



The Sound of Rain

Supporting the work of Emily Carson

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Forgiven

Transcribed from a sitting with Emily Carson, Sunday, October 30, 2011

Forgiven is the nature of all things. Elated and blessed, forgiveness already resides in all actions, all consequences, all thought and all behavior. Every intention, be it virtuous or otherwise, is forgiven already, long in advance of its transgression, long before any of its consequences. Forgiveness is not an attainment, it is a fact. Forgiveness is not bestowed, it is inherently abiding, and there is no punishment, no sin, and ultimately no real transgression, because forgiveness is and always was permanent, permeating, and all-available. To say that you are forgiven is to say that you exist; they are the same. And to say that you are free of sin is to say that you draw breath because life and this freedom are one. And there is no life in which a person must pay for actions always performed in innocence and thoughts always generated in confusion. There is nothing you have done, and nothing anyone has ever done to you, which calls for some reckoning. It was reckoned already, long ago, at the moment that it all began; so, too, it was all forgiven. We are this hopelessly innocent, this blessed, this holy. That anything *is* demonstrates its forgiveness, demonstrates its innocence. Please do not seek retribution of another or punishment for yourself. These are not real and so they will never come. Forgiveness is real and you have had it all along.

Questions and Answers

Q: Speaking of thoughts born of confusion, I've been thinking about death a lot. My mother died in June, and so I've been wondering things like...what is death? Where do the dead go? Is death some kind of journey—are there progressive stages? ...Does how we live our lives affect our experience of death? Is there any control that we can exert in the death process? ...I guess my basic question is how to live our lives...in preparation of death, even though that might be many, many years away.

You ask a lot of different questions about dying—too many to address all at once. Tell me what gnaws at you the most about death.

This idea that it might be a journey that may be wonderful or it may be difficult... I was raised Roman Catholic with the concept of purgatory so...I think that's what first engendered curiosity about this journey, and just thinking about my mother after she died and where she was and how she lived her life and how that might influence where she is in her journey.

Life is heaven, hell, and purgatory, as you already know. Life is a journey, it is a process, and everything that happens to you is informed by—and, in many ways, caused by—the choices you make previously. Everything you are talking about describes life, not death. Death is essentially nothing. You go to a different place, but you go to a different place every time you leave your front door and go to your car, and you don't call that a 'journey'. The choices you made throughout your life and the way you perceived things all affect your dying, but that is because they affect your living. In death we step through one set of circumstances into another, but you do that every day of your life. The leaving of this one particular individual body is highly over-emphasized. It is only because our memories are so poor that we convince ourselves that this one little body dying has so much significance. Your mother barely registered her death as an event. In a long stream of her living, which continues right now, that final gasp of air will hardly be remembered. Our choices, our intentions, our will, our aspiration—these are everything, they make our lives. Prepare for life, not for death. Death is one little skip forward. It is nothing. It is life that goes on and on.

Q: I would like to ask about the pain in my shoulder. I'm trying to understand what message it has for me.

Do you have any sense of a message from it?

Well I usually think about my arm and my shoulder as having to do with work and the way I express my...work in the world...

But do you just go in and listen very carefully to your shoulder?

Yes I've been doing that.

What does it say?

Some part of me is tired...

And do you rest it?

Well, in the job that I do I actually use it a lot, unfortunately, and I really can't not use it.

Can you take a break of a few days to a week in which you don't use it at all?

I can try and look at that...

Our bodies are sometimes very simple. Yours doesn't have anything complicated to say to you. It says, 'Ouch, I am tired'. That's all it says and that's all it needs. But you have to respond to it the way you would respond to a child who told you the same thing. You would make sure she rested. You must treat your body with that same kindness.

Q: In this life of mine there's an aspect that I self-sabotage and have disengaged with this reality at times, and I feel like I'm starting to break through that but...as I move forward and trust the vulnerability of throwing myself into this world in a more complete way...I am scared that I won't have the support I need around me and that I will continue to struggle, and that's part of my...addictive secret voice that likes to keep me down...and I feel ready to release that energy and I guess [I'm] asking just [for] some guidance around how to frame my mind day to day to achieve that.

