

A Sermon on Individual SWAG (Stuff We All Get) "Bags"  
Sermon by Minister Angela Smith of COPE for April 12th, 2020 (and beyond)

If unfamiliar with the parlance, a SWAG Bag is what some formerly referred to as party favors in gift bags or with assorted gifts. The Stuff We All Get in the SWAG bag of life is life itself in whatever bag it may come in and I do not support the use of the phrase "old bag" to refer to women of any age or demographic. However, I did laugh myself realizing how some may arguably abuse the double entendre in reading this sermon or listening to it. So, as always, a sense of humor helps.

To tell someone the limitations on individual SWAG Bags involves variables including arguable achievements of predecessors received via heredity, arguable rigging to maintain current position of established players, fear and/or ignorance reinforced rather than addressed effectively due to prejudices of any sort, is to be completely honest. And, you can join an existing team or start your own team if seeking to participate in the game of life. But, how successful you and/or your team is will depend greatly on how you maximize your SWAG Bag contents regardless of if you got a GAG Bag because many are simply set aside for April Fool's Day and sometimes leftovers are redistributed on other occasions when the SWAG Bags have already been taken like some twisted game of musical chairs from some perspectives at times. But, like when playing even Super Mario Bros and you know you start at the basic screens and have to learn to overcome all those obstacles well before you can move onto the next screen or challenge, life is like that too. But, maybe you've never played Super Mario Bros or are a cheater and look up the cheat codes to get to other screens without actually achieving that through your own skill. And, if a cheater, the only reason the games have that remotely available is to reveal your character to others so they are now warned that you cut corners and in real life may put you at great risk for short-term gain that may result in death or other disaster in a video game. Eyes wide open time.

For the sake of another microcosm example, think about elementary school lunches. Now, if you are in 2nd grade and it is lunch time and a classmate sits next to you with their lunch, you are likely both curious what the other brought. You may even trade if you each like something the other has better than what you each came with in terms of lunch. "I have an apple and you have a cupcake, I'd prefer the cupcake will you give me the cupcake in exchange for the apple?" It totally depends on the classmate and if they are willing to trade. What would you do? What would Jesus do? Now, say you refuse to trade the cupcake for the apple. Is it acceptable to you that the party seeking to make the trade uses undue influence, coercion, intimidation, peer pressure, or bullying of any sort to make the trade happen? What about public shaming? Would you say "My metabolism can handle the cupcake, clearly yours can't so stick with the apple."? Now, what about someone without any lunch at all and no lunch money who might be hypoglycemic asking for anyone to share anything and willing to eat the apple or the cupcake or half a sandwich or anything? Are you going to share with that classmate? What would Jesus do? Jesus would arguably give his whole lunch and any money he could spare to cover supper too in the event the classmate would not eat without said help. But, say the hypoglycemic classmate gets aggressive as a result of low blood sugar and just grabs

lunch or robs someone of their lunch money leaving the other without lunch. It's a legitimate medical condition where aggression is normal as a result of low blood sugar that could be addressed simply by providing lunch without any lunch-shaming at all to those who would otherwise be deprived of lunch as a result of economic disadvantage where any opportunity for advancement is actually impracticable where not impossible as a result of historic disparities and a sick version of musical chairs involving real property and other resource distribution. Should we forgive the hypoglycemic on medical grounds if not moral ones? Would our own generosity towards the hypoglycemic classmate in sharing to begin with have addressed the issue so no aggression would manifest at all whether medically caused or not? We can brag about what we had or are having for lunch and broadcast that so everyone who has no lunch at all hears about it and knows it is possible even if impracticable or unlikely for them at any given time. And, we can see that as offering some hope that it is possible while hypoglycemic classmates or fellow global citizens see it as akin to Marie Antoinette's bullshit and we all know what happened to her. So, to share or not to share, that is the question. And, sharing is caring, the rest is lip service most can live without and others don't understand anyway.

I personally prefer the status quo to what is happening with the whole COVID-19 thing and recognize that arrogance and ignorance know no class distinctions when it comes to resolving or addressing humanity's suffering. If someone walked up to you while you were dining and said "My grandfather used to work for you, but, didn't get paid what he was worth or you committed what some refer to as "wage theft" in regards to compensating him which is a large reason I now can't afford lunch, you owe me lunch now," what would you say? What if someone said, "Your grandfather used to work for me and he stole equipment, sabotaged production, and pulled all kinds of shit but had a good sense of humor so we kept him around. But, I feel like as his grandson you now owe me lunch to make up for all the shit he pulled while working for me. In fact, I'd like a gift card to cover my lunch for the rest of my life to make up for it," what would you say? Ex Post Facto is what I'd say in either case. The Statutes of Limitation exist for a reason and Ex Post Facto is part of the US Constitution in regards to barring retroactively applying new laws. So, that makes it a moral argument and not a legal one so it is one in which the government, legislative bodies, and such can be left out of it. But, if someone is trafficking people, committing wage theft, or even vandalism or other forms of theft, they can be turned in and prosecuted in a timely fashion where victims can get restitution at law. But, without wages there can be no wage theft. Or, that's my understanding and you are welcome to disagree.

So, find out where you want to go and know how to get there by following the example of someone who started out equally positioned with the exact same or nearly identical SWAG or GAG Bag you got to start life with and ended up where you want to be. Then, follow every step or take very similar if not the same steps to get there. You want to play basketball like Michael Jordan or Lamar Odom? Practice, commit, and learn everything you can possibly learn about basketball. Try out repeatedly and don't let rejection stop you from trying unless it is obvious that your love does not equate to talent in the field and you are better off as a fan or friend of the team. And, if you give up on everything including yourself, everyone will join you. If you believe you've nothing to offer, others

believe that too. Many will be generous and see you as a charity case or a candidate for institutionalization of some sort while others ignore you entirely. And, I love you, whether you are a charity case or not, as does God. Love isn't money and money can't buy you love. But, for basic needs money is necessary regardless of country or denomination and if heredity didn't provide for your SWAG Bag through fortune of birth, then you must invest your labor where others have already taken the risk and put up the money or take that risk yourself if not investing in your education with a reasonable plan for a viable career once you graduate.

I'm thinking of Jesus and Easter Sunday as it is Easter Sunday in the US today. And, if you get an Easter Basket consider that your complimentary bonus SWAG courtesy of Jesus and celebrate his life by sharing and caring today and always.

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

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<http://www.churchofphilosophicalexploration.church>

and

<http://www.heal-online.org>