

## **Subject: Sermon Ideas -- Heart to Heart Resuscitation**

### **Heart to Heart Resuscitation by Ram Dass**

**It's evident that we are living in interesting times**, and I think we're feeling that we understand better every day why that was considered a curse by the ancient Chinese. We're getting hit from every direction. Everything is shaky: social structures, political structures, economic crises, ecological crises---all of it changing, all destabilizing at once. In the presence of human unconsciousness, what is generated by all that change and instability is fear. People get frightened, and when they get frightened, they use certain mechanisms for coping with it. They go into denial---"Global warming is not really happening." They look for a talisman to ward off the evil, like holding up a cross against a vampire, so they become fundamentalists or they become ultra nationalists. There's more ethnic prejudice, more racial prejudice.

**It's not just in the U.S. ---It's a worldwide thing.** Everybody's scared. The poor are scared of the rich, and the rich are scared of the poor. Let me share this little sequence of events with you: About 10 years ago, I spent some time in Guatemala doing work with the Seva Foundation. I was working with the Guatemalan women, women who had lost everything---their homes, their villages, their husbands, their sons---to the armies of the Guatemalan government (which was, incidentally, being kept in power by the U.S.). The women were living in constant fear that the armies would come back and kill more of them and drive them off their land; they lived with that fear all the time.

I left Guatemala and flew to Los Angeles. I had a gig in Hollywood, and I was staying in Brentwood, which is a very fancy suburb of Hollywood, where the rich live. I drove down this street in Brentwood, this quiet avenue. In fact, it was too quiet; I realized there were no human beings anywhere in sight. There were little plots of well-tended grass alongside the street, and next to that, big walls and electronic gates, so all you saw from the street was a row of high walls. And on each little plot of grass in front of the wall was a sign that the security company had installed---a very vivid sign, with big black letters on a red background, saying, "ARMED RESPONSE!" Just think about that, I mean, here you are, you've finally made it, you've got it all---and you have to hide behind a big gate.

It was a strange flip. I'd been in Guatemala, where the poor women were scared that the army, in the service of the rich was going to come and murder them; and I'd flown to a place where the rich were hiding behind their walls, afraid that the poor were going to come and murder them.

**Gross economic disparity is a profoundly destabilizing force in the world.** It's been called the "North-South Issue," because so many countries of the Northern Hemisphere are "haves," and so many of those in the Southern

Hemisphere are “have-nots.” And it’s only getting worse. The disparity between the rich and the poor is growing, and in the meantime we’re taunting people with all the things they see on TV, with all the things they’ve been carefully trained as consumers to want, while at the same time we’re giving them fewer and fewer opportunities to break out of their circumstances, to break out of racial or economic suppression. It’s a recipe for destabilizing things.

Now the interesting question is, “How could a society that is experiencing the pain we’re in not be looking for solutions? How could it not want to do that?” The problem is, when there is worldly power, then there is also a vested interest in preserving that power, in not upsetting the apple cart. So instead of a search for solutions, we see more massive levels of denial. Nobody’s willing to bite the bullet and propose real solutions, because it might mean we’d have to give up something we enjoy, and we don’t quite want to do that.

But try though we might to wish them away, we see the changes happening, we watch the fear being created, and we can’t hide from it all. In the face of all that, the question we need to ask ourselves is whether there is any place we can stand in ourselves where we can look at all that’s happening around us without freaking out, where we can’t be quiet enough to hear our predicament, and where we can begin to find ways of acting that are at least not contributing to further destabilization. I think that’s a fair request.

That place, that new perspective is what I call the “soul-view.” Let me share with you this little model I’ve worked out about who we are as human beings. I call it the “Three-Plane Consciousness Model.” If I were to take a picture of who I see you to be, the picture would show three “I’s”---three different levels of who you are, planes on which you have an identity.