Your mind wants one thing. It is not your freedom or your empowerment or your happiness. It is certainly not the realization of your potential; it is not your joy; it is not the overcoming of all your obstacles. Your mind wants everything to stay the same. It believes that if it exercises this kind of rigid control over you that everything will be exactly as it is forever: You will not change, you will not grow, you will not die; nothing will threaten you, nothing will harm you. But the mind's objective can never be realized because every single second you are already changing, growing; there are already threats all the time. What you must realize is that nothing you want is actually shared by your mind, no aspiration you have is also held by that mind. If you admit its advice, ever, even to the smallest extent, then you have poisoned your own heartfelt ambition and dampened the spirits that need so much to be lifted. What you are talking about is nothing short of stepping off the edge of a cliff with a blindfold on. I cannot tell you you will have any support at all. I certainly will not tell you that someone will catch you. In fact, I hope that no one does, because what you need is not support, not embrace, not approval, you need only that sense of falling—that is really what it feels like to fly. You will never stop your mind from saying the outrageous things it does in attempting to undermine you every step of the way. Don't try, but never follow it; that is the only thing you need to remember. You know what is right for you, and it does not. Follow yourself. Your mind will never bring you home.

Q: [I've been] clearing space in my life for quite a while now...,trying to make a new path, and I have many interests but I need to focus on one thing so I'm trying to find out what that right path is for me, what direction I need to focus all my energy.

And why do you have to pick?

Because there are too many things to do everything...

But why do you have to pick only one?

Because I've always picked many in the past so I think I need to select less [rather] than more...

What is your name?

R.

Tell me what you love.

Too many things.

List them for me.

It would take a long time.

Just get started, I'll stop you.

I love to teach. I love to perform. I love to travel. I love to do sports... I have a deep involvement in the environment, and I'm involved in medicine so I have a deep involvement in finding things out; I love studying minutiae... I love astronomy. I love the arts, I love to sculpt...

As you listed those things, were there any of them that, when you told me you loved them, that didn't sound exactly true?

...I think about them and I think I could do any one of them and I would be happy, and I've done so many things in my life already, I feel like it's time to focus on only one.

I'm afraid my answer may not please you because I do not think you should focus either on only one thing or even on lessening your pursuits. I think that if you love a thousand things then you must do a thousand things. The only question I would have you ask yourself, and ask this of yourself each time you are doing these things, is: Do I really love this, or did I used to love this, or do I just think I do? It may be that you can eliminate one of your activities through this exercise but it is just as likely that you will add more things to your list if you ask yourself this regularly. But I say, the more the better. Love gives energy; it gives life greater vitality; in some ways it makes time so full that it's like it gives you extra of that too. Whatever you love deserves you, and you deserve to have all of it. There is no transcendence that comes through focusing on one thing, and there is no perfection. Whatever you think you will find through narrowing your pursuits and putting all of your energy in one place I tell you you will find that through loving everything as you do, as completely as you do. And so that is what I would recommend. If anything, R., I think you should do more things, not less.

Q: ...I feel like I have more than one question but one has to do with my daughter, one has to do with myself...

Ask about yourself.

Okay. ...I find that things always lead me to a burden that I have of feeling like I've made a horrible mistake...and I realize that my feeling is beyond this lifetime... It leads me to a bottom place where I feel very out of control and...I...have been trying to go to the...center of that feeling of 'out of control'...and I kind of get to a stop where it feels very intense, and it helps me to go that far but I'm still very stuck there, and I find it so affects how I behave in life and my daughter is going through a difficult place where she's a teenager and also feeling out of control...so...'it's up', and I'm wondering what you can...say to that part of me.

A., what do you suspect you need to do for yourself with this?

I...have to face...something that I have yet been fearful of facing...

Do you have any idea what it is that you're supposed to face?

Not really,...like I said, I get to the place where I feel like I know that this 'out of control' is a central place that I come to...and that I've caused awful things, but I'm not sure.

The sense of being out of control is really just a gateway. It's just like the experience of fear. You tremble, you shake, and you realize that there's absolutely nothing you can do about the experience that is rising up in you. But what you must face is the fact that you, just like everyone else, have done something atrocious, something that is in your mind unforgiveable, something which you have no intention of ever letting yourself do again. It doesn't make the slightest bit of difference whether or not you believe in past lives. The fact that you feel you have done something horrible is the reason you have to face that—it doesn't matter when it happened. All I can say to you is, we have all done things that we believe are unforgiveable, and even if we cannot identify what those things are, we all feel somewhere inside us that sense of guilt and dread that comes from transgression. The only thing that makes these atrocities bearable is the fact that they are not atrocities at all, that whatever you did, whatever your motives, it was all done in innocence because it *is* all done in ignorance. We act in a way that makes sense to us at the time. We cannot be punished for that. And so, because there was

never any real harm done, and because you were innocent all along, the fact of that behavior can be accepted. And that is all you have to do, that is all that it means to face something. It means that you open your eyes to what is right in front of you and you say, 'Yes, I did that. I have no excuse. That was me. Those actions were mine'. And there may be pain in that but it will not be anything like the pain you experience, every day, running from it. Like I said before, we are all already forgiven. It has never been otherwise and there has never been an exception. No matter what you have done, it has all been done before, and it will all be done again, and it will all be equally innocent and equally forgiven.

