

## *Neville Goddard Lecture*



### **The True Vine**

**Neville Goddard Lecture - The True Vine 04-04-1969**

Today, as you know, is Good Friday, and undoubtedly millions have attended services and heard some portion of the last seven words of Christ; but I wonder how many of them know who he is and what the words really mean. I tell you: Jesus Christ is your awareness, your I AMness, who became as you are that you may be as he is. I want you to accept this literally, for it is true.

Now, each one of the seven words spoken of today is really a sentence, the first of which is: . . . “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do, . . .” and the last is: . . . “Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit.” This is only a portion of the quote from the 5th verse of the 31st chapter of the Book of Psalms. The complete thought is this: . . . “Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.” Here we find the redeemer to be one with the redeemed, for speaking to the Father, he says: “Thou hast redeemed me,” . . . yet he has already confessed . . . “I and the Father are one.” So you see the redeemer and the redeemed are really one.

Let us look at these words through the eyes of the mystic, and not with the traditional eyes of the church: . . . “I AM the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser.” This true vine is the imagination. It is man’s eternal body, who is God himself. Jesus is the divine body, of which we are his members in the sense that he is in us. Christ is not a little man, but humanity. He is our own wonderful human imagination. He is our redeemer, yet he is the one redeemed.

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When I first realized this I was shocked, for I was born and raised in the Christian tradition and knew no other religion. Then I discovered that Christ was not someone on the outside that I should worship, but my own wonderful human imagination, and for a while my world turned upside down. There is a little poem that fits this perfectly: . . .  
“Behold this vine. I found it a wild tree whose wanton strength had swollen into irregular twigs. But I pruned the plant and it grew tempered in its vain expanse of useless leaves and knotted as you see into these full, clean clusters to repay the hand that wisely wounded it.”

Your imagination is the true vine from which everything in your world is drawn. Any misuse of your imagination causes the deformities in your life. It is a shock, I know, to realize that you are the sole cause of your life; and what a responsibility you have, to prune this true vine of awareness!

Since the Father and the Son are one, I . . . as Father AM the true vine and must prune myself. Not realizing a seeming other was a branch growing from me, the true vine, I allowed myself to entertain unlovely thoughts of him. But I didn't cut the branch, for the pruning is not in that way. Called repentance in scripture, pruning is revision . . . which is a radical change of attitude towards an individual or a situation. I revised my thoughts relative to that seeming other and accepted this unseen imaginal act as reality. Then I watched, and in time I became aware of a change in my world relative to this person or that condition. Having found the true vine and the Father who pruned it, I know I must prune it every day; for if I do it will knot and form itself into these full, clean clusters to repay the hand of the vinedresser (the Father) who pruned it.

Listen carefully now to these words from Paul's letter to the Philippians: . . . “Christ Jesus who . . . though he was in the form of God . . . thought it not robbery to be equal with God, emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and was born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.” Your body is the cross upon which Jesus Christ is crucified. And it is there he will remain until he transforms your lowly body into the one form with his glorious body. Then he will have fulfilled his purpose. I tell you: Jesus Christ has actually taken upon himself your body of humility and become its slave by feeding it, bathing it, clothing it, and caring for it in every way; yet Jesus Christ is not of this world. But in time he will completely transform you into his glorious body, for he is the redeemer, who . . . having assumed your body . . . will redeem it, thereby becoming the redeemed.

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The true vine is your own wonderful human imagination. When you believe this you will no longer imagine as you formerly did, but will prune your thoughts every minute of every day. You will break the habit of feeling remorseful, depressed, or regretful. You will no longer think unkindly about another, because you will know that he is actually yourself pushed out, and appeared in your world because the Father in you called him. No one can come unto me unless I, who am one with the Father, call him. Even though he brings poison he does it because I gave it to him to bring. This is the story that is reenacted today, but not understood.

Now we are told he took a sop (called 'a morsel' in some translations) and gave it to Judas, who quickly departed. The sop is a gift of great friendship. In the ancient world, the sop was dipped into a liquid and handed to the honored guest, he who is the closest and dearest friend. That's Judas. Only one who knows the messianic secret can betray it. No one can betray me who does not know my secret. How could you betray me if I had not taken you into my confidence as a friend, and shared my secret?

