

March 26, 1998

- *Human form compared to a pitcher*
- *Accept problems as gifts*

God is with each of you and fills your souls with that Presence. This is not just a pleasant remark—it is an absolute truth. You are being filled—filled with life, filled with a loving presence, filled with a spiritual warmth that we see. We are aware of that loving presence and warmth. As you know, it is physical to us as a myriad collection of colors with tremendous intensity.

You are filled as a vessel of water is filled. A pitcher holds water, but its purpose is not merely to hold water but to deliver it, to spread it outward as sustenance, as a life-giving force. And so it is with your spiritual growth, a continued awakening. You are indeed the temple for your soul. But just as the pitcher's purpose is not limited to containing water, your purpose is not limited to being the house of your soul. It is for you to allow that warmth, that presence to be spread outward beyond the confines of your physical presence. You have been given souls not just to allow your souls to develop but to provide a life-force directed outward.

Your bodies have much in common with the pitcher. The pitcher is visible, but the content is not so clearly seen. You are visible, but it is more difficult to perceive your spiritual essence. The same is true for all people. Looking outward, it is easy to see all the pitchers lined up and yet have no understanding of the beauty and value of that which is contained within. When you recognize the purpose of the pitcher being greater than mere storage, the pitcher takes on far greater significance. The same is true for all individuals. The value of every individual goes far beyond serving as a home for the spirit.

Denying the presence of water within the pitcher reduces the importance of that pitcher to being a mere ornament. Denying the spiritual content of all human beings reduces the value of what is seen to be merely a visible presence though of no lasting value. The water and the soul share a unity beyond what is readily apparent. There is no form to the water. It takes the shape of its container, but when released can spread to great distances. The same is true of your souls. As you release your soul's character, your soul's influence, the soul takes on significance far greater than yourselves.

We are much like the water that has been released from the pitcher. Your souls existed before they entered the human form, just as water existed in another form before being poured into a pitcher. If you recognize the truth of this analogy, you cannot approach fellow human beings as mere objects, as mere challenges, or even as supporters of your efforts. Every individual takes on far greater significance in life. All individuals become equal in their importance. There is no pitcher that is more important than another regardless of the color or shape or material. They are really all the same.

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Tonight you have spoken and shared experiences concerning the nature and ailments of the body. You have described pitchers that have chips on them, whose paint may be partly hidden, but these, despite the immediacy, are superficial in substance. What is important is really what is everlasting—it is the content; it is what is contained within; it is their souls.

[Note: On March 24, 1998, two boys, ages 11 and 13, fired on their Jonesboro, Arkansas, middle school from nearby woods after pulling the fire alarm, killing four girls and a teacher, and wounding 10 others.]

There is great tragedy in the killing of youngsters that you spoke of. It is a tragedy that those children were denied an opportunity to grow into adults, but as you know, the eternal content remains undiminished. It is freed, and it continues to reach far beyond the limits of the body. For the families of those children, there is understandable bitterness and remorse and great sadness. But eventually each family will learn to recognize that the presence of that child in its permanent form is undiminished and constantly surrounding them. It takes time, it takes healing, it takes a transformation from asking God "why" to reach the point of listening and no longer asking. But in listening, those families will ultimately find comfort. Peace for those families takes on a very different meaning now.

Suffering and questioning, fearing and wondering are all a part of your human lives. It is these elements that specifically distinguish much of what differentiates your lives from ours. There is no suffering for us. There is no effort expended by us in asking. Much effort is exerted listening. It is the most difficult kind of prayer. It is the most elusive activity that humankind can perceive. The most productive activity becomes inactivity. The most beneficial moments are when you are listening, for it is in receiving that you are given the ability to reach outward. It is in hearing that you are given insight to speak. If you sense God's presence, if you believe in God's guidance, you will be directed, and your actions will be a result of what you have heard and not what you have wanted willfully.

So it is in being passive that you become active. It is in receiving that you give, just as it is in being loved that you learn what it is to be loving. It is through the compassion of others that you become compassionate. It is in being filled that you are able to fill.

Your lives are filled with so many experiences, those that bring joy and those that bring pain or questioning or frustration. But all of those experiences can be turned by you into strength that provides insight and a sense of purpose, direction. Your lives become valuable, therefore, not by what you will for them, but from what you learn, what you receive, what you hear, what you absorb, what you experience. There's where the depth of the human experience is given character and purpose.

You all know that problems are said to be stepping stones to solutions. It is said so often and in so many different ways that most individuals tend to laugh it off as a trite

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expression having relatively little meaning. The truth is there is great wisdom in that. The problems that you deal with give you perspective, they give you humility, they give you respect for others, they give you a more perceptive understanding of what the experience of life really is. If you are sheltered from those experiences, if you are sheltered from understanding fear and anxiety and frustration and anger, your lives are shallow and have little impact, and your souls are restricted in their capacity to develop. The soul that resides with an individual who overcomes many obstacles also becomes stronger, more resilient, and more able to provide strength.

Your lives, therefore, contain an incredible potential, and that is the potential to transform trials and frustrations into triumph, into joy, into a firm affirmation of a place within God's view. You must allow yourselves the opportunity to deal with these difficulties. They are not negatives in life. They are not just hurdles to be gotten over and forgotten. They really do provide you with great strength. They give you insight into what it means to be a part of the human condition rather than being somehow aloof, beyond or separated from it.

Yes, it is true, you can welcome frustrations, you can welcome your fears, you can welcome your anger, you can welcome your pain and your suffering. It is difficult to convince you to rejoice in those occurrences, but if at least you can accept their necessity and their ultimate value, then there is no victory achieved over your soul. Your soul flies victoriously over the difficulties. Allow yourself to be strengthened by those challenges. Do not deny discouragement, but let yourselves rise above that discouragement. Do not deny yourselves pain, but allow yourselves to get beyond the pain to find the joy. If you have never experienced a long night, you'll never understand the joy of a sunrise. The sunrise has little meaning without the dark that precedes it.

Your life is filled with dark and light; it is filled with challenges and growth. Welcome these contrasts, recognizing that without one it is impossible to experience another. Your lives are enriched because of the experiences you endure. That enrichment provides meaning and focus and beauty. Welcome that beauty, for it is a direct reflection of God's light upon each of your lives.

Thank God for your life. Thank God for the experiences you are given. Thank God for the water and for the vessel and for the opportunity to pour out that which has been given to you.

We bless you with God's presence, with our prayers, and we bless you with joy and gratitude and love.

Amen.