



The Sound of Rain

Supporting the work of Emily Carson

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Love

Transcribed from a sitting with Emily Carson, Monday, July 23, 2008

Love blinds the surest among us to all our certainties. Love blurs the edges and distorts the image of what you thought to be real, recreating it in the image of the very thing's essence. Love changes how you see things and makes that clearer. It can't transform you, but it can transform how you know, and so, what you know. Love defines things out of thin air, but erases all the definitions you thought you could rely on; it puts things in perspective so they inevitably look distorted to you. Love makes what is real appear as it is, indescribable, without the hard edges you put there, and in its core, benign and painless. Love can't lead you to itself; it calls your name but you have to look for it. It needs you but not as a thing it craves, only as a part of its very definition, an essence the same as its essence. Love can have no urgency, it can have no spiked words, it cannot be unkind; but you will have to learn something new about kindness to understand this. You will have to know what is really meant by hardness and why it is merciful sometimes to be penetrated. Love will get inside you because you have no solid boundary, you are porous in every way and love seeps in, filling you up from the inside as much as from the outside. Love lies in wait for you and will consume you with certainty as soon as you encounter it. Your death is assured because love will slay you; you will give in eventually to that embrace. Love hands you the keys to heaven, it wants you to have paradise, it even knows that you deserve it. But love can't make you enter that kingdom; you can stay in your illusions if you wish, though they rightly be called "hell." And love cannot damage you, but one day it will destroy you and leave no trace, no carnage. Love kills like that, like a clean beheading, and all identity gone; and then, at that precious moment, all there is is love, there is no you and no story and nothing up ahead. There is love backwards and forwards in space and time, in every direction permeating every being, every

thought, every bit of dust that you walk on and which you breathe. Love is all there ever was. To keep the truth as simple as possible, I can say just this one thing: Love is all there ever was.

Questions and Answers

Q: I've been pondering a one-word sense of myself, the word is delicate, and I felt that your talk about love began to answer some question that I have about that, because for me, when I'm in that flow of love I feel incredibly delicate, and when I'm out of it I'm just basically out of it, and I just want to know if you have something to say to me about that.

What do you appreciate about being in that flow?

...It's just a singular experience. It's just completely devoid of anything even remotely associated to judgment; it's just simple...and pure.

Why, then, do you allow yourself to give that up?

Out of a sense of obligation—it doesn't really matter to what, whether it's work or somebody: family, friend—and I follow that obligation...a sort of external obligation that I believe in....

And you think that what you are obligated to do means you must leave your own delicacy?

Yes. It's clearly a thought. ...If I feel it from my body upwards, I just don't do it, but if I think it...then I think I need to leave my delicacy.

There are few things you can't do while staying in your delicacy, that is true. You are sometimes, though not very often, obliged to do one of those things. But most of the time, either there is no obligation or there is no conflict between delicacy and what you must get done. I cannot give you a better description of what you lose by abandoning your own delicacy than what I already described in the opening talk. You need to take a disciplined approach to figuring out what exactly you are obligated to do and which of those obligations truly require you to abandon yourself. If you must

leave your delicacy for some short period, there is no reason why you need to stay gone, and this problem, the problem of not being able to return on your own, is as much a problem as not properly understanding that you could be delicate in most situations. You simply don't try to go back—not unless someone else prods you. You consider it a lost cause; you barely know what has gone wrong. But this has happened so many times—this disconnecting in the same way—that you should be able to find your way back without anyone else needing to tell you to do so. The gain would be all yours. In truth, it doesn't really matter how many times you leave yourself; it only matters how many times you return. If returning is your habit, then leaving starts to dwindle of its own accord. Love waits for you all the time. If you must take a few hours to do something that can't really accommodate your delicacy that is no reason you can't return to love immediately afterward; so you have lost a few hours, it really doesn't matter. As it is, you lose days, sometimes weeks, just because you go a little astray, you get confused, you have a thought and you follow it. You can't expect, at this point, that you will stay in that flow that you find, and so you must learn how to return. That is the practice you need the most. I have said to you so many times: nothing can harm you, no matter how vulnerable you become, no matter how delicate you are. Love itself is so delicate we almost don't even notice it. But it can't be damaged, not by any thing or any one, it can't be lessened, it is the essence of vulnerability which is never actually threatened. You are like that too in your delicacy. No matter how vulnerable you feel, it is only your sense of vulnerability, it is never true. Nothing can hurt you, T. Return to love's flow and try to bring your delicacy into your obligations.

