



Reading

How many times have you heard it said, “I don’t want to make the same mistakes that my parents made.” I’ve said it myself many times. Even now, [a parent myself] I cannot renounce those words. Fathers and mothers, even with the best of intentions, hurt us and scar us.

As bad as those wounds might be, our fathers and father figures are part of a past that has formed us, and we must not turn our backs upon that past. There have been times when I tried hard to make my memories disappear, but the end result was not liberation, not more freedom. It was, rather, a feeling of living in limbo, or existing nowhere, or being a mere abstraction. It is fatherhood, ultimately, that has taught me to affirm my father and to love him, even as I struggle with his memory and my need to wrestle a blessing out of him.

My father was a workaholic, the kind of guy who always said, "If you're gonna do it, do it right or don't do it at all." A doctor, people loved him. He always gave his total loving attention to patients, answering all their questions, knowing all their names.

When I think of my father, a story comes to mind. A mother and her nine-year-old son were at a grand concert hall, tuxedos and evening dresses everywhere, a high-society extravaganza. Paderewski, the famous composer and pianist, was scheduled to perform, and the mom had hopes that her son would be encouraged to play the piano if he could just hear the immortal master.

The boy was fidgety, and as the mom turned to talk to her friends, he slipped away, drawn to the concert grand Steinway on the huge stage. Unnoticed, he sat down. He placed his small, trembling fingers in the right location and began to play “Chopsticks.” The conversational buzz hushed as hundreds of frowning faces turned in his direction. “Get that boy away from there!” “Where’s his mother?” “Somebody stop him!”

Backstage, the master overheard the sounds out front and quickly put together what was happening. He rushed on stage and stooped over behind the boy, reached around both sides, and began to improvise a counter melody. As they played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy’s ear, “Don’t quit. Keep on playing ... don’t stop.”

These are the precious words that all people need to hear – especially in the face of regrets and the perplexities of existence. We play the tune we are born with, or given, or create, but something stands with us, improvising a counter melody, whispering in our ears to keep going, that we are exactly where we need to be at the moment.

[Adapted from original by Anthony David, “Wrestling Match” "Wrestling with Adulthood: UU Men Talk about Growing Up"]

Sermon

I grew up in a world of men. Three brothers, seven uncles, ten male cousins, two grandfathers, one great grandfather, six great uncles, and of course, my dad. I grew up amongst swirls of often competing male energy. I loved all these men in my life, even though it wasn’t always easy, and so the well-being of men has always been important to me. Especially as I grew in my understanding of feminism, it became clear that patriarchal ways of being not only hurt me and the women I loved, but also all the men in my life. I still grieve for those of my beloved who were and are stuck in old ways of being that damaged themselves and those who tried to love them. I continue to hope for the rest of my beloved, that they find healing and hope and renewal and I speak this morning in the spirit of that love and hope.

This has been a momentous week for this country. With elation, bitter disappointment, joy and sadness around every turn. As I watched the returns come in on Tuesday night, I spent some time reflecting on how Barack Obama and John McCain presented themselves as men during this campaign. How did they embody their masculinity? And how might that have spoken to voters?



John McCain clearly set himself up as a warrior. A veteran, and POW, he became the brave, valiant and self-sacrificing hero who never left the battlefield. He always had something to fight for or resist or protect, whether that be corruption, his own party, a piece of legislation, or his political opponent. He always donned the mantle of the warrior, the one who makes strong decisive decisions, the one who is knowledgeable, skilled, courageous. A man who has seen much, lived through much, and is ready to expand his battle field to serve the entire nation. And he has the scars to prove it.

Barack Obama did not set himself up as a warrior. As a black man that would have been a dangerous thing to do in a country where the connection between black men and violence is so strong in white consciousness. He needed to be non-threatening but not so non-threatening as to seem weak and ineffective and overly feminine. So he tried to embody a strength of a very different kind – the strength of a Martin Luther King - a unifier who surrounded himself with ability and knowledge. He sought to embody steadiness, wisdom, calmness, a deep sense of caring, competency, and a clear sense of direction. He rarely displayed anger, rarely became emotional, some said to his detriment. His body language was contained. He projected the image of a man in control and as the economy tanked in October, that's the image that caught everyone's attention. This man was in charge of himself and his campaign, just like he'd be in charge of the nation.

Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, authors of *King, Warrior, Magician, and Lover*, a book about how to reclaim the true masculine, have a lot to say about what it means to be a real man. They believe that men are hardwired into four archetypes – the King, the Warrior, the Magician and the Lover. In everything that men do, they access these archetypes. Sometimes they'll act out of their King self, other times out of their Warrior self, and so on. These archetypes aren't just owned by men. Women carry them too although they may not be as predominant.

Moore and Gillette might say, for instance, that Obama embodied the archetype of the King. The King inspires hope and trust and loyalty. The King has a larger vision and welcomes those who follow him into that vision. The vision contains not only a new direction, but also safety, security, and stability. The King takes care of his people. For the true King, it is never about the King, it is always about those the King serves.

Obama also embodied the Magician archetype. The Magician is a transformer, taking what is impure and making it pure. Obama offered a message of healing. He held up all the bitter stuff of the last eight years and offered the promise of a better world, where hope could be alive again.

John McCain was the scrappy warrior had no fear of getting down and dirty and calling it like he saw it. He didn't give an inch to his opponent. His supporters saw in him the warrior who would always fight for them and protect them from socialists, Marxists, terrorists, liberals, immigrants, big government, taxes, and Wall Street. They wanted that kind of warrior on their side. McCain also played the magician archetype, promising to transform the scandals of the last eight years into a restored Republican party.

Gender is such a defining element of who we are, and undoubtedly voters responded to the way the candidates embodied their masculinity. What else would we do when electing the most powerful politician in the country, the one who is to be our leader. On any given day, McCain and Obama moved through all the archetypes - the King, the Warrior. The Magician. And.... The Lover. Of course, who can forget the Lover, the archetype of play and pleasure and passion, of deep feeling and connectedness.

I saw this archetype most clearly in Obama during the primaries. Even if he was playing it cool, the Lover archetype was certainly being projected onto him, especially by women, and if Saturday Night Live had anything to say about it, especially by CNN. Those who followed him often craved a connection with him, wanted a piece of his passion and his message. I also think McCain tried to access this archetype. When he chose Sarah Palin as his running mate, he was trying to connect himself with her passion, her sexual appeal, and her drive. Through Palin he tried to engage his beloved nation and its people.

These archetypes are part of our inner architecture. Every man is a warrior, a king, a magician and a lover. Every woman, if she is in touch with her masculine side, is also a warrior, king, magician and lover. These are powerful and life affirming and when you live them fully you are all the man you can be.

And yet, in each of these archetypes there is the danger of falling into its shadow side – the warrior becomes addicted to violence, the king becomes a tyrant, the magician falls into manipulation, and the lover becomes an addict, filled with passion



to the point of being controlled by it. Gillette and Moore say that the shadow archetypes are what we fall into when we play the script of patriarchy. When men fall into the dysfunctional ways of being men that have been taught to them by our society, they are accessing the shadow side. Furthermore, Gillette and Moore would say that much of the evil in this world, and a good portion of its pain, is because most men aren't living out of the adult side, the light side, of these archetypes. They're living in the shadow, the boyish side, the immature side, for this is what we teach our boys to be as they grow up.

Moore and Gillette have made this deep injustice their battlefield. They see the pain and misery, they see the lost potential, they see the damage and want something more for men, women and children. What these archetypes really represent is a holy battle – a battle between the world of equals, when all men and all women are free to be who they are – and a world of unequals, where might equals right. These archetypes and how they manifest inside each of us draw us into the battleground where we're fighting for equality on a dramatic scale.

Moore and Gillette might say that John McCain was the warrior archetype who fell into this shadow. He lost sight of the terrain of his battlefield. He took on the dishonorable weapons used by those who discredited him in 2000 and this previously honorable warrior became mean and nasty and stretched the bounds of truth in a very uncomfortable way. Instead of self-mastery we saw pettiness and a misdirected ego. He moved from hero to grandstander and sometimes bully. He also played the shadow side of the magician. Rather than taking the impure and cleansing it, he took anything he could find against his opponent, and made it into a toxin for the purposes of sowing fear and distraction, all with the goal of victory. And like the misdirected lover, his passionately-driven tunnel-vision towards that goal came to control him.

