

THE RIVER

PULSE OF SPIRIT
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I want to share a vision of what we are moving into and what is beginning to happen for us as human beings, individually and together. The vision comes out of time I have spent walking along the Poudre River. Several times, I have started out at the headwaters of the Poudre River, a place called Poudre Lake. The word *Lake* makes it sound like a grand thing, but it is more like a little pond right up by the Continental Divide. Out of that lake comes what looks more like a stream than a river. It is somewhere around eight or ten feet across. As it moves down out of the high peaks, other streams join, and it grows. Along the way it becomes a surging, mighty river. At times there is a great current. And there are points where it is moving along smoothly. And then there are waterfalls, ten or twelve feet high, so the water cascades with great power. Adventure-hungry souls take kayaks down those waterfalls!

As you watch the water, it moves in paths that replicate themselves over time. As you watch it go over a boulder, it keeps going over that boulder in a predictable pattern. There are the waterfalls that

flow in a pattern that repeats itself. What you see is that the movement of the water is structured. It is a particular kind of structure—not the structure of rocks themselves. It is a structure in the current. The river does not just go down the mountain in one straight stream of water. It moves in a structure of waterfalls and eddies and currents. That structure is created by the flow of the water over the underlying structure of the mountains, the valleys, and the rocks.

What is it that creates the current in the water? There is a very simple answer. Altitude. The vertical drop creates the flow. The speed of the water and the way it flows depends on slope. Flow is created by gravity and the drop in altitude as the river goes down the mountainside, until the Poudre River flows through Fort Collins and joins the South Platte River out upon the plains. There its flow is different—it does not have the rapids or the waterfalls that characterize the river in the mountains.

The mountain river is a symbol of what is emerging

in our human experience. We can try to sort out what is happening in our physical body, our emotional body, in our mind. We can try to resolve the issues that arise. But if we do not find a way to increase the flow of life through our human capacities, we will be unsuccessful in creating vitality. We will not thrive if there is not a flow. And how is that flow created for you and me as individuals? It is created by our verticality, by altitude. It is created because we open to the verticality that is within us. We open to the place of the Most High in ourselves.

If you look at the mountain river, it has no real way of blocking the flow from on high. There is no dam to stop the water. And if there were, it would likely just become another waterfall, and the water would find its way over or around whatever obstacle was in its way.

And yet for us as human beings, the flow within us depends on consciousness, because it is coming *through* consciousness and then ultimately landing in physical bodies. It is a conscious process that moves in mind and heart, and so mind and heart have to open to that flow from on high. They have to touch the secret place of the Most High. They have to be open to the Wonderful One Within, who is the Lord of our Being. And when we open in mind and heart to the Lord of our Being, we are opening to the source from which the flow of life comes. When we stay open and we let it come into mind and heart, it is a mighty river.

It is meant to come into us, and then through us and out from us, into the world in which we live. If it becomes blocked at any point along the way—if we

do not open to that flow coming in, or if we are not willing to let it out and bring it powerfully, courageously, into our world—we block the flow. And then we are left with water that should be flowing but which is sloshing around inside this. This manifests as the sloshing around of thought and feeling—ambivalence, anxiety, worry and fear, followed by attempts to improve those experiences. A person might read a book, go to a workshop, meditate or pray. All those activities could be wonderful if they open a person up to the source of the flow from within themselves. But if that flow does not move, you cannot work it out. All the worry in the world and all the spiritual practices in the world do not make life better without the actual flow from the place of the Most High in ourselves.

In our collective activities—what we do with other people in our families, in our organizations, in our communities and nations—to thrive, we have to allow that flow to come in and through. We have to have someone or someones who are touching the place of the Most High, the highest place within humanity, and then allowing a flow of wisdom and love to come from that place into our shared collective space. And then when it is shared, it has to be welcomed and embraced. The collective has to let it in and let it continue to flow for the collective to thrive.

When we look to people who lead in our world, we naturally hope to see something coming from a high place. So often, when it does, the collective receiving it engages in the game of putting the person up on a pedestal and then knocking them off it, criticizing the flow from them. In subtle and not

so subtle ways, they are sabotaged, and in some cases assassinated.

There have to be those who show up in our human world and bring a flow of wisdom and love from the highest altitude possible. I am not saying it has to be brought in a religious way or a spiritual way. Nonetheless, there have to be those who represent to humanity the highest of who we are—the Most High in each of us and the Most High of who we are collectively.