Q: I've been feeling really unmotivated this summer to be practicing signing, which is what everybody in my class is supposed to be doing...and just yesterday I went into the advising office...to see kind of what my other options are, and if I did drop out of the program I could take...a year of classes and transfer to a college, so I'm kind of considering doing that.... I really do like sign language a lot, it just makes me confused...—I love watching it is what I love doing—but...why am I not picking my hands up to even do it? [So, the first part of my question is]...would I still be okay, eventually, if I decided to go into something else? And then the second part is, a week ago I was kind of frustrated with A. and I started looking on Craigslist and I did find a place that's right next to where I live...[with] two serious students, and I thought, maybe if I moved there I would be...more motivated; and also...I don't know if I'm still supposed to be in freefall...I feel good where I live, but I don't feel like I'm in freefall....

Your relationship is not stable, your future is not certain, and nobody is taking care of you. Because these things are true, if you are really attending to your internal experience, you will still find

something akin to freefall, even if it is not as acute as it has been. There is still enough uncertainty in your life to generate the feeling you already have at some deeper level that you're not really taken care of. Just search inside yourself for some feeling you have that things are unstable—that's the word I would use at this point rather than freefall. Of course you'll be fine if you go to college instead of continuing the course you're on. But I cannot tell you it would be much easier on you. You are not inclined to complete this coursework without structure. You actually could finish the program you started, but you have to design a study schedule for yourself. Find someone you can meet with or somewhere you can go to practice your signing, if that's what you choose to continue, and schedule that practice on a regular, ongoing basis. That's all you need to do to get back on track. Your lack of motivation does not indicate a problem with the course of study you've chosen, and there's no real problem with your housing situation. All you need to do is pay more attention to how you feel; there's enough there already for you to make use of. It's not better for you to switch to some other course of study or to be surrounded by different people, but either of those are things you can choose if you just want them. There is no right answer here, nothing that you're supposed to do or should do. If you choose to continue signing, you need a schedule for your practice. Whatever you do, you need a regular time you do nothing but feel into yourself, especially into your heart. That's my suggestion.

Q: Last week I went back to the place where the commune was where I lived as a teenager, and since then I've been remembering a lot of the feelings that were present there: intense shame for being rejected all the time—especially by women that I wanted—and the bliss of being around thousands of people that were just in love with life, really, just alive, and with that remembering, my own love for life, for God, and also the grief of having lost that community, having lost that paradise, and I'm just wondering what's relevant for me to know now about that experience.

How old were you when you left that commune?

About to turn seventeen.

Some of your memories are the memories of a child; a child sees things as brighter than they really were when they were bright and darker than they really were when they were dark, but always simpler, without nuance. But some of your memories are those of the person you still are, the grown person. The way you feel inspired and the way you long are parts of you you give little attention to these days. You sort of hope in the back of your mind that these things will come back the way they

were alive in you at that time, and when they don't seem to come back you just feel more despair and more self-hatred. I'm glad you went back and remembered something about yourself. Your longing for God has always been there, and it's like a candle that can't be put out; it's still burning inside you and nothing you do will ever diminish it. But you have to find it; you have to want to know that it's there. You don't want to know that it's there because you don't know what to do with something like that. You used to have such an easy answer to this question, what to do with longing for God. But now you have to make something up or find something on your own—nothing is given to you. Though it may have been easier on that commune, I guarantee you your experience of God can be richer now than it ever was then. Your life in many ways is the same. You fear and avoid rejection; perhaps now you are more successful than you were, but that doesn't keep you from your shame. And you long for God almost desperately sometimes; it's only that then you let yourself know this and now you hide that knowledge from yourself. Longing can't be a secret, F. Longing has to be owned. Everything you want can be had if you just know that you want. I would say to the child in you who remembers how bright things were that that same brightness and more is possible even now, even without that company, without that form. And to the child in you who still feels the pain of shame and rejection, I would say, all that passes, if you allow it, it leaves you. Once shame has diminished you then love takes over and claims you for itself. All that little boy ever wanted was to be held in love's arms, and shame is the only way there. I hope you will tell him that and help him to hear it. And I hope you will hear that God is like that for you. Just give up and He is all there is.