Obama's critics said that he fell in the shadow side of the King on his overseas trip in the summer. He got carried away with the King archetype, attached to glamour and glory rather than service. They tried to paint him as over-eager and power hungry, an opportunistic celebrity who needed to come home to the people he hoped to lead and care for. Indeed, as Obama takes the reigns of power, he would do well to hold on to the adult side of the King archetype. There is always the danger of a leader losing his footing and forgetting who he serves.

Each archetype has its light and its shadow side and we inherit both of those. Just as in our reading today – you can't renounce your inheritance. It is part of who you are. We carry the light and the shadow. They're the scripts that are given to us to play, much as that little boy sat down to the grand piano and plunked out his awkward song. But luckily, the master saw and understood and surrounded the little boy's simple song with his own magicians' power so that the boy could see what was possible.

It's that possibility that I want for the men in my life, for my beloveds, and for yours. But we've got some work to do because we're sure not there yet. We are still ruled in so many ways by the patriarchal shadow side of those archetypes. We are still on that holy battlefield.

You know what makes me saddest about the nature of John McCain's defeat? In some ways, it is a defeat for all men who resonate with the battle. John joins a growing line of discredited warriors. George Bush misleading us into war with thousands now dead. Wall Street executives who fought their way into economic success only to leave behind an economy that is in a shambles. Each took their battlefield and misused it because they saw only the victory.

The warrior archetype is the most feared and the least understood of the archetypes and many have failed trying to live it. Mostly because we think it means war, many feminists think the warrior is synonymous with the oppressor, so a lot of men suppress this archetype for that reason. But I have really come to believe that men hunger for a battle field, where they may hone their prowess, demonstrate skill and mastery, and ultimately create something of value for which they will be respected.

I have also come to understand that men hunger to lead, to be the King, even if just in their own lives and in their own hearts because to be a King is to work in the timeless realm of honor and nobleness. But this archetype is also feared and misunderstood. Especially in liberal circles like ours, we are often distrustful of male power and anything that looks potentially hierarchical and patriarchal. So often our men will try to suppress their King self in order to gain approval and respect. Sadly, it prevents many of our men and boys from engaging key aspects of who they are.



“Unleashing the Masculine ”

Rev. Krista Taves

November 9, 2008

Emerson UU Chapel, Ellisville MO

We all have the warrior in us. There is so much drive and energy and a holy aggression in our warrior selves. And there is such a hunger in us to engage in a life of honor and noble purpose. There is a king inside every one of us, waiting to lead, wanting to inspire trust and loyalty. We hunger for respect and honor – both in the receiving and in the giving.

I now have a beautiful nephew and I wonder what kind of man is he going to be? His grandmother is rooting for the magician! His grandfather, probably for the King. His mother would say that he becomes a little Tyrant at every meal. His father is just so proud I can almost see his King crown glinting in the sun. I look at the boundless energy of the boys in this congregation. What are their battlefields? I see the rising masculine energy of our teenage boys. Who is going to teach them to be passionate lovers of life? I see the challenges of our fathers and working men, carrying the heavy responsibility of providing, guiding and loving, and still wanting to play. Where is your inner magician and lover now? I look at the sacred drivenness among our senior men to keep creating, always shifting in that battlefield of life. What does it mean to be a King when the King is approaching the reality of the new kings waiting behind him? How are you going to be the ruler of your life in these years?

Oh we love our men, even as so many of us will never understand you. But we hunger to. We want your warrior self to be all it can be. We want your king to rule in all its fullness. We yearn for your magician self, with the kind of transformative prowess that many of us haven't seen in a long time. And of course... the lover.... That passion freed from the constraints of all that would hold you back. We hunger for these in ourselves, and we dream of them for the men we love.

Someday, maybe sooner than we think, may it be so.