i love listening.
it is one of the only spaces
where you can be still and
moved at the same time.

~nayyirah waheed, instagram poet
PRELUDE

The Blizzard of the World

The blizzard of the world
has crossed the threshold
and it has overturned
the order of the soul.
—Leonard Cohen

There was a time when farmers on the Great Plains, at the first signs of a blizzard, would run a rope from the back door out to the barn. They all knew stories of people who had wandered off and been frozen to death, having lost sight of home in a whiteout while still in their own back yards.

Today we live in a blizzard of another sort. It swirls around us as economic injustice, ecological ruin, physical and spiritual violence, and their inevitable outcome, war. It swirls within us as fear and frenzy, greed and deceit, and indifference to the suffering of others. We all know stories of people who have wandered off into this madness and been separated from their own souls, losing their moral bearings and even their mortal lives: they make headlines because they take so many innocents down with them.

The lost ones come from every walk of life: clergy and corporate executives, politicians and people on the street, celebrities and school children. Some of us fear that we, or those we love, will become lost in the storm. Some are lost at this moment, and are trying to find the way home. Some are lost without knowing it. And some are using the blizzard as cover, while cynically exploiting its chaos for private gain.

So it is easy to believe the poet’s claim that “the blizzard of the world” has overturned “the order of the soul”, easy to believe that the soul—that life-giving core of the human self, with its hunger for truth and justice, love and forgiveness—has lost all power to guide our lives.

But my own experience of the blizzard, which includes getting lost in it more often than I like to admit, tells me that it is not so. The soul’s order can never be destroyed. It may be obscured by the whiteout. We may forget, or deny, that its guidance is close at hand. And yet, we are still in the soul’s back yard, with chance after chance to regain our bearings.

This (Circle of Renewal) is about tying a rope from the back door out to the barn so we can find our way home again. When we catch sight of the soul, we can survive the blizzard without losing our hope or our way. When we catch sight of the soul, we can become healers in a wounded world—in the family, the neighborhood, the workplace, and in political life—as we are called back to our “hidden wholeness” amid the violence of the storm.

Adapted, Tony Vento 2020
“All around us life is dying and life is being born. The fruit ripens on the tree, the roots are silently at work in the darkness of the earth against a time when there shall be new leaves, fresh blossoms, green fruit.

*Such is the growing edge!*

This is the basis of hope in moments of despair, the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint and men [and women] have lost their reason, the source of confidence when worlds crash and dreams whiten into ash. The birth of the child—life’s most dramatic answer to death—this is the growing edge incarnate.

*Look well to the growing edge!*

HOWARD THURMAN (AUTHOR, EDUCATOR, CIVIL RIGHTS & RELIGIOUS LEADER)