



## Caring and goodness are triumphing over fear

by Jean Houston, Monday, April 6th 2020

The epic scale of the coronavirus threat has humbled me with its power, and is asking more than just staying at home.

Now is the time to live out the promise that we all carry to become a noble, kind and compassionate people.

This week on television, I witnessed the best and most fearful sides of our natures. On the one hand, I saw violent videos of shoppers fighting over toilet paper, and also experienced indiscriminate generosity while shopping at my local Costco.

Customers who know the gravity of the challenge we collectively face stepped aside for each other in the aisles. If one item was left on the shelf, some asked the person behind them if they would like it. The obviously overworked employees were never too busy restocking the shelves to share a smile and ask how they could help. Strangers looked at each other — really looked at each other — and bonded in that momentary glance. There was a pervasive energy of collective caring.

Tonight on the news, I saw restaurant owners and chefs in New York who were transforming their empty restaurants into soup kitchens and creating food for those who might be hungry. Families in need were brought to tears with the unexpected kindness of these people.

Yes, my belief in our potential is vindicated as neighbor cares for neighbor and plans are drawn up for feeding children who can no longer go to school.

The remarkable thing is that this isn't a government that is rolling out a highly budgeted plan; it's individuals. As one restaurateur said, "I'm asked how long I'll be

offering food. I guess it's until I run out of money." My hope today is that we allow this crisis to evoke the best of us.

We can hunker down in fear, or look for the opportunity to care, each in our own way. Our kindness is a light. The more we extend it, the brighter it becomes and the more darkness we illuminate. We can give without any expectations until goodness flows from our depths, presents new possibilities, and expands our sense of purpose.

The benefit is not only for those we touch but is also like my Costco experience, where our generosity of spirit can create a positive energy that permeates the very air we all breathe. It creates a powerful new vision of who we are and what we can accomplish together. We must hold fast to that vision until it becomes reality.

So my dear friends, I invite you to create a new virus of caring, of a nobility of our humanity that becomes even more contagious than the one dancing in the headlines.

This is our time. We can choose to surrender to fear or we can show the world what it means to be thoughtful, to be generous, and to be proactive in helping friends or strangers alike. Perhaps this is an initiation of sorts in which we are invited to step into a new experience of our interdependence and empathy.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, during the last debate, announced his intention to create programs that would "make us whole." As we extend ourselves into the well-being of each other, we return to wholeness as the family of humankind. Self-serving actions and the illusion of separation can transform into a collective strength that is more encompassing than divisions of race, economic status, gender preference or political party.

It can be as simple as a smile, an encouraging word, a "window visit" to an elder care home, or a letter to someone in prison. Your words of encouragement are constantly influencing our perceptions and worldview.

Take all the precautions that are recommended, and at the same time be bold in your love, and constant in your faith that together we will pass through this challenging time. On the other side of it, we will look back and realize that we were part of an epic time in history when caring triumphed over fear, and goodness prevailed. This is creating the culture of peace.

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