

THE MESSAGE IN CHARLOTTE'S WEB

Timeless truths are strong ligaments; sticky stuff connecting us in a living web. Being no respecter of persons, trying to escape them only tightens their grasp.

Anticipating Presidents Day and shopping for a DVD on Lincoln, my thoughts wandered to the last city council meeting, councilman Kardos' silence and the din of boorish flippant condescension by councilman Mraz when critiquing a voter's comment. My sadness was quickly interrupted by a toddler tugging at her mom's sleeve, pleading to see the movie "Charlotte's Web".

Mesmerized by the care worn face of Lincoln, I felt those timeless ligaments hold fast and the web tighten as I realized how much Charlotte and Lincoln knew about the tangled webs we often weave.

In the movie, after 'spin doctor' Charlotte weaves words in praise of Wilbur in her web, there is predictably "fifteen minutes of fame" for the little pig. Yet it quickly fades like the vapors from his unaltered fate, the farmer's winter smokehouse. Is this not so with life? Yet we humans love to do it. We "Charlotte-ans" weave tales of being "some pig", rave on our "radiance" or spin tapestries of how "terrific" we are.

Only the last word Charlotte spun was redeeming. It was a lesson regarding a crucial ligament in the web of life-humility. It is often the first ligament we tear.

Humility is an anchor essential to ground our lives. Yet addictive technology, moronic mass media telling us what we should be, and the disdain we have for human interdependence loosens that anchor. We seem ignorant of the meaning of the word.

Another great president, George Washington, was a humble fellow who neither faltered nor feigned weakness. He did not seek royal status and he understood the wisdom of being wary of kings and those who wished to be. Yet, how quickly do we reach for our own scepter and crown?

Charlotte and great leaders beseech us to ensnare ourselves in life enhancing humility.

Humbling oneself does not mean diminishing one's true value or falsely self deprecating. It means a sincere desire for all to strive for excellence. It means understanding the lie inherent in thinking that once I get "there", or once I have "it", life will be great. Humility is the wisdom to know that both the sizzle and the steak of life are the passionate pursuit of productive, creative and compassionate living-together.

Humility is the fullness we feel after a rewarding interaction filled with another's presence, and our absence. It is a belief in God; not the one we see in the mirror, root for in the sports arena, fawn over in the tabloids or groove to on our iPod. For some, humility is a foreign tongue too difficult to speak as in its alphabet the letter "I" is usually mute. It is a measuring rod reminding us of the smallness of our greatness

Humility is a divine attribute ranking up there with God's capacity for love, His unfathomable sense of humor and His incredible ability to take a punch. It is a direction; which can set ones' moral compass. Humility's bank account pays enormous dividends as you withdraw self interest. It is intellectual, fully appraised of what it does not know. Humility is a thermostat; programmed to know we are really not that hot.

Lincoln said to a nation at war with itself ...“Malice toward none; charity for all; firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right...to bind up the nation's wounds”

Each one of us is a nation of competing interests needing humility to broker our own lasting peace.

Humility self pollinates the soul. It understands how all are connected intimately by the silken threads of Charlotte's web. Maybe humility should be what is meant when saying, “Jesus H. Christ.” Perhaps that should be the middle initial of all who lead.

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