So Judas leaves to tell the world of the real Christ and gives them a sign saying: "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him. Hold him fast." Don't let him go, but eat his doctrine, feed upon it, drink it. Let everything else go, but don't let him go. When you have found the cause of the phenomena of your life, let every other belief go. Should people urge you to eat certain food or observe certain days do not believe them, for there is nothing you can do on the outside that will ever commend you to God. You are defiled or purified by what comes out of your heart, not by what you eat or observe on the outside. Are you imagining good or evil for yourself, for the true vine is your own wonderful human imagination, and the world without is nothing more than your branches.

Now, who is this one that Judas kisses? The Risen Christ! This I know from experience. One night I was explaining the word of God to twelve men, when one jumped up quickly and departed. I instantly knew he was going to tell exactly what I had told him concerning the cause of the phenomena of life. Then he returns. It's the same being, but now he is richly dressed and so important we all stand at attention at his entrance. Coming toward me he severs my sleeve, revealing my right arm and kisses the one it is said of him: "Don't let him go, but hold him fast."

The word "hold" as defined in the concordance, means "almighty power" and the word "fast" means, "to abstain from all food." Here we are being told to abstain from any food for thought other than our own wonderful human imagination. We are urged to feast

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upon our own power and wisdom. Abstain when others urge you to try a little numerology, a little astrology, or any belief of a power outside of your Self. One of the great weaknesses of man is the necessity of always being right. Those who prophesied that California would experience an earthquake which would kill millions, will pray until they break their skull to prove the rightness of their prophecy; but it hasn't a thing to do with scripture. The earthquake spoken of in scripture takes place within, and not on the outside, at all.

Jesus Christ is God himself, who became you, individually. Your awareness is He. When you imagine, God is acting. He is the true vine and the vinedresser, for he is your imagination, imagining you. If you really understand this, you will start pruning your thoughts. If you don't and continue to believe Jesus Christ is other than your Self, you will persist in allowing your wanton energy to run wild, to swell into irregular twigs, and bear unlovely things in your world.

When you become aware of those in need, even though you do not know them personally, do you use your imagination to lift them from that state? That is what you are called upon to do. If you represent them to yourself as you would like them to be, and persuade yourself it is true, that branch will change in your world. You do not eliminate the state of need. It remains for anyone to be aware of, but you . . . having lifted yourself out of the state . . . see it no more.

Prune your vine morning, noon, and night; and then . . . when you least expect it . . . a series of wonderful, supernatural experiences will be yours, as God reveals himself in you . . . not as another, but as your very Self. Then you will say, from personal experience, "I AM He."

In the 17th chapter of Luke, we are warned not to heed anyone who may say: "Lo, here it is!" or "There!" for the kingdom of God is within. And we are told in the 3rd chapter of Philippians: "Our commonwealth is in heaven, from where we expect a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will refashion our lowly body to be one with his glorious body." This body of humiliation will be completely transformed by the exalted Christ in you. So do not go any place when someone tells you to look elsewhere, for you can only find the true God within. If our commonwealth is in heaven (from which we expect a Savior who is the lord Jesus Christ) and heaven is within, our Savior cannot come from without. And when he comes, it is in a series of majestic, supernatural acts, wherein he unveils himself and rises from within.

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Blake expressed this thought so beautifully in Plate 96 of 'Jerusalem' as: "I behold the Visions of my deadly sleep of six-thousand years Dazzling around my skirts like a Serpent of precious stones and gold. I know it is my Self: O my Divine Creator and Redeemer."

I have beheld those visions. I have known the thrill of seeing that pool of golden liquid light and knowing it to be my Self. And I have experienced the 3rd chapter of John by ascending into the kingdom of God within myself. I was taught to believe in someone on the outside; yet, when my Spiritual body was split and truth was revealed to me, I fused with golden, pulsing, living, liquid light and . . . like a serpent . . . I returned to the kingdom of heaven within me to become a living stone in the living temple of the Eternal God. This knowledge, I know, everyone is going to experience.

