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For the Beauty of the Earth: Serving Others Through Being Fully Present

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FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH

Serving Others Through Being Fully Present

— JIYING SONG

Have you ever tried to describe a quiet summer afternoon in the garden? You are sitting in the shade, feeling the breeze, smelling the barbeque aroma from the neighborhood, drinking iced tea, listening to birds chirping, and watching the sunlight embracing leaves, flowers, and grass. We are made out of dust; that is how attached to the earth we are. We may be looking at a garden, but are we present to the beauty of the earth?

I have been going through an intense journey of pursuing my degrees while being apart from my husband for the last six years and apart from my daughter for one year. I saw the beauty of the earth on the internet, rather than going out and looking at my garden. I conceptualized service instead of meeting with people and serving them in the real world. I was like an old-fashioned winding clock that would never stop running. I thought that all the life's answers were in my electronic devices. I was on them all the time. I was in the virtual world and lost touch with the earth and my family and friends.

This summer, my family drove around Mt. Rainier and



stopped at Reflection Lake. It was a foggy day and all we could see was fog hovering over gray water. We were so disappointed, and we left. I suggested going again a couple of days later when it was sunny, but my husband and my daughter had no interest. They said, “If you want to see Reflection Lake, you can just look at pictures on the internet.” I found some beautiful photos, but I was not there for the lake to take my breath away.

For the beauty of the earth, one has to be present.

For the beauty of humanity, one has to be present as well.

I so appreciate technologies. I remember the year I left home and left my daughter with my husband. We video-chatted almost every day. One day my daughter said to my husband, “Dad, I don’t want a mom in the computer. I want a *real* mom.” I have shed many tears over my eight-year-old daughter’s simple words. This summer, my husband visited us for six weeks. After he left, we video-chatted also. One day my daughter commented, “Dad is *almost* real.” I fell into silence hearing her words. I am grateful for technologies, which can ease our sense of separation, but we are still hungry for real touch—being fully present. Video chat may satisfy our mind, but being fully present satisfies our heart. Sometimes I wonder why we have five senses, rather than only sight and hearing. It is because we have the gifts of being fully present.

Mother Teresa (1987) shared a story of the beauty of being present:

My sisters also work in Australia. On the reservation, among the Aborigines, there was an elderly man. I can



assure you that you have never seen a situation as difficult as that poor old man's. He was completely ignored by everyone. His home was disordered and dirty.

I told him, "Please, let me clean your house, wash your clothes, and make your bed."

He answered, "I'm okay like this. Let it be."

I said again, "You will be still better if you allow me to do it."

He finally agreed. So I was able to clean his house and wash his clothes. I discovered a beautiful lamp, covered with dust. Only God knows how many years had passed since he last lit it.

I said to him, "Don't you light that lamp? Don't you ever use it?"

He answered, "No. No one comes to see me. I have no need to light it. Who would I do it for?"

I asked, "Would you light it every night if the sisters came?"

He replied, "Of course."

From that day on the sisters committed themselves to visiting him every evening. We cleaned the lamp, and the sisters would light it every evening.

Two years passed. I had completely forgotten that man. He sent this message: "Tell my friend that the light she lit in my life continues to shine still." (p. 17)

You do not have to climb to the mountaintops to witness the beauty of the earth; you can do so through opening your window and embracing an evening breeze on a hot summer



day. You do not have to be a president, manager, or CEO to serve; you can serve through being there in the midst of abandonment. Nurturing minds without losing hearts, servant-leaders enjoy the beauty of the earth and serve others through being fully present.

Reference

Mother Teresa. (1987). *Heart of joy*. Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books.

After earning her Master of Engineering in China and working in the field of IT for 14 years, Jiyong (Jenny) came to the United States to pursue a Master of Divinity from George Fox University. After completing her second Master's degree, she earned a Ph.D. in Leadership Studies from Gonzaga University. Through this process, she has discovered that she has a passion for both effective leadership and academic work.

During her career in China, she served as the Operation Director of an IT company and managed the Operation Service Center and Marketing Department for seven years. She obtained a Project Management Professional certification and an IT Service Management certification and worked as a project manager for more than 10 years. During her graduate study at George Fox University, she worked as Teaching Assistant for Dr. MaryKate Morse, teaching and tutoring graduate students in New Testament Greek. She has been active in ministry to international students and visiting scholars



at George Fox University since 2013. She graduated from George Fox University and received the Dean’s Award for “superior academic achievement, exemplary Christian character and extraordinary potential for service as a Christian scholar.” At Gonzaga University, she worked with Dr. Chris Francovich as a data analyst for National Science Foundation’s ADVANCE project. Currently she is an adjunct professor at George Fox University and serving as Associate Editor with Dr. Shann Ray Ferch and Larry Spears for *The International Journal of Servant-Leadership*.