

A Tale of Woe or A Story of Joy?

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There is an ancient Greek tale of a man named Sisyphus. He was a trickster who played his pranks on everyone, including the gods. One day he fooled the God of Death and locked him in a cupboard. Of course, the death god was not too pleased and when other gods eventually released him, he condemned Sisyphus to an eternity of rolling a large, heavy boulder up a mountain. When he reached the top, the boulder would not rest and it rolled all the way down the mountainside back to the bottom. This was the eternal tormenting load Sisyphus was condemned to bear, or so it would seem.

But, there is another way of looking at this story. Once Sisyphus got to the top he had a long time to enjoy himself as he made his way back down to the bottom. He would have a great view on the mountaintop and could savour all the magnificent scenery and wild flowers on the way down.

When he started his task over and over, he could think what a great workout he'd been given and how it will help him keep fit and healthy. He could break out into song and sing 'Oh! What a beautiful morning,' as he took deep breaths whilst gritting his teeth to push the rock up to the summit. He could observe the beauty in each vein of the rock and feel its sensational texture. He would have all the time in the outer world to understand that the rock and he are one and the same. He could instruct his mind to believe the rock was actually pulling him up the mountain and it was he who was resisting the rock's power. He could play a game of push and pull. He could be thankful for the great strength the gods had given him. So he would be able to continue his labour of love and fun. He could blow the gods kisses, and make up jokes for them, so that their mockery and laughter would focus on the jokes, which may be, forever, on them.

We all have our rocks to push up mountains. It could be that stock market portfolio that seems to be rising nicely, then crashes like a boulder to the bottom again. Perhaps a person becomes a writer, artist, teacher or shop assistant, etc. and then feels life is unfair ... that other people are not grateful for their contributions and the efforts they continue to roll out. Maybe mothers and fathers feel their children are not thankful for all their loving kindness and vice versa from the children's' perspective. There are so many situations in life where people feel as though they are given seemingly hard tasks to endure. They think their lot in life is not a happy one...only comprising more and more hard toil, ridicule, complains and mockery as the reward.

If we turn the tables on the way we view our efforts and enjoy our tasks, no matter how taxing and difficult they appear to be, we may find they are not that demanding and formidable at all. The secret lies in not letting other people, or false gods, take away our joy of living, no matter what labours we have to implement.

So here is the question to ponder. When your life on earth is nearing its end and you look back on each event, do you want it to be recorded as A Tale of Woe or A Story of Joy? Always remember...it's your rock...your mountain ... and your freedom of thought can make all the difference.

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