Once again let us return to the drama depicted today. The first word of the seven wonderful words is this: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing." If you know that you are the cause of your sorrow, can you not forgive the one who submitted it? Must you condemn a shadow, when you are its cause? Everyone who comes into your world is drawn there by your Father, with whom you are one. If he who enters insults or offends you and you know you are the cause of his seeming offense, can you not forgive him? Can you not say: "Father, forgive him for he knows not what he is doing?" Your world is filled with those who are under compulsion to play their part because of what you have imagined. You may have forgotten your imaginal acts, and may even deny you ever entertained such thoughts; but they could not come if you had not called them out of yourself; therefore, you must forgive them, for they only did what you asked them to do.

Now at the very end, this statement is made: "It is finished." What does he ask for when the work he was given to do is finished? "To return unto me the glory that was mine, the glory that I had with thee before that the world was." Having emptied himself of his glory and taken upon himself the form of a slave to become obedient to death upon the cross of Man, he has redeemed the state of slavery by becoming one with it and raising it to the level of Father. Now he requests to return to his former glory, the glory that he knew before that the world was.

Only one being returns. That being is God the Father, the sender, now one with his Son, the sent. Entering this world of many, we are the gods, sons of the Most High, yet one with our Father. When, as the son, we overcome death, we return with greater brilliance and translucency because of our victory over death. Then what a joy is ours!

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If you will accept this truth and will not let it go, your days will change as you feast upon the body of imagination and drink of its life-giving blood. Give up everything you have ever believed concerning causation and believe in the one cause of all life . . . be it good, bad or indifferent . . . which is your own wonderful human imagination.

When an experience comes to you that causes you distress, instead of denying it or trying to rub it out, accept the event and change it. Beautify your world! The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the story of redemption. Jesus Christ is not some man who died two thousand years ago. You and I died with Christ in the beginning. You have been crucified with Christ and he lives in you. Live your life in the flesh by faith in the Son of God. who so loved you he actually became you. His incarnation took place when you were born. He is a slave to your body, for your birth from below is when imagination took upon himself the form of a slave. He is not a person who, enslaving another, calls that other his slave; for the one who is the slave-master is still a slave to the body he wears, taking care of its normal, natural functions for himself.

God actually became the slave that you are, in order to redeem you. A complete transformation will take place, and you . . . the grub worm . . . will return to the awareness of being the exalted butterfly . . . the same being you were before you descended in power and took upon yourself the form of a slave.

I can't tell you the thrill that is yours when you wear that all-powerful garment of fire and air. While you wear it there is nothing you cannot do effortlessly. You can form eyes that see perfectly and mold them into empty sockets, form arms, which move perfectly in their sockets. With your magical power you can change age-shrunken bodies into perfect twenty-year-old ones. That power is yours when you wear your body called heaven.

One night in 1946, I wore that body. It's the same body I gave up when I took upon myself this body of a slave in order to redeem it. That night, while still aware of being Neville, I . . . the invisible . . . became a visible being by nailing myself upon this cross called Neville. And I wore it faithfully until the night of the transfiguration. So I know the thrill that is in store for you when your body of slavery is transformed into a body of immortality. You see, the being you really are is Jesus Christ and cannot die. You who were before that the world was, came down into this world of death to overcome it, to rise as one being; for you . . . the redeemer . . . will know yourself to be one with the redeemed.

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Now, one of the last words on the cross is: "I thirst." You may think this is a thirst for water, but the Book of Amos tells you what he is thirsting for. "I will send a famine upon the land. It will not be a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, but for the hearing of the word of God." Every word has to be fulfilled in him. That is his thirst. When the thirst comes upon you, every word of God will unfold in you, casting you in the starring role. Then your hunger and thirst will be satisfied, for you will have experienced the entire Bible in a first person, singular, present tense experience.

I wonder what per cent of our world understands this wonderful day of the crucifixion. At one church here on Wilshire Blvd., there will be seven preachers; each will speak on one sentence and attempt to explain it. With the traditional concept of Jesus Christ, how could the statement: "Father, forgive them," be explained? How could you, personally, truly forgive someone if you did not believe he was yourself pushed out? How could you forgive one who had just murdered a friend or a loved one, without acknowledging that you had to have done it; because it couldn't have happened and you be aware of it, unless your Father called it to your attention by drawing the event into your world, and you and your father are one? Only when you know who the real cause of the phenomena of life is, can you forgive. If awareness is the cause of murder and you are forever aware of something, the state of murder cannot be cut off; but your awareness can be rearranged. The event can be completely transformed by repentance, which I call revision. When you revise a disturbing memory, you have repented in the true sense of the word.

