

CALLINGS FOR OUR TIME

Passages from “Call and Wholeness” by Krista Tippett, *On Being*, November, 3 2023

In the modern western world, vocation was equated with work. But each of us has callings, not merely to be professionals, but to be friends, neighbors, colleagues, family, citizens, lovers of the world. Each of us imprints the people in the world around us, breath to breath and hour to hour, as much in who we are and how we are present as in whatever we do. And just as there are callings for a life, there are callings for our time....

We are called to creativity and caring and play and service for which we will never be paid — or never be paid enough — but which will make life worth living. And each of us imprints the people in the world around us, breath to breath and hour to hour, as much in who we are and how we are present as in whatever we do.



And just as there are callings for a life, there are callings for our time. **Some of us are called to place our bodies before other bodies on the front line of danger Some of us are called to be bridge people,** staking out the vast ground in the middle and heart of our life together, where there is meaningful difference but no desire for animosity. **Some of us are called to be patient calmers of fear.** This calling is so tender and so urgent if what we truly want is to coax our own best selves and the best selves of others into the light.

There are many ways to analyze the crises and the tumult of our world ... political ways ... economic ways... But one way of seeing our world and the incredible toxicity and polarization is that it is pain and fear on the loose, pain and fear metastasized. So these callings ... about how we live into the fullness of our humanity become essential to generative forward movement on any of the great issues of our time.

“Issues” is too small a word for what we have to meet. Whether and how we rise to our ecological, racial, economic, social reckonings will mean the difference between whether we flourish and grow or whether we perhaps merely survive, as a species.

And ... it's come to seem to me that ... what we're called to collectively, is nothing less than the possibility of wholeness — to figure out what it means to be whole human beings, with whole institutions, living in whole societies.

Wholeness does not mean perfection but that we turn and structure towards what is life-giving, that we can become conscious of our complexity and our strangeness and work with them — as creatures who also have it in us to become wise.

**... your job is
trying to find
what the world
wants to be...**

“Vocation,” by William Stafford

That's our name, after all, *homo sapiens* — “the creatures who are wise.” But ... I have seen, experienced, learned that wisdom and wholeness emerge in lives and in places precisely in moments like this one — ours is writ large — when human beings have to hold seemingly opposing realities in a creative tension and interplay:

**power and frailty,
birth and death,
pain and hope,
beauty and brokenness,
mystery and conviction,
calm and fierceness,
mine and yours.**

The invitation here is to open wide your powerful, reality-shifting imagination, your heart, your energy, your will, to the possibility of wholeness — how to live into that. This brings us full circle back to seeing and participating in the generative story, the generative landscape, of our time to that simple practice of taking in the good, because again, there is so much learning and wisdom unfolding all around, right alongside our better-publicized dysfunction and decay.

.... Evolutionary biologists in our day are rediscovering or discovering for the first time humanity's superpower of cooperation. They are telling a completely different story than the one the West was built around — the story that we as a species have always progressed by competing and fighting and winning. It is simply not true.

In the name of that story, we perfected systems for making an “us” and an “other.” We made of the natural world an “other.” But now, on frontiers of seeing inside our brains and our bodies, we are grasping that we are also capable of change our whole lives long and that we have inhabited ecosystems — our bodies themselves are ecosystems — while we organized around parts. It even turns out that we are linked in our cells to cosmic time — the life and death of stars. Every generation of our species has looked up at the night sky and wondered where we came from — **we are the generation that learns definitively that you and I, and everyone you see is actually made of stardust.**



Every surface of fracture in our world notwithstanding, for us all of life is being revealed in its insistence on wholeness: the organic interplay between our bodies, the natural world, the lives we make, the worlds we create. It is the calling of callings to make that vivid and practical and real, starting inside ourselves and with the lives we've been given. So I'm going to end there. Thank you for being here, for being with me, for being with each other. Until we meet again.

Read or listen to the whole reflection —

<https://onbeing.org/programs/calling-and-wholeness/>