Q: I've been having a physical sort of sensation, some pain, in this area here, kind of hip/abdomen, lower....[and] I'm just wondering what you can tell me that would be helpful...

And do you go in and listen to that part of your body?

I do,...[but] I don't have a clear...understanding of what it is.

Someone is punching you there. That is what your body feels, that is what your body remembers. You have to let your body have its own experience no matter how little sense that makes to you and no matter how uncomfortable it becomes.

Q: ...I have a...neck thing that I've been having for a couple of years now. ...I guess I injured it when I was moving my stuff out of my ex-girlfriend's and...I was angry...and I guess I ripped [it] pretty bad... It's resisted physical therapy, chiropractic, acupuncture...,it's just one of those things where I'm kind of...maybe looking at [the possibility that] it's not going to go away, but then...I've also had other challenges in my life...: I'm living out of a van (and...not even a real camper van)...and not sleeping on a proper mattress [which are] probably hindering it from healing, and I'm rectifying some of those things, but...if you just had anything that you could speak to around that...

Your body cannot heal itself if you are living like a squatter. Will that change soon?

I sure hope so. I finally got a decent mattress to put in there...

And when will you have a decent house?

I don't know that I ever will. I've been living out of either this van or a car...for like ten years, mostly; [there was that] short time that I was with that girlfriend... I seem to have some kind of karmic block where I haven't even had a steady even-part-time job for a decade...I'm just living on this little disability check...

And if I told you that your neck cannot heal in your current circumstances, would that motivate you enough to change them?

I would have to really question myself because my doctor told me the same thing... Are you sensing that I have a lack of motivation because I ask myself, am I just not...? I guess I do just not even try sometimes...

Is there anybody you can stay with for six months to a year?

The only people I can think of are my family members that live in Portland but the dysfunctional dynamics of my family is what caused me to be living in this situation at all because...at any cost to my own peace I wanted to just not be living with them.

At this point it is better that you have a room, a roof over your head, a bed with a proper mattress, a proper bathroom, and a proper kitchen. You cannot heal until you have these things, and your work is seriously hindered by your physical problems. I agree with you that your family is dysfunctional—I am not saying that they are not—and I'm sorry that I can't give you an easier out than this, but my best advice to you is more practical than esoteric. Move in with your family, fix your body, get a job, and then come back and tell me how it's going.

Okay, understood, thank you.

Q: I've been working with a teacher from Brazil for a few years, actively, and for many years kind of peripherally, and when I first got involved with him it was shortly after my father died and I had...many questions that he answered for me. And a few years ago, when I first started getting involved with him, it required quite a leap of faith which...I felt was a huge obstacle for me, and now he's telling me that I kind of have to take the next step, and I'm just wondering if it's the right thing for me, and for my path—if he's someone I can trust, I guess.

Why would you even ask me this? Do you have doubts about him?

Not about him necessarily but about the path. I'm wondering if it's more of an external path, I mean I have general doubts about it, yeah.

Is it your experience with it in the past that it's been primarily external without any real internal movement?

I think I find comfort but I don't necessarily feel like a deep connection... I think it's more that the ritual aspect of it is comforting on some level but...I wonder if I'm kidding myself and I don't know if my intuition is astute enough... Maybe it's that I don't trust my intuition about it.

And what does your intuition tell you about it?

I think that's maybe my question.

I first just want to qualify that there is no such thing as a path here, except the very particular individual one that you are on. You don't have to choose to follow something exclusive of other methods or forms but you do have to put your whole intention, your whole mind and heart, into whatever it is you choose to do, and that is the case whether you perform one ritual every decade or one every day. All this teacher really wants you to do is suspend your beliefs and your certainty and your preconceived notions so much that, in that space that is left, things you never could have imagined possible reveal themselves. One thing that is sure to reveal itself is your own inner wisdom, your own deeper knowingness, your intuition. I would basically say to you that anything at all that helps you suspend those beliefs and that certainty is an aid on this very personal, very particular path that you are on. Faith is just the acknowledgment that we have no idea what is going on here. It's nothing more than that really. It's not substituting one belief with another, it's substituting belief with uncertainty and allowing all the vulnerability and openness that uncertainty brings. He wants you to put a blindfold on so that you will feel your own life and this world you live in with your whole self rather than perceiving it with your mind. The reason so many people eventually come to faith is not because it's easy but because it is inarguably the case that we don't know what's here and that what we perceive is at best the tiniest fraction of what is real. What I can tell you about yourself is that you really want to know, you want to see more than you do, you want to get at the heart of things. I won't tell you that this is the only form that would help you do that, but it certainly can be one that does. Follow blindly—that is my best advice to you.