Number One is what I call ego, that’s the “I” we all know very well, the plane of the body, mind, and personality, of all those things we think we are. Number Two I call the soul; the soul measures time not in days and years but in incarnations, and it’s the “I” that was around before we as egos were born and that will be around after we as egos die. And Number Three is...just Number Three. We all have different names for it, and wars are fought over what to call it, so I avoid all that by just calling it Number Three.

I see our task as learning to live on more than one of those planes simultaneously, experiencing ourselves as egos and souls at the same time. And since “you got to be one to see one,” once we are resting in our souls, then we will see others as souls as well. Then when we look into another person’s we’ll say, “Are you in there? I’m in here. Far out!”

When we are able to look behind even that identity as soul, we’ll see that we have still another identity because we are also Number Three. That’s the mystic “I,” because in Number Three there’s actually only one of us. Your Number

Three isn't merely *like* my Number Three---They're the same thing. "*Sub ck*," my guru used to say; "It's all one."

When we are creating social action out of that kind of consciousness, it's coming from a totally different space, a different motivation, than when it's coming out of our egos with all their conflicting wants and needs. Now it's no longer, "I will relieve your suffering," because it's all just our suffering. If my right hand is in the fire, my left hand just naturally pulls it out. It goes beyond empathy---it's the experience of oneness. It's a different consciousness.

**That change in consciousness is what the world needs.** I believe that the basic institution for social change is the individual human heart and that we change hearts one by one through a process I call "heart-to-heart resuscitation." My guru, Neem Karoli Baba, gave me heart-to-heart resuscitation; he awakened my heart; he kindled that love in me. Larry Brilliant, a guru-brother of mine said, "What astounded me when I was around Maharajji wasn't that he loved everybody. After all, he was a saint, and saints are supposed to love everybody: What astounded me was that when I was around Maharajji, *I* loved everybody." It's the kind of love that's contagious---It's passed from heart to heart to heart, from soul to soul to soul.

**And it encompasses everybody.** I know---there are certain people around whom it's very hard to keep your heart open. You probably have your own list; I know I have mine. Nowadays one of the names on my list is Dubya. I find it very hard to keep my heart open to him, to remember that he's a soul, too. So here's what I do: I have a *Puja* table, a little altar, in my home. I take a picture of somebody like Dubya, and I put it on my *Puja* table. So I have a picture of Christ, and a picture of Buddha, and a picture of my guru---and a picture of Dubya. In the morning I light my candle, and I light my incense, and I greet everybody---"Good morning Christ, "and Good Morning Buddha, "and "Good morning Maharajji"---all so sweet and loving---and then, "Hello, Dubya." I see how far I have to go in keeping my heart open.

**If our actions are to be truly compassionate,** that's the kind of change in consciousness that's required. If our actions are truly to lessen suffering in the world, and not just shift it around a little, they have to come from the deepest quietest spaces of our hearts. Acting from that deep consciousness is the most profound social change possible, and it's a change that each one of us, individually, can make. Peace isn't something "out there." Peace comes from within and then spreads out into the world. The greatest social action we can accomplish is to dig deep into our hearts until we find that new consciousness, that place of peace. That's the antidote to terrorism, because as Christ said, "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

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**Ram Dass** has led the life of seeker and traveler, teacher and social activist for 45 years. The quality of his consciousness is legendary, not only for the words spoken, but because of the spell that is somehow invoked in his company.

Ram Dass is well known for his experimentation with LSD and his anthem book of the late '60s "Be Here Now". But his life works include much more than these. Early on he created the Prison Ashram Project, introducing deep spiritual work in prison. To the taboo surrounding death & dying in this culture, he responded with the Dying Project, introducing dying people to other planes of consciousness. Noticing the need to combine social action with spiritual motive, Ram Dass co-created the Seva Foundation, working with doctors and activists in India, Nepal, Guatemala and here in the US. He has worked with business people in the Social Venture Network, and with Creating Our Future, a spiritually questing organization for teenagers, among many other causes. The common theme in all of these projects has been the application of spiritual principles to social realities.

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