

David's Desk #187 Audio Companion

December 2022

James: Hi, David.

David: Hi, James!

James: Welcome to another David's desk audio companion.

David: Thank you, thank you for doing this.

James: Oh, it's my pleasure. So this is coming out in the month of December, and we are going to be talking about the Christ.

David: Yes, I usually try to do some kind of themed essay in December and something relating to the holidays. And it just seemed to me that this time around, saying something about the Christ would be appropriate.

James: I'm very much interested in that as well, David.

David: What I want to explore is this relationship between the universal and the individual or the specific. In the New Age movement—and this may be true for a number of alternative spiritual movements over the past 40-50 years—there was a tendency to abstract the Christ out of the life of Jesus, and to talk about the Christ or Christ Consciousness, or the Cosmic Christ. Part of that I understand was because there were people who no longer felt at home with traditional Christianity and the emphasis on Jesus, but they did feel a deep connection to the idea of the Christ and all that's good for.

Also, some of these teachings were coming out of a place of affirming that what Jesus manifested was not a singular event, but something that each of us can partake in as well, that the Cosmic Christ or Christ Consciousness is inherent in each of us and so we have the ability to participate in that manifestation.

I felt at times—and not only about this topic—but at times that the thinking in the New Age movement and in similar progressive or alternative spiritual movements was to privilege the transpersonal, to privilege the universal. Again, it's understandable why this can happen because it turned something that otherwise would be a unique event tied to a single individual or to a single religion into something that people could share whatever their religious background and anywhere in the world. The Cosmic Christ, as the name implies, is universally available to everyone.

But in this movement away from the specificity of Jesus's life and the story of Jesus, I feel something can get lost. On the other hand, we know that in the Christian tradition, particularly amongst some of the churches in their teachings, the emphasis goes the other way and you have what in effect is a kind of Jesusology, as differentiated from a Christology, and the great deal of emphasis is placed upon the individuality of Jesus and everything gets collapsed into this one singular individual.

There's these two extremes that the idea of the Christ or of Jesus Christ gets pulled into: one become very exclusionary and the only way I have of participating with it is through belief, or devotion; the other can become very diffused and expansive and then it starts to lose its specific meaning. Even more than that, it takes on the order of a universality that in its own way places it out of people's reach.

In either case, you have something that could be of valuable heritage for all humanity being placed out of reach, either by it being confined to a particular time and place in history, or by being rendered so universal and cosmic that we may feel we're not worthy to aspire to it or certainly not worthy enough to embody it, and the only way we can embody it is by following some particular path of training and development and skill and so on that will make us able to embody the Christ Consciousness.

Different traditions, different teachings and teachers may have different paths that you need to follow in order to get to that place.

But in both cases, something is lost to time: it's either there in the past or it's there in the future, and someday, I'll evolve enough that I can be part of the Christ, but probably not today.

James: This is a really nice way of presenting that because here we are in the middle between the past and the future, and what better place to stand than in the middle to begin to embody the Christ within our own lives. Incarnational Spirituality provides a vehicle for that journey.

David: Yes, I feel so. I have an interesting story: a very close friend of mine back in the 60s and 70s was herself a spiritual healer and fairly deeply into progressive spirituality. I wouldn't call it New Age spirituality, but certainly a very holistic approach. She had come out of a very orthodox background. It wasn't exactly evangelical, but it was a small sect of Christians where the teaching was very restrictive. So she had moved beyond that. She just said, "that's in my past." It had been very Jesus-oriented. She opened her heart and mind to the Christ, to the universal experience, and that was what she drew on for her healing work. But then she developed a very severe disintegration, a progressive disintegration of the vertebra in her spine. The doctor told her well, we're going to have to fuse the vertebrae together, and you decide if you want to spend the rest of your life standing up or sitting down, because you won't be able to do both.

So she was praying about this. She heard a voice and the voice said, "Pray for Jesus's help. Ask for Jesus's help." In effect, go back to the devotional belief system that you had as a child and turn to Jesus. At first, she resisted that because he's put a lot of energy into escaping from those restrictions. But eventually she gave in and she began praying to Jesus and her spine healed by the next time she went in to see the doctor. They did x-rays and the doctor said, there's no sign of disintegration here, you have a perfectly healthy spine. He couldn't understand it. He thought maybe the x-rays had gotten switched with someone else's. She'd had a complete healing.

The interesting thing was, she just knew that she wasn't being asked to go back into this restrictive belief system; she was being asked to honor that particular specific manifestation of the Christ that had taken place through the person of Jesus and to take it out of this universal context and anchor it into something that was within a human scale.

So I think about that story at times. Certainly in Incarnational Spirituality, our emphasis is on both, as you say. But there are specifics about our individual lives—the fact that we are where we are and we're engaging with the things around us. We're not universal beings in that sense, we're not distributed throughout creation. That's very important because the universe aspects of ourselves then have a way of making themselves active in the world through our specificity and through our uniqueness.

If Jesus had simply been an abstract philosophical concept, I doubt Christianity would have spread the way it did. It was the fact that here was the universal making itself the particular; here was God becoming an individual. Jesus said it quite plainly: Everything I have done, you can do also. He wasn't taking up a position of exclusivity, he wasn't saying, I can do this and you can't. His life was him was saying, I'm this specific manifestation, but you can be a specific manifestation as well, and I think that's the part of the Christian tradition that tends to get lost in these two extremes.

