

“Dear as Salt” Traci Hubbard

Shakespeare and Spirituality: “The Disinheritance of Ego”

(Contextual Story of the ending of Saul’s Life I Samuel 28 – 31) Isaiah 66:1; Luke 4:8-11

John Bright said that “An egotist is a self-made man who worships his creator”. I think that an egotist is someone who cares more about himself than me!

Dear God,

I wouldn’t be praying this prayer if I didn’t believe that Sharon really needs to be slapped up one side and down the other for her own good. Sharon had to leave our Bible study early tonight because she had two soufflés in her oven that she was donating to the Salvation Army’s silent auction. She said that she choose to make soufflés because one has to be quiet so they don’t deflate. She also shared that it was time to spoon feed egg custard to her quadriplegic blind and now mute 102 year old father – in - law who never liked her on a count of her father being a Yankee. She will also be completing the thesis for her second doctorate tonight which she has titled, “No One Has a Valid Excuse”. The reason why I believe Sharon needs my prayer is because when she rose from our study to go home, she had a piece of brown toilet paper hanging out of her right pant leg and not one person said a word. There were 36 of us in the room and not one person said anything to Sharon or anyone. We all just went home and the odd thing is that my phone hasn’t rung one time with a prayerful concern, bless her heart. So I am wondering if you will continue to keep blessing Sharon and help me

disinherit my lazy self-serving ego enough to tell her that I would really like to learn how to make a soufflé, as I would like to get a rise out of something in my life before I die and I would also like to ask Sharon to teach me how to love my father-in-law who, by the way, is still a picture of health at 99, and can shot put 35 yards with his one good arm (of course you remember he lost his other arm saving a German woman's life in WWII). I admit that I have despised him since the night of my wedding when he told my husband I was lazy and self-centered. I was just tired on my wedding night, that's all. It had been a long day. I always thought that man was psychic.

Oh yea, I don't know if this is important or not but Sharon is the only person in our Bible study that hasn't been divorced, don't you think that's strange? Anyway, God please bless Sharon, she really needs you and don't slap her too hard. She must be exhausted and I could really use some of her free advice. Amen. Traci

Maybe the nicest thing about egotists is that they do not participate in gossip because they are always talking about themselves.

ego eimi (ἐγώ εἰμι) "I am", "I exist", is the first person singular present tense of the verb "to be" in ancient Greek. "To be" means we are created with divine intention for holy purposes. To believe that we are intended for more than intimate personal relationships with God, others, nature and ourselves is taking a step outside of being centered in the divine which can only lead us to be centered in ourselves. Once we become self-centered, we forget our giftedness and purposes and become fixed upon the gifts and actions of others. Then, our hearts become filled with jealousy and envy because our

skewed perception lies to us and tells us that we are not enough for our journey. When we believe that we are not enough, what we are really saying to ourselves is that God isn't strong enough, powerful enough or gracious enough to enable us to become the people we need to be in order to fulfill and enjoy the purposes we were created to complete. And once we arrive at this screwed up version of our relationship with God, others and ourselves, all that we will be able to see is failure and this leads us to forsake the ways that lead to life and joy and our spirits shrivel up in the rages of regret, we become our own fools. Shakespeare loved the Geneva version of the Bible and we see that he was well versed in the story of Saul as the lives of his characters Hamlet, Macbeth and King Lear appear to be lifted out of the scriptures of I Samuel's story of the life of Saul. The end of I Samuel finds us with Saul full of jealousy, envy and hatred towards the heart of the young man David. He has consulted with a witch in Endor and Samuel has appeared to Saul and listened to him blame God for all of his misery. The prophet reminds Saul of his divine appointment as King of Israel and the purposes God gave him to fulfill which were accompanied by an instruction manual so Saul was without excuse for his choices. Saul's story ends like a Shakespearean tragedy as the things he could have easily defeated, had he stayed in relationship with the Holy, became the things that entrapped him to the point where he would rather kill himself than face the fact that all God desired was that he become a man after God's own heart. So Saul falls upon his own sword on the battlefield with the Philistines, the army whose greatest warrior and giant had been defeated by a boy with a rock who would now replace him as King and become a man after God's own heart. We know how the story

of David's life turns out and the grace in his story, in all of our stories is this: God has never expected perfection from us and we waste so much time looking at what others are doing instead of focusing on our purposes. We forsake beautiful and life giving relationships because we become full of false pride in our accomplishments. We waste sacred energy trying to manipulate others into admiring us so we can feel important and lovable because we don't really believe that we are. Like Saul and King Lear, we wear so many masks of being what we think will deliver us joy we are shocked to discover that the love and joy we so painfully desire has always been with us.

Defeat, disgrace, death and devotion. Loss, shame, demise and consecration. These are the words that describe the end of the Saul's and King Lear's story. Let us look at another story of a king that chose to end his life with devotion and consecration.

