



The Missing Peace

I

That's the first verse of "The Missing Peace," a song I wrote nearly 30 years ago, and have been singing ever since. It's about searching for and hopefully finding something missing in a life or in our lives. Occasionally people ask if the peace in the song is spelled "p-e-a-c-e" or "p-i-e-c-e." In the title its written "p-e-a-c-e" but the answer is that it can be spelled or heard either way because the peace we seek is sometimes tangible, other times it's something more spiritual and hard define, and often times it can be and is both.

For so long I've thought of myself as a seeker searching for something sorely lacking in myself as well as someone journeying to know the peace that comes from finally finding my way home, so for me the peace I've longed for, searched so long for can surely be described as both tangible and spiritual.

Something strange and startling happened not long ago while getting ready to share my life and career using these songs and stories. It was like I saw something out of the corner of my heart's eye or spirit's eye, sensed on some nearly indiscernible level something I had never truly known before, a feeling however fleeting that I was finally both whole and home, that somehow I had found my missing peace.

II

It's interesting how I reacted to that would be revelation. The truth is I got scared. Suddenly the image I've had of myself for so long of someone searching for some missing piece, the stories I've told myself for all these years that I was somehow flawed, suddenly may need to be revised and while nothing may appear different there is a fear that everything somehow is going to or have to change and that can be pretty scary. It also seems somehow pretentious to be saying out loud that I could be whole and home while at the same time there's a voice inside me yelling, "You're wrong"?

Then of course there's fear that comes with faith. How can I really know if it's true? After so many small steps of a long journey it seems to be coming down to a leap of faith that once I make I can't take back. Maybe the only thing scarier than that is allowing the doubts and fears to rule this moment and so choose to back safely away from the edge and not take the leap.

III

My favorite cinematic leaps of faith include Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid chased to a rocky ledge by a group of "who are those guys" on horses with Paul Newman's character asking Robert Redford's why he's so reluctant to jump.

"I can't swim," Redford replies.

"Oh, hell, the fall will probably kill you." Newman answers.

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And with that they take a profane flying leap together into what proves to be the liberating safety of a raging river.

Another leap I like a lot is Dorothy's much quieter and less literal one in the Wizard of Oz when she must have the faith and fully trust the ruby slippers she is wearing to finally transport her (magically) home again, to Kansas, to those she loves and those who love her.

I dare say the figurative leap that I've just taken is much less dramatic and magical than either of those yet it still may prove in its way to be (truly) life changing.

What's the aftermath of a leap of faith supposed to look like and how do I talk about it when the only thing that's different is a moment ago I was living in the world as someone searching for a missing peace and the next moment decide to live in that same world as someone whose found it? The truth is I don't know what it's supposed to look like or feel like but I want to find out and the only way I know how to do that is the same way I discover most things that have the potential to be life changing. That is to get up every morning "believing"...in this case believing I found some missing peace then choosing to live each moment as if that's true while at the same time testing and tempering that faith every chance I get which surely means acknowledging instead of ignoring the doubts that grow out of such changes. There is a certain magic along with some mystery and a lot of mundane in thinking this way and that's okay because I know as I say it that the idea is alive and somehow that matters a lot right now.

It also feels important to say all this out loud as I begin to share my life and career in songs and stories; promising to do my best, to tell the truth, and leave nothing behind the curtain which in this case means to talk about a leap of faith. Time will tell what difference it all makes.

IV

In the fall of 1965 I came Seattle to the University of Washington and with the exception of a few years have called the Puget Sound area home ever since. Which means I've spent most of my life living in the shadow of the volcano that is Mt. Rainier and even on those days you can't see it it's still there. A year ago I managed to walk 70 miles of the Wonderland Trail the pathway around that peak. I'm still trying to figure out all it meant to encircle that magical mountain one step at a time. I know for sure the journey was priceless and well worth the effort.

In a similar way I feel I've lived much of my interior life in the shadow of a different kind of volcano and somehow feel I've persevered and had the time and the stubbornness to journey around that metaphorical and mythical mountain as well and I feel it's a good time to figure out and talk about all that such a journey has meant or might mean. As I say this I'm reminded of a quote by Cormac McCarthy that goes something like this, "It's our life's work to see ourselves for what we are and we still might be wrong." Even with that in mind it's still worth taking a peak.

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V

TS Eliot wrote, "We shall not cease from exploration/and the end of all our exploring/will be to arrive where we started/and know the place for the first time."

While hopefully this is not the end of all my exploring I feel that choice and chance and circumstance has somehow returned me to where one journey of a lifetime began in part to find a missing peace with a chance now to know and see this place if not for the first time at least with a fresh set of eyes and with an important missing peace.

I also return with over forty years worth of songs and a lifetime of experiences to look back on and to somehow weave together, to help blaze a trail around a lifetime, to help define such a journey, give meaning and hopefully some understanding to it. At least that's something I'm hoping for and finding out is part of the journey and discovery of this coming year.

VI

We each make our separate journeys yet like it or not we are also on a journey together. We ask individual questions and make personal quests while yearning for collective answers and searching for that which assures us we are not alone.

A significant part of all our journeys and so many questions are found in the stories we tell and the songs we sing. My hope is that the stories here may add a small voice to the collective campfire; the songs add their part to the common chorus. Songs and stories of someone searching for a missing peace sung and told now by someone choosing to believe he is finally whole and home.

The telling and the singing do not come with guarantees but simply possibilities that we are better for the journey, better for the sharing, perhaps able to see something out of the corner of our heart's eye that we simply would not or could not have seen if we were not sharing this journey.



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