Even in our one-to-one relationships, there has to be verticality, does there not? There has to be altitude that is brought into our one-to-one relationships so that one person allows a waterfall to flow into another. My experience is that when someone truly does that, it is not an act of arrogance. It is an act of humility to open yourself to the Most High in yourself and then to share that with another person. It is an act of love.

When that is offered to us, how do we respond? Do we embrace it? Do we love it? Do we let it in? Have we lost the ability to be nourished by the Most High in another person? *Oh, I am on a solo spiritual path. I am relating to God, or I am becoming spiritual all by myself.* Really? Have we lost the ability to drink it in from another, and then to give it back? To say thank you? And then to access the Most High in ourselves, open to it, and have the courage to share that? It takes courage to touch a place of the most profound love and the most profound truth in ourselves and then say to another, *Here it is.*

When we begin to know that kind of verticality and we share it amongst ourselves, then there is the

mighty current of Creation, which is born out of the Creator, that we are beginning to share. It is flowing as a mighty river. It has structure to it—the current of life has a structure. It is not just sloshing around and it is not coming as an undifferentiated flow. It has cascades and turbulence, eddies and hydraulics. It has shape. And when there is the current of Creation that is flowing through us as a community, it creates a shape. It creates the very design of community that is born out of that flow.

There is an underlying structure that creates the structure of flow. For the river, it is the rocks, it is the ravines, and the vertical drop that creates the waterfalls and rapids. For us, there is the underlying structure of reality, the underlying structure of who you are and who I am, how we are made and from whence we come. We do not have to figure that out, but it shows itself in the structure of the flow among us and in the structure of how we relate collectively. That underlying structure shows itself as the flow of Creation moving through us when it is surging as a mighty river. It shapes us, it brings us together, it sends us apart in the mighty river.

There is no answer for humanity outside of that flow. Today, what is happening in the world is that the old ways that we have structured ourselves and structured culture are not working. What is being unleashed through us is the very current of Creation that is reshaping us. It is reshaping us inside; it is reshaping us in the collective spaces we share.

The flow is the power of love, which is the power of the universe. It is Universal Love. That is the very nature of Creation and the very nature of this flow.

This flow brings wisdom. It is telling us things. It has the very DNA of Creation within it, so that we begin to know things in this flow that we cannot know otherwise. We can sound smart in the sloshing-around state; we can have what sound like brilliant solutions to all the problems that are present in humanity, but which actually do not solve our problem of themselves. All those brilliant social solutions, all the technological solutions, the scientific solutions, the philosophical solutions, do not solve the problems that we are having unless we do something about this vertical flow.

And really, the only thing we have to do about it is open to it, because within the flow is the wisdom and guidance of the Creator. We are not left to just make it up ourselves out of our own human minds. The wisdom of the Creator is in the flow.

There is a part of letting the flow of Creation move through us that is about the courage to let it out, and the courage to bring it to another person. Here is a poem by David Whyte called “The Truelove.” He speaks about loving fiercely. I do believe we are called upon to be warriors of the truth of love; warriors because we will not stop and we will not give up. We bring it courageously to one another. We offer the opportunity for the people around us not just to touch that fierce love that we are bringing but to let it in. Because this current is not meant to come solely from the inside. It is meant to be shared in our collective space.

*There is a faith in loving fiercely
the one who is rightfully yours,
especially if you have
waited years and especially*

*if part of you never believed
you could deserve this
loved and beckoning hand
held out to you this way.*

*I am thinking of faith now
and the testaments of loneliness
and what we feel we are
worthy of in this world.*

*Years ago in the Hebrides
I remember an old man
who walked every morning
on the grey stones
to the shore of the baying seals,*

*who would press his hat
to his chest in the blustering
salt wind and say his prayer
to the turbulent Jesus
hidden in the water,*

*and I think of the story
of the storm and everyone
waking and seeing
the distant
yet familiar figure
far across the water
calling to them,*

*and how we are all
preparing for that
abrupt waking,
and that calling,
and that moment
we have to say yes,
except it will*

*not come so grandly,
so Biblically,
but more subtly
and intimately in the face
of the one you know
you have to love,*

*so that when we finally step out of the boat
toward them, we find
everything holds
us, and confirms
our courage, and if you wanted
to drown you could,
but you don't*

*because finally
after all the struggle
and all the years,*

*you don't want to any more,
you've simply had enough
of drowning
and you want to live and you
want to love and you will
walk across any territory
and any darkness,
however fluid and however
dangerous, to take the
one hand
you know
belongs in yours.*

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