/not enough". Do you know where I do insist on "never enough"? I can never meet enough good people or know enough good people.

26, jettising psychological junk. Good ideas there.

29-30. I've only been (to the Grand Canyon once.) (God—it's incredible to believe it was 40 years ago. We woke up at 4:30 to troop out to watch the sun rise and hit battleship rock and the area around it. I still remember the grandeur of that place at that moment so vividly (and do still have a picture to remind me). I felt very, very small standing on the south rim and looking at this statement of nature.



This chapter. Let me try it this way, from a much more recent journal entry:

“Why is it so important for us to be our world instead of just letting the world be? The human need to control her world seems to be genetically implanted. Anthropomorphism? The thirst for knowledge? We practice the deception that if we understand we can

shape, and control. So why?

Maybe because it matters so much to us that we matter. The ultimate core of human hubris, even if it is for good and glory, is that we make and leave our mark. And because there are so **many** of us now... although the spectrum of diversity of mark-making is breathtaking, one can ask—**does the world have enough room for this many marks.** I was remarking to someone this morning that possibly the biggest challenge we face is not repairing or replenishing the world but **rebalancing** it. Our earth is so spun off its axis.

What we do in this way may only be a refinement of animals marking their territory, but it might be novel to let the world be our world instead of shaping the world **to** be our world.

I do believe in meaning and purpose to life, but I am also starting to feel that it is important to release the hold on those things every once in a while so you can breathe the world and let it breathe you.

Please take time to read Mike's notes (unabridged) for the Prelude and Chapter One: [sduc.ca/Ministries/ Adult Spiritual Development Ministry/](http://sduc.ca/Ministries/Adult%20Spiritual%20Development%20Ministry/)file attachment.

“We need to reframe aging as a passage of discovery and engagement, not decline and inaction.”

8. Housekeeping Review:

- Check out sduc.ca for weekly updates and keynote presentation.
- Enjoy “Pause to Consider.” Thanks for giving me the opportunity to process my thoughts in such an enjoyable way.
- Screen capture (take a picture of what's on a screen that interests you — (on my machine, hold down “shift, command, 4” to take a picture.)
- Bible Study on Thursday mornings on ZOOM at 10 a.m. is on I Corinthians.

11. Some links you might like:

<https://couragerenewal.org/wpccr/parker/videos/>

On Being Project: <https://onbeing.org>

<https://www.newcomerpalmer.com/home>

12. Remember to send me your faith words for each letter of the alphabet.

Thoughtfully yours,

Brenda

