

A Sermon on Madness

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for December 3rd, 2023 (and beyond)

The title of this sermon could easily be *a sermon on stir craziness* or *a sermon on boredom*. Initially I was going to title it “A Sermon on Mad Women”, but understand that while women historically have been primarily homebodies for our/their own safety given at times rampant incivility in the public square, they aren’t the only ones suffering dependency without means of their own to relocate and potentially no opportunity to live as anything other than a charity case in economic terms depending on skill set, means to gain new skills/certifications/etc, and available jobs fitting their current skill set.

As a result of said dependency and being an economic charity case, some feel entitled to be kept in the manner to which they’re accustomed without needing to acquire independent means. For those who feel so entitled, there is some hypocrisy unless they insist for the sake of equality everyone is entitled to receive the same level of charity they do at minimum, if not more. But, if they believe they deserve the level of charity that keeps them in the manner to which they’re accustomed and others don’t equally deserve, that’s vanity and hypocrisy.

From a position of relative comfort and no means of one’s own, the home of the homebody may feel like a fort or a prison. If the homebody is actually disabled and/or suffering traumatic stress related to harm that has befallen them potentially repeatedly away from home, home may feel more and more like a fort or safe-haven from which they fear to depart. Such individuals often feel very grateful for having a relatively safe place away from external threats, however may still be prone to boredom and need a hobby which may turn into a way to earn money but would still require charitable gifts of materials for the hobby where the hobby is constructing birdhouses or something similar that could later be sold for a potential profit which could be used for more materials or potentially lead to independent means.

If the homebody has suffered harm in the home and fears both home and more so the public square having been too sheltered, the home feels more like a prison from which there is no escape. Homebodies may be prone to what seems like paranoia or may even be paranoia as a result of their own experiences. But, overcoming that fear and understanding how the economy works and people go about establishing independent means can be extremely overwhelming and seem impossible to those so situated. At times this can result in attempts to dominate or control the immediate environment in response to the feeling of absolute powerlessness that permeates their daily lives.

Whether feeling entitled to or grateful for charitable assistance that is not legally mandated unless the dependent is legally so recognized and therefore a minority where their provider has the right to make their life choices for them to a great extent as a matter of law, or feeling imprisoned in one’s home, the way out is through independent means and potentially a call to law enforcement to start the process in terms of the homebody overly sheltered and harmed in the home environment.

But, right now, 142,577,000 individual income tax returns were filed with reportable income with the IRS in 2023 for the 2022 tax year. 66 million Americans currently receive Social Security and 40.2% of those have that as their sole income. Those receiving social security are required to file income taxes annually. 26,532,000 Americans filing income tax returns live solely on Social Security and have no other income. That leaves 116,045,000 individual federal income tax payers with potentially gainful employment at this time. There are 258,300,000 adults in the US at this time. Source: <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/united-states-adult-population-grew-faster-than-nations-total-population-from-2010-to-2020.html> This suggests 55.1% of US adults are unemployed or 142,255,000 adults in the US are unemployed and have no reportable income. In 2022, the US economy added 4,500,000 jobs. <https://www.epi.org/blog/historic-job-growth-in-2022-reflects-strong-but-uneven-economic-recovery-state-and-local-lawmakers-should-prioritize-rebuilding-the-public-sector-in-2023/#:~:text=Nationwide%2C%20the%20U.S.%20economy%20added,pandemic%20relief%20and%20recovery%20measures>. Are charity cases right to feel trapped in their current situation? Would you if in their shoes? Over time would you see yourself as potentially thinking of your home as your fortress and cling to it with the force of someone mad? How feral in behavior might you become in terms of insisting on keeping your territory and the manner of living to which you're accustomed regardless of economic or social realities? Does this explain why so much activism?

Whatever am I to do? Whatever I can without letting facts deter me from dreaming and trying. Would you give up? Would you know the world hasn't abandoned you, but that you abandoned it if you stopped trying? Is there a way we can all understand reality and have compassion for those of the 55.1% that didn't find a job last year and may not this year either or even next? Would you resort to a life of crime if there were no other option for even the illusion of independent means? Would you like being in a situation where you are constantly told to be grateful without being given a reasonable chance to provide for yourself? How long before you go mad under these circumstances as a dependent? Would a hobby help? I say hobbies help. Some people collect leaves and that hobby costs nothing. And, some are selling 100 real fall leaves for \$18.97 right now on Etsy. For some antique French pressed leaves, those are going for \$272.69 on Etsy used right now. There's always a way and a reason to hope.

I'm alright and hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season!

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.