

BRING IN THE POOR



THE HOUSEHOLDER IN ANGER SAID TO HIS SERVANT, "GO OUT QUICKLY TO THE STREETS AND LANES OF THE CITY, AND BRING IN THE POOR AND MAIMED AND BLIND AND LAME."

—LUKE 14:21

Think of someone you dislike—someone you generally avoid because his/her presence generates negative feelings in you. Imagine yourself in this person's presence now and watch the negative emotions arise . . . you are, quite conceivably, in the presence of someone who is poor, crippled, blind or lame.

Now understand that if you invite this person, this beggar from the streets and alleys into your home, that is, into your presence, he/she will make you a gift that none of your charming, pleasant friends can make you, rich as they are. He or she is going to reveal yourself to you and reveal human nature to you—a revelation as precious as any found in Scripture, for what



will it profit you to know all the Scriptures if you do not know yourself and so live the life of a robot? The revelation that this beggar is going to bring will widen your heart till there is room in it for every living creature. Can there be a finer gift than that?

Now take a look at yourself reacting negatively and ask yourself the following question: "Am I in charge of this situation or is this situation in charge of me?" That is the first revelation. With it comes the second: The way to be in charge of this situation is to be in charge of yourself, which you are not. How does one achieve this mastery? All you have to do is understand that there are people in the world who, if they were in your place, would not be negatively affected by this person. They would be in charge of the situation, above it, not subject to it as you are. Therefore, your negative feelings are caused, not by this person, as you mistakenly think, but by your programming. Here is the third and major revelation. See what happens when you really understand this.

Having received these revelations about yourself, listen to this revelation concerning human nature. This behavior, this trait in the other person that causes you to react negatively—do you realize that he or she is not responsible for it? You can hold on to your negative feelings



only when you mistakenly believe that he or she is free and aware and therefore responsible. But who ever did evil in awareness? The ability to do evil or to be evil is not freedom but a sickness for it implies a lack of consciousness and sensitivity. Those who are truly free cannot sin as God cannot sin. This poor person here in front of you is crippled, blind, lame, not stubborn and malicious as you so foolishly thought. Understand this truth; look at it steadfastly and deeply; and you will see your negative emotions turn into gentleness and compassion. Suddenly you have room in your heart for someone who was consigned to the streets and alleys by others and by you.

Now you will realize that this beggar came to your home with an alms for you—the widening of your heart in compassion and the release of your spirit in freedom. Where before you used to be controlled (these persons had the power to create negative emotions in you and you went out of your way to avoid them) now you have the gift of freedom to avoid no one, to go anywhere. When you see this you will notice how to the feeling of compassion in your heart has been added the feeling of gratitude to this beggar who is your benefactor. And another new, unaccustomed feeling: You actually feel a desire to seek out the company of these growth-



producing crippled, blind and lame people, the way someone who has learned to swim seeks water, because each time you are with them, where before you used to feel the oppression and tyranny of negative feelings, you can now actually feel an ever-expanding compassion and the freedom of the skies. And you can barely recognize yourself as you see yourself going out into the streets and alleys of the town, in obedience to the Master's injunction, to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and lame.