



and flowers that are so totally unselfconscious, too busy with the task of living to care one little bit about what others think of them, about whether they are special to others or not. And at last, you will have become fearless and free.

BE AWAKE



BLESSED ARE THOSE SERVANTS WHOM THE MASTER FINDS AWAKE WHEN HE COMES.

—LUKE 12:37

Everywhere in the world people are in search of love, for everyone is convinced that love alone can save the world, love alone can make life meaningful and worth living. But how very few understand what love really is, and how it arises in the human heart. It is so frequently equated with good feelings toward others, with benevolence or nonviolence or service. But these things in themselves are not love. Love springs from awareness. It is only inasmuch as you see someone as he or she really is here and now and not as they are in your memory or your desire or in



your imagination or projection that you can truly love them, otherwise it is not the person that you love but the idea that you have formed of this person, or this person as the object of your desire not as he or she is in themselves.

Therefore the first act of love is to see this person or this object, this reality as it truly is. And this involves the enormous discipline of dropping your desires, your prejudices, your memories, your projections, your selective way of looking, a discipline so great that most people would rather plunge headlong into good actions and service than submit to the burning fire of this asceticism. When you set out to serve someone whom you have not taken the trouble to see, are you meeting that person's need or your own? So the first ingredient of love is to really see the other.

The second ingredient is equally important to see yourself, to ruthlessly flash the light of awareness on your motives, your emotions, your needs, your dishonesty, your self-seeking, your tendency to control and manipulate. This means calling things by their name, no matter how painful the discovery and the consequences. If you achieve this kind of awareness of the other and yourself, you will know what love is. For you will have attained a mind and a heart that is alert, vigilant, clear, sensitive, a



clarity of perception, a sensitivity that will draw out of you an accurate, appropriate response to every situation at every moment. Sometimes you will be irresistibly impelled into action, at others you will be held back and restrained. You will sometimes be made to ignore others and sometimes give them the attention they seek. At times you will be gentle and yielding, at others hard, uncompromising, assertive, even violent. For the love that is born of sensitivity takes many unexpected forms and it responds not to prefabricated guidelines and principles but to present, concrete reality. When you first experience this kind of sensitivity you are likely to experience terror. For all your defenses will be torn down, your dishonesty exposed, the protected walls around you burned.

Think of the terror that comes to a rich man when he sets out to really see the pitiful condition of the poor, to a power-hungry dictator when he really looks at the plight of the people he oppresses, to a fanatic, a bigot, when he really sees the falsehood of his convictions when they do not fit the facts. The terror that comes to the romantic lover when he decides to really see that what he loves is not his beloved but his image of her. That is why the most painful act of the human being can perform, the act that he dreads the most is the act of seeing. It is in that



act of seeing that love is born, or rather more accurately, that act of seeing is Love.

Once you begin to see, your sensitivity will drive you to the awareness, not just of the things that you choose to see but of everything else as well. Your poor ego will try desperately to blunt that sensitivity because its defenses are being stripped away and it is left with no protection and nothing to cling to. If you ever allow yourself to see it will be the death of you. And that is why love is so terrifying, for to love is to see and to see is to die. But it is also the most delightful exhilarating experience in the whole world. For in the death of the ego is freedom, peace, serenity, joy.

If it is love that you truly desire then set out at once on the task of seeing, take it seriously and look at someone you dislike and really see your prejudice. Look at someone you cling to or something you cling to and really see the suffering, the futility, the unfreedom of clinging and look long and lovingly at human faces and human behavior. Take some time out to gaze in wonder at Nature, the flight of a bird, a flower in bloom, the dry leaf crumbling to dust, the flow of a river, the rising of the moon, a silhouette of a mountain against the sky. And as you do this the hard, protective shell around your heart will soften and melt and your heart will



come alive in sensitivity and responsiveness. The darkness in your eyes will be dispelled and your vision will become clear and penetrating, and you will know at last what love is.