Q: ...I'm just wondering what is in my best interest to hear about my process and where I am.

Do you have any questions about what's going on with you, or where you're at right now?

...Not really; I guess I...feel like I just trust that this is all taking me to love....

The only thing you're not doing consistently enough is exposing your nakedness. That is my ongoing assignment for you. You have to be dirty, naked, and broken in front of people—it is as simple as that. There is a particular experience there which robs you of your pride and refuses your thoughts and so brings you right into love's care. But it isn't love the way you think it ought to be, it's love the way it is, and that is vast enough to hold all experience, whatever its nature, and powerful enough to be infinitely delicate without ever breaking. Love sees what happened to you and still smiles, and knows it to be no more significant or tragic or painful than the rustling of leaves or the way the wind whistles.

Everything, all form and all action, is the same in love's eyes, and so when love looks at you, disheveled, naked, and broken, it sees not purity but the fact that "disheveled, naked, and broken" doesn't matter. You are diminished because your pride demands that you be better than that, but love knows that there is nothing better than that, that pride is just an illusion, a set of lies we tell ourselves thinking that we need them. Love sees you as you are and knows there is nothing wrong with that, but if you never allow yourself to be seen then you can't have the experience of love's glance, the way it looks at you, the way it feels to be diminished and loved anyway. Let everyone see you. That is my ongoing assignment. Let everyone see you as you are.

Q: ...A lot of my process...is...focused around the energy of the man that I found a few months ago, and...last time I was here...we talked about the shame aspect and I haven't really done much with that yet...but one of the things that happens for me when I feel that energy in my body...is I feel like I've found a part of myself that's been missing and I finally feel quiet inside...and I guess I don't really know what my question is, but if you have anything to say about my process with this right now, that would be helpful.

Why are you not dealing with the shame of it?

I think part of it was...I went camping and also I've been sick...,circumstantial things, so I haven't been consistently at group every week to kind of get me there.

And when you feel the presence of that man in your body, do you not also feel the shame?

No I don't; I mean, I have felt that before, like the beginning of it...,I felt it coming, and it was around...being in bondage and...being in front of a huge group of people.

So when you feel it in your body, what exactly do you feel about him?

I feel really expanded...almost like my physical body expands, in my shoulders, just energetically...more strength, and...physically...more energy.

I don't want you to reach for an experience you don't have. I wouldn't advise you to seek out the shame at this point; it should come organically if that's the right thing for you to focus on. But I would advise that you make a more regular practice of visiting this person in you and let it be something you

do not only when you're alone but also when you're with other people. You need to be able to inhabit this strength that you already feel around people who you have not always been comfortable upsetting or crossing. You need to be this out in the world and not just in the sanctuary of your own home or in the sanctuary of your therapy group. You're glad that he is part of you right now and I don't want to take that away, but I would say if there is real strength, real power, and real energy inside you, even if the form feels foreign, then you should own that wherever you are, in all circumstances, whatever you're doing. If you bring this out in the world you'll learn a lot more about it. That's my suggestion.

Q: What would help me to cherish my own experience, particularly my outrage and anguish?

You think you are someone sweet, easygoing, mild-tempered, but in fact you're more like the character from a Greek tragedy, always tearing her hair out, always yelling or laughing or falling lustfully towards someone. You're not mild in any way; you don't resemble the person you identify with. It is your major problem. I can't teach you to cherish your own experience while you insist on being someone you're not. You have to want to be whoever you are—that is the key, that is the step that matters. You are so foreign to yourself at this point that losing the identity you have constructed for yourself seems to you like a real loss. You have never wanted to be a Greek heroine; you wanted to be a child that everyone liked. But you can no longer really live this lie comfortably because you know well enough that it is a lie. You have always lied about yourself, G., you were never the person you claimed to be. If you could become comfortable with that fact then you could become comfortable with the extremes of your experience. It's very painful to be a fake, and a very small loss indeed to part with an identity which was never yours. That's all you have to lose. But it must be lost or you can make no other progress. You want this, G. Somewhere inside you, you want this very much. Try to give yourself back to yourself.