

Since when is God a destination?

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“A Way Out”

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How are you with puzzles? My mother worked the New York Times crossword in pen. For the more tactile, some restaurants supply those triangles to keep you occupied while waiting. 15 holes. 14 golf tees. When our copy of Highlights Magazine arrived, I tried to trace my way through the maze without lifting the pencil.

Mazes can be equally fun and infuriating. Life often resembles a maze. We stumble around, looking for the right path out. Ask Theseus who volunteered to slay the Minotaur (that ferocious half bull, half man). Theseus felt called to end the cruel sacrificial tributes of Athenian youths who were sent into the Maze by King Minos to feed the Minotaur. Theseus ventured into the Minotaur’s maze in Crete. Theseus slew the Minotaur. Theseus found his way out because he marked his way with a ball of thread given him by Ariadne, King Minos’ daughter.

Let’s avoid confusing mazes with labyrinths. Too often, maze and labyrinth have been used interchangeably. Mazes and labyrinths both are designs found in cultures from around the world and from various ages. There is a difference. Mazes are meant to confound and confuse, hence the word ‘maze’ comes from Old English word meaning ‘to daze, cause delusion.’ You hear it in the word, ‘amaze.’ Labyrinths offer a singular path (without deceptive branches) to lead you toward the center and then back out. One of the more famous labyrinths is in Chartres, France. Labyrinths are designed for prayer and meditation, spiritual tools. Mazes are designed to disorient, to trap you. I hear the Animals singing: “We gotta get out of this place.” Shallow religions view life as a maze where only true believers find the right way to God. All the rest are dead ends, leaving you lost. Since when is God a destination?

Frankly, I’m fed up with being disoriented, feeling trapped. Please, no more broken hearts from those who choose violence against others or against themselves. Resorting to violence always is a selfish, sad act, resulting in nothing but grief, guilt, pain, anger. Violence against others or yourself is what a friend described as making a permanent choice for a temporary problem. No more broken hearts from those wandering around lost, given Walmart shootings, or shootings at shopping districts, grocery stores, churches, nightclubs, synagogues, mosques, elementary schools. I’m fed up with the right to procure an AR-15 trumping another person’s right to live, to be happy sitting at the family Thanksgiving table. Why are you so unhappy you feel you have the right to harm others?

I’m getting impatient. I’m tired of waiting for humanity to stop making such terribly wrong and unhelpful choices. I’m tired of the hurt and hatred, the fears and bad grief, the pain. We have grief enough. We can walk with lost, lonely you. We learn to live in the meanwhile. We learn the difference between impulse and delayed gratification. Mature adults don’t mimic the patience of puppies. Gwendolyn, our Corgi, is six months old. She fit in puppy perfect with our toddler grandbabies during their Thanksgiving visit from California – all three were paragons of patience, calm, quiet. Right. Little Isaac with eager hands, broke the trunk of one of the ceramic elephants we display on the windowsill.

I've learnt when gluing, don't fuss with it. Set it aside and wait for the glue to do what glue needs to do. We're no longer grandbabies who need to get our way lest we whine or throw tantrums. Meanwhile, we're supposed to be meanwhile mature. Still, I'm sick of being disoriented. I need to believe there's a way out.

Other languages enrich our perspectives. The verb 'to wait' in Spanish is the word, 'esperar.' But 'esperar' has another meaning. It also translates as: 'to hope.' It's true that where there is life there is hope. Far truer is that where there's hope there is life.

Do you know the secret on how to find your way out of a maze? There is a guaranteed method, tried and true, regardless if you take a wrong turning and end up feeling trapped. Simply hold your hand to the wall and keep going. It may take longer than trial and error, unless you get lucky. Keep your hand to the wall. It will always lead you out. That which might seem like a dead end isn't, if you keep your hand to the wall of the maze.

Hope, like God, never is our destination. Hope is the wall.