Once there was a mighty king who ruled his kingdom with a strong fist and a heart full of pride. The king loved his own reflection, especially when he saw himself through the lives of his daughters. When the king became older, he decided to call his three daughters into his chamber and speak with them so he could decide which daughter was worthy to become queen and rule his kingdom. His oldest two daughters were vapid and vain. They thrived on using whatever means possible to manipulate their father into getting whatever they wanted. They were beautiful and all the men in the kingdom desired them and they relished in being showered with attention and gifts. The king's youngest daughter was plain and simple. She was not concerned with the latest fashions or the who's who list in the kingdom. She spent much of her time with her

father, learning about his life and his beliefs and she educated herself on as many subjects as she could so she would be better equipped to serve others.

The king decided he would ask each of his daughters how much they loved him and their answers would determine the inheritance he would leave to them. His oldest daughter bowed gracefully in front of her father and answered, "I love you more than all the gold and silver in your kingdom". The middle daughter cried loudly, "I love you more than all of the beautiful buildings and theatres you have created". Then the youngest approached her father's throne, took his hand into hers and as she stroked her father's hand, she looked deep into his eyes and said, "You are as dear as salt to me". The older daughters began to laugh and the king was outraged! Salt! He could not believe what he was hearing as his youngest had spent the most time with him and he thought she loved him the more than anything. "What a fool I have been," thought the king. He banished his youngest daughter from the kingdom, leaving everything to his two oldest daughters.

Years went by and the king grew older and weak. One day, he and his daughters received an invitation to dinner from a kind and hard- working family in his kingdom.

The king accepted to the horror of his daughters who had never set foot on that side of their father's reign. The family welcomed the king and his daughters with a grand feast that was truly fit for a king. The King sat down to dine with the humble people and their sons and his daughter's joined them for dinner. The king's daughter's did not engage in conversation for they believed they were above conversing with this lower class of

people. The food looked delectable and after everyone was served, each person began to eat. The humble family enjoyed their food with hearty appetites but the king and his daughters were surprised to find that each dish, though beautifully presented, was sadly tasteless. When the lady of the home noticed that the king was not eating, she asked him what was wrong. The king replied, "Your feast is lovely to behold and I could not wait to eat what you had graciously prepared for us, however, I find this meal hasn't any flavour. Everything looks wonderful but it does not taste very good." The lady replied, "That is because we do not have any salt. Salt is so very precious and it is extremely expensive. I am sad to say that we simply cannot afford to purchase any salt even though we know it would give everything wonderful flavour." The king's heart fell and he immediately realized that his youngest daughter had loved him the most. She had valued the things that were important and she was the daughter that cared about things that mattered. He looked upon the countenances of his oldest daughters at the table and found that their hearts were full of entitlement, judgement and arrogance. The king began to grieve for his youngest daughter and he longed to see her again. He didn't know where his daughter was and he was ashamed that he had allowed his pride and selfish desire to be admired to blind him to the true love his youngest daughter held for him. Just then, as his heart was breaking, a young woman appeared from another room. She knelt down beside the king and took his hand into her own. Tears rolled down the king's face as he humbly looked at the faces of his hosts. He looked into the face of the young woman he recognized as his daughter and said, "You are as dear as salt to me." The young woman fell into the king's chest and said, "Father!" The king dropped to his

knees and swept his daughter up into his arms, hugging her and stroking her hair.

Realizing his mistake, the king thanked his hosts and immediately returned to the castle and changed his will. He left his kingdom to be ruled by the kind heart of his youngest daughter. The older daughters were filled with jealousy and hatred as their youngest sister's heart revealed the greed inside their own. The youngest daughter had disinherited her selfish ego and by doing so, she inherited her father's heart and kingdom.

This is the story of King Lear through the pen of a children's author who wrote the book, "Dear as Salt".

Our texts today remind us that all we have, ourselves, one another, our gifts, our provisions and our beautiful world, all that we have finds its beginning in God. And God is the sustaining force that keeps all things together for good for those who humbly rise up into their gifts and callings of God. Life will be hard sometimes, giants will appear, others will seem more successful, jealousy will tempt us, pride will trip us up but if we devote ourselves and consecrate ourselves into pursuing a relationship with the One who made us, we are promised that we will not be disappointed. When we are lost and when we fall, nothing will be able to destroy our hope because our hope is in the heart of God who loves us as dear as salt and longs to transform us into people who are full of divine flavour. King Saul and King Lear lost their lives because of their pride. The king in the children's story saved his life because he fell to his knees and was happy to learn and accept his lesson. The way to build a kingdom is the way we need to build

relationships, one day at a time, with just enough salt to heal our wounds, flavour our speech and preserve our hearts for the day when we see God face to face and we hear the Sacred say, "Well done my good and faithful servant. Welcome home for all that is mine has always been yours." May we become authentic people who encourage one another to become people who are more concerned with how we love others rather than how much we are loved by others. If we will disinherit our lesser egos like Jonathon, King's Saul's son, and Cordelia, King Lear's daughter and choose to love unconditionally, like the youngest daughter in our story, we will know what love really means as we are being transformed into the salt of the earth. Namaste.