Let Your Life Speak by Parker J. Palmer

Journal 2: Chapters 3 & 4
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The question that I want to ask myself is: Do I resist the ideas of limits? In chapter 3, Palmer is honest with himself and with the readers about his inability or unwillingness to accept his limitations. This dishonesty had countless negative effects on his life. I have to think deeply about this question because if I answer too quickly, then I'm afraid I won't be truthful with myself. I think that I am prone to push myself beyond my limits because of an inability in myself to be unproductive. The imagery of a plant freely giving its fruit without harming itself is such a powerful picture of what it looks like to give of oneself in a healthy way. To work within that imagery, I think that I can relate my life to giving fruit before it is ripened enough to simply fall in a natural way. I give prematurely and excessively because I don't want to wait around and let time go by without having anything to say for myself. I can relate this to my personal and my professional life. I think one of the reasons that I'm attached to social work is because I want to have something to say for my life. I want to spend my life doing things of impact in the world around me. These chapters definitely don't deter me from this desire, but I do really need this moment to pause and think.

Palmer quoted Dorothy Day's words, "Give only if you have something you must give; give only if you are someone for whom giving is its own reward" (2015, pp. 48). I think that I am compelled to give when I see a need in front of me. I am motivated by an internal desire for justice and desire to help others. I'm also motivated by the sense of purpose that I have when I'm doing something with meaning beyond myself. But I think that many times when I give, I receive fuel for more giving through other's people positive responses or the recipient's gratitude. To be honest, I'm not sure what it would look like to operate differently. But I want to pay attention to when giving feels like the most natural part of me and when it feels like it forced and striping life from me.

I think trust is a bit part of this growth process for me. Palmer wrote, "When we reach the limits of our own capacity to love, community means trusting that someone else will be available to the person in need" (2015, pp. 49). I always get super excited and encouraging of my friends having good boundaries in their life and relationships and yet sometimes I lack good boundaries myself. It's too easy to slip into the mentality that if I don't fix a problem, or help the person I see in need, then no one else will. But I think that the truest part of me will be ignited if I can learn to walk away from needs that I'm not supposed to meet. It's such an inspiring thought that a closed door which feels so restrictive and disappointing can open wide so many other possibilities!

One of the reasons that I am attracted to this growth process is because I know that there will be more freedom and more clarity for me to live the life that I'm supposed to live when I know what my limits and my limitations are. Another word that could describe what I want is wholeness. Palmer writes of his own experience in this direction, "I now know that to be whole means to reject none of it (my weaknesses, limitations) but to embrace all of it" (2015, pp. 70). Wholeness means that all of the parts of me can be at home and at peace and I don't have to force anything to keep the external expectations of others or the voice inside my head that says I have to be everything to everyone.

References

Palmer, P. J. (2015). *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. Wiley.