James: Yeah, I can see that. If you're facing to the left, you won't see behind you to the right, and vice versa, but you're in the center, you can actually see both directions. For me, what you're saying with this story is that I am a sacred being. There is specificity here and the universal is taking form in the body suit of James and in the interaction of James bringing the sacred down to everyday ordinary life. It becomes extraordinary when that understanding is embodied and expressed. The world is alive, and we this innate ability to have one foot in both the physical and in the spiritual and subtle realms. It's a wonderful place to be, and it's a wonderful place to explore from, particularly when we're looking at the life of Jesus and the actions of Jesus, and what's involved in the Christ event, and the

Cosmic Christ coming in, and the qualities that were embodied within the being of Joshua Ben Joseph. If we can aspire to those expressing those qualities, that's a good place to begin, as well as from where we are as understanding ourselves to be an expression of the sacred.

David : Yes, I believe so. I think it's an interesting contemplative point for us to ask, in what way am I a begotten son or daughter of the Sacred? We give that status to Jesus—here was God's child—but we're all God's children. Part of the challenge here, and I think part of the mistake we make is that we look at the action of the Christ through the life of Jesus as made up of miracles—he feeds the 5000, he raises the dead, he walks on water—and we associate the presence of this universal quality, of this sacredness with the miraculous. But we do it in a way that blinds us to the miracles of life that are always around us and to the miracles of life within us.

My original subtle contact, whom I named John, he used to say that at that point of interface where one person meets another, that's where God erupts. That edge of meeting is the place of miracles, and you don't know what the effects of that will be, If we take the intention of bringing our love and our regard and our honoring into that moment, and we see it as a sacred moment, as a miracle moment, who knows what can emerge out of that between the two people.

We not only abstract this universal aspect out of the human scale when we only say the Christ is the Cosmic Christ; we do the same thing when we say it's only associated with what we think of as the miraculous, that which somehow transcends natural law. Then we fail to see the sacred in the ordinary, we fail to see the many miracles that are going on within us and around us at all times. The great truth to me is that the universal yearns to express through infinite diversity, it seeks the particular as much as the particular seeks the universal; it's a yearning on both sides. It's a yearning that is fulfilled when each side appreciates the other and says, I'm worthy of the other. I don't have to hold on to my specificity at the cost of my universality or vice versa.

James: When meeting someone and in that moment, you recognize the beingness or the soul of the other person, that connection with both the specificity of the person and the universality of the expression of the soul coming into being, I can feel the sacred erupting in that moment of being seen and of seeing in that moment. In our really busy times, that we're coming into all the pressures of shopping and visiting and doing that just to have a conscious moment, when you realize the clerk that you're working with to try to find that special gift—that's the sacred and it's the clerk. In that moment when you see that, the sacred erupts. For me, it erupts in that moment as well.

David: I feel this is an important concept at this time in our history because we see all around us the challenges of the specificity of human life trying to grasp how to relate harmoniously with larger, more universal or planetary dimensions. How do individual humans relate to Gaia, for example? How do we relate to what's happening in the natural world? How can human society with its various specific characteristics come into a harmonious relationship with this larger planetary environment and larger planetary spirit?

There's a challenge here of how to relate the universal and the specific that echoes through this whole story of the birth of Jesus and the life of Jesus. The interesting thing is that so I'm told, Catholicism has Incarnational Spirituality as well. It has something actually called "Incarnational Spirituality," which is very different from what we're teaching. But what it is, is a study and exploration of the way God incarnated through Jesus and the power of the incarnation as a redemptive act.

There's this interesting recognition of the power of this convergence of universal and specific, coming together to fulfill each other. It's been held through the centuries in a religious context, but it's actually not a religious phenomenon; it's a phenomenon of life, and it's something that we're all engaging with in one way or another.

When we bring that to our attention, we heighten our awareness of that, then I think we place ourselves in a better position to enable that merging to take place, to find the universal within ourselves and experience its appreciation of our unique particle-ness, and vice versa, and not getting into the sense of one being too pure for the other, or one being unworthy of the other.

James: Just on a side note, David, would you lead either a simple prayer or a simple reflection that actually helps place the person into that contemplative appreciation?

David: I'm always a little hesitant because I feel these kinds of prayers really need to emerge out of the heart and mind of the individual rather than something that they take in from the outside that somebody else has done.

James: It's like a contemplative moment in the Christmas season, that just invites them into this space where what needs to emerge can emerge.

David: It would be something like:

May the birth of the light that we celebrate at this season, be the birth as takes place within me. May I be the cradle for that light in all the aspects of my life, and may I be the creche through which the universal makes itself known in blessing to the world.

James: That's beautiful David,

David: I think mainly I want us to celebrate the coming together of the personal and the universal as a partnership. That that's what we celebrate this time of the year. It's a partnership that our world truly needs. It transcends any particular religious holiday. It speaks to the holiness that is within each of us throughout the year and the partnerships we create, and can create at any time, the spirit of wholeness that pervades the universe.

James: Thank you, David. What a lovely presentation for Christmas.

David: Thank you. I wish everybody the most wonderful and merry and blessed of holidays.

James: And thank you for the gift of that little blessing that you shared with us.

David: Thank you, James.

James: Okay, bye for now.

David: Bye bye, my friend.