When I first found this vine I could hardly sleep for days and days, I was so disillusioned thinking of the responsibility that was now on my shoulder . . . responsibility that I had always placed upon the shoulder of another. But once I accepted the fact that Jesus Christ is my human imagination and the cause of everything I am aware of, I knew I couldn't pass the buck any more, but had to do something about it. So I, the Father, began to prune the vine.

The entire 15th chapter of the Book of John is devoted to this pruning of the vine. He starts off: "I AM the true vine. My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." The tree in your garden may be lovely to look at and it may pain you to cut a certain branch, but you know you must do it if you want good fruit next year. That is life. Consciousness (the I AM) is the eternal vine. Your eternal body is the Imagination, which is God himself. We are all members of the divine body . . . Jesus; therefore humanity is truly the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every child is part of that universal body; and when he knows that Jesus Christ is his

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own wonderful human imagination, he is confused for the moment, until the realization rearranges itself within him. Then he takes himself in hand, determined to do something about it. I tell you from experience, if you will take yourself in hand and really believe in Christ in you to the point that you will turn to no other causation, but will prune your thoughts morning, noon, and night, your world will change. It will mold itself in harmony with the change which has taken place in you, for your outer world is forever reflecting your inner, imaginal acts.

This is the great story that is told today. Jesus Christ is not a man who was nailed upon a wooden cross, or hanged upon a tree on the outside.

The tree spoken of in the Book of Acts is Man himself. The brain is the root, with the veins and arteries as the tree and its branches. This is the tree of life spoken of in the 4th chapter of Daniel. It was felled but its root was not disturbed so that the tree could reverse itself, and its power . . . which had gone down into generation . . . could be turned up into regeneration.

When that hunger comes upon you, the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But be not deceived; the kingdom of God will not come with signs to be observed. Let no one tell you: "Here it is," or: "There" for the being you are seeking is the cause of your life. That being is God the Father, who is in his kingdom, and that kingdom is within you. Suddenly the drama called Jesus Christ will unfold within you and you will know the joy that comes with fulfillment. When this plan unfolds, you sleep differently, you wake differently. There isn't a moment in time when you could not close your eyes and willingly depart, for you know the Word has unfolded in you. Yet night after night the visions continue to possess you, all based upon the promises of God as recorded in the Old Testament.

Every night when I close my eyes to this world, I enter that world . . . the world of Spirit waking . . . and fulfill the word of God.

Now, I received two letters this week regarding dreams of horses. Always bear in mind that a dream is a parable with a single point of truth. In one lady's dream she was driving down the highway with her husband, when she looked back to see two wild horses running toward a deep cliff. The younger one leaped across the cliff into rich pasture, but the older one fell on the highway. Although she knew he was not injured she felt sorry for him, and as she reached out to him, he got to his feet and came to her for comfort. The horse is a symbol of one's understanding. She has not completely discarded the old, yet it is not equal to the new understanding of the eternal truth, for the



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younger horse made it beautifully across the cliff. She didn't go to bed that night to conjure horses. They came to her, for now she is riding a new understanding and the true word of God is becoming alive within her. In the 12th chapter of Numbers we are told that God speaks to man through the language of dream. If God is speaking, you want to pay attention and extract the single jet of truth in what he is saying.

Another lady dreamed of three horses . . . a white, black, and pale one, all living on her thousand-acre estate. Men offered her a fantastic price for the estate; yet she knew what they really wanted was her white horse and she didn't want to part with it. Time and time again they tried to kill her or injure her in some way, yet the white horse always appeared to redeem her in a human manner.

In the Book of Revelation we are told that Jesus Christ rides the white horse. Here we see this lady isn't completely in control of her understanding, but she has found it and is redeemed by it even though she is still seeking herself, because her enemies are her beliefs based upon her early training, which came back to haunt her.

In her letter to me she wondered if she had already ridden the red horse of conflict, since she did not see one. I tell you all: don't try to put something into your dreams that is not there. She didn't dream of a red horse, so why mention him? A dream has only one central jet of truth. In her case it is the white horse, the symbol of the redeemer, who is your own wonderful human imagination.

Now let us go into the Silence.