

Thoughts on "Magical Thinking versus a Firm Faith"

Reflection from Conference Minister from May 6, 2020 Coconut Wireless

When a crisis occurs, it is easy for people to blur the line between magical thinking and faithful responses. Recently I was on the writer Alice Mills' blog, *Poema Chronicles* (poemachronicles.com). In the article, "Magical Thinking versus a Firm Faith," Alice explores the difference between magical thinking and faith. What follows is a mixture of her thoughts and my own. Direct quotes from Alice Mills appear in quotation marks.

- 1 **Magical thinking uses God as a talisman and flattens our relationship to the Divine to one purpose – what God can do for me.** Faith wrestles with how we might open our lives to God and be used for divine purposes in God's good creation.
- 2 **Magical thinking lacks logic.** "To make a connection between a cause and effect without understanding the actual causation is to make a dangerous assumption." For example, there is no evidence that COVID-19 will simply cease to exist all on its own. As Christians, we are just as vulnerable for picking up the virus and spreading it to others.
- 3 **"Magical thinking denies personal responsibility; faith requires it."** The crux of magical thinking is that it puts the blame on God when things do not work out. Faith wrestles with human sciences to come to a factual understanding of how the natural and physical worlds work and our role as part of creation.
- 4 **Magical thinking is less taxing while faithful response requires effort.** There is a reason why magical thinking becomes dominant during a time of crisis. When we are overwhelmed and overtaxed, our brains default to easy thinking in order to retain some energy for the freeze, fight, or flight instinct within us. Faith requires that our minds handle critical data, examine that data in relationship with God, and move to a God-informed response, which may be at odds with our gut response.

I appreciate how Alice Mills concludes her article: "I find this a difficult subject to write about, in part because I have fooled myself time and again. I believe in miracles. I have experienced them first-hand. But magical thinking does not produce them. It is faith that brings about the kingdom of God. The key to discerning the difference is humility, I believe. Are we willing to be guided by the loving but firm hand of the Lord? My submission to Him always requires giving up some aspect of magical thinking."

We will get through this together because we are in God's hands. And because we are in God's hands, we will be changed.

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