

Meditation

LOVING KINDNESS meditation between now and the election, a 100 day challenge. Prayer doesn’t change outcomes, it changes us...

May I be filled with loving kindness.

May I be free from suffering.

May I be well.

May I be at peace. May I be joyful.

To those you love:

May you be filled with loving kindness.

May you be free from suffering.

May you be well.

May you be at peace. May you be joyful.

To those you find challenging:

May you be filled with loving kindness.

May you be free from suffering.

May you be well.

May you be at peace. May you be joyful.

To those who most need it in this moment:

May you be filled with loving kindness.

May you be free from suffering.

May you be well.

May you be at peace. May you be joyful.

May all beings be filled with loving kindness.

May all beings be held in loving kindness.

May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings be well.

May all beings be at peace. May all beings be joyful.

Message:

- This talk will not be about Jim's miracle of *A Course in Miracles*. :-D But when Jim texted with the news that he and Kay had to cancel their trip, and the talk was mine today, my first thought was "Well, it'll take a miracle!"
- Our whole family— multiple generations— quote lines from the movie, *Princess Bride*, like we were in it! The scenes with Billy Crystal as Miracle Max, and Carol Kane as his wife are some of my favorite moments in a favorite movie. "Do you think it will work?" "Eh, it'll take a miracle!" But this is also not a talk about *Princess Bride*. :-D

What do miracles look like?

A miracle is not defined by an event. A miracle is defined by gratitude.

— Kate Baerstrup

Matthew 14:13-21

Feeding the Five Thousand

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15 When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

16 Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." 17 They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." 18 And he said, "Bring them here to me." 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

"They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

Each gospel shares this story of feeding the hungry crowd. There are slight variations, but they all share the same basic narrative arc:

- Crowds have followed Jesus and he has performed miracles of healing

- It's growing late and the disciples want to send the crowds back into surrounding villages to find food since they have only a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish
- Jesus admonishes them, "You give them something to eat."
- Then Jesus gives thanks to "heaven"; he prays and blesses the food
- There is enough left over to fill 12 (or 7!) baskets

This has long been one of my favorite Jesus miracle stories. Because what I picture happening is the spread of generosity: Jesus paused to give thanks, and it opened up the crowd to share what little they had. One fisherman and his wife pull out another loaf, and another fish or two. Someone passes along the figs they'd brought, or shares a bit of cheese. The mamas and grandmas gather little ones and make sure they have a bit of bread and soon "5000 men, besides women and children" have eaten their fill, with abundance to spare. The disciples fret, Jesus prays, people are fed. It'll take a miracle!

A miracle is not defined by an event. A miracle is defined by gratitude.

- Miracle of "brother's christmas" and mom and dad giving part of that gift to their friends in the same financial boat who needed new tires
- A rescue dog or cat finding the just right person to love, and the love that stays with you when you say good-bye to that four-legged beloved
- Friends driving for hours to just to give you a hug at your loved one's funeral, and then showing up to sit, to laugh and cry over memories
- Finding a blessing that was oh so deeply disguised as heartbreak
- Finding a community that feels like home, where together, we commit to our ongoing spiritual transformation– and the transformation of our world

Terry Patten was a teacher, activist, author, and the founder of A New Republic of the Heart, an international community of practitioners committed to transforming the many global crises we face today. In an article on gratefulness.org, *[Gratitude, Grief and Finding Your "Yes!"](#)*, he writes in particular about the urgency of the climate crisis, but his wisdom is transferable– to crowds who need to be fed, to families and individuals facing loss of jobs, loss of loved ones...

“Our predicament presents us with a vast demand and limitless opportunity for growth. Our crisis seems overwhelming, and yet we live in a universe of awe-inspiring creative potential—in nature, in our fellow humans, in the evolutionary process, and certainly in ourselves.

The story of evolution is a story of miracle after miracle. We must simultaneously take in the magnitude of the problem—grieve for much inevitable suffering—and do what we can on behalf of creative solutions, on every scale. To do both requires great openness on our part—openness to growth and to creative responses that we didn’t know were possible. We give ourselves over to something that feels true. We magnify health and wholeness, even in the face of fragmentation—and in our trust of the larger process, we also become more effective... This process of growth is clearly never-ending.

The first stage of the journey into spiritual activism is grounded robustly in gratitude and appreciation. In the second stage, we awaken from denial, apprehend the enormity of the challenge before us, and allow a great grieving process to transform the soul. We benefit even from the awful moments of hopelessness—because despair is not just the end of our conventional hope. It is also the beginning point for a new possibility, a third stage—perhaps a kind of unreasonable affirmation.

In the passage from Matthew that directly precedes the story of the miracle of loaves and fishes, before Jesus looked with compassion on the hungry crowd, he is told of the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. I imagine now a Jesus, with heart heavy with grief, perhaps despairing at the challenges of teaching over and over again a message that often fell on ears and hearts unable to fully understand. But a Jesus who first gives thanks, then opens a crowd of thousands to the simple miracle of feeding each other.

How has your life been touched by the miracle of generosity? How have you noticed a hunger— a need for food, for kindness, for comfort, for laughter— and responded by offering your miracle of attention? *A miracle is not defined by an event. A miracle is defined by gratitude.*

May all beings know the miracle of loving kindness, the miracle of peace, the miracle of living with ease and joy, free from suffering. And may those miracles begin with our deepest gratitude for all that is. Amen.