

Morning Meditation ~ Inspiration

Given all the stress and strain that we swim in each day; given the negative news cycles that can be on 24-hours-a-day both on the television and in our minds; given that 2020 has been the very definition of the word, “unprecedented” there are two things I notice happening with me. First, is a reminder that no one has this all figured out. No one has solved the perplexing puzzle of living in a time such a times. Some might confidently say they see clearly, but we are all staring into the mirror that the Apostle Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 13. We see dimly because the brain fog and deluge of daily information is too much. Our inability to disconnect impacts our ability to decompress. Please re-read that sentence. I know my inability to disconnect impacts my ability to decompress or chillax or rest/renew/recover.

Secondly, given the above, I crave inspiration. I crave that which will stir my soul and remind me that brokenness and bad news are not the only truths. I need moments of where the traces of God’s grace become more visible. This week I want to share with you four moments that I find inspirational. I long for encounters and experiences that help to rewire my brain waves because living constantly in the flight/fight/freeze/flock lizard brain of my mind is exhausting.

When was the last time you were inspired?

Where did that inspiration happen? Had it happened in moments like that before or was this serendipitous?

How did you respond?

For example, I was inspired reading a novel on Friday afternoon. (FYI, it was a novel by Fredrik Backman). The moment happened in my favorite easy chair where I often read and find the inspiration of being lost in a good story. I responded with a smile, a deep breath and feeling the joy of finishing a book.

If last week, we focused on gratitude as a companion, the moments of engaging gratitude open us to is inspiration and feeling fully alive (to borrow a phrase from Howard Thurman).

Take time today to consider prayerfully where you are discovering inspiration and how you can stay open to the movement of the Holy in your life each day.

Prayer: God take my life and let it be, blessed with grace-filled glee. Take these broken moments and days, heal our world with love that amazes. Amen.

Morning Meditation ~ Inspiration – Quotes

There is in every person an inward sea, and in that sea there is an island and on that island there is an altar and standing guard before that altar is the “angel with the flaming sword.” Nothing can get by that angel to be placed upon that altar unless it has the mark of your inner authority. Nothing

passes “the angel with the flaming sword” to be placed upon your altar unless it be a part of “the fluid area of your consent.” This is your crucial link with the Eternal. From *Howard Thurman, Meditations of the Heart*

As I mentioned yesterday, words inspire me. Words from poems, prayers, novels, sermons, speeches, causal conversations, and even silence can communicate God’s love. I have been living with the above quote from Rev. Howard Thurman for awhile now. First, Thurman names that there is a sea within us. On Sunday, we heard the Creation poem when in the beginning it was the Holy hovering and hanging around with the chaotic seas. I certainly have felt the seas of my internal life churn and crash in these last few months. The boat called, “my life” has been tossed to and fro searching for a safe haven to come ashore, rest, and renew. So, I love when Thurman goes on to say that there is an island – an oasis where you can park the boat of your life, step onto the sandy beach to breathe and be. Do you have such an oasis either external/physically and internally/emotionally? The place where you can go where the truth that you are God’s beloved is discovered again as if for the first time? As you name the place and space, Thurman says, explore and experience it, find that on the island amid the sea there is an altar.

Pause with me because that word, “altar” might make you think of the wooden table at the front of the church. While that is one example, it is only one. Altars were originally stones. In Genesis 28:10-22, Jacob lays his head down on a pillow of a rock – which is one of the funniest images of the Bible. As he lays his head down to sleep and prays the Lord his soul to keep, he sees a ladder or stairway between heaven and earth – where the earth is full of the holy. Jacob is blessed by this vision and builds an altar out of rocks. Where is your rock altar? It doesn’t have to be rocks, it could be flowers or pictures or crayons or books or a speaker to play music. Where is that sacred space in your house where peace like a river attends your soul? If you are unsure, how might you create such a place?

On the altar within us, there is an angel, just as Jacob encountered. The angel blesses and beholds what is set upon the altar. The angel counsels and cares. The angel provides and protects. Stay with me, because in our cultural moment with information overload, not every tweet or news story or experience and encounter should be laid upon the altar of our soul.

As a matter of fact, most of what we encounter, might not belong at the altar and would be better left adrift out to sea. Not every message in a bottle is holy, not every phone call is vital, not every text needs to be answered immediately. What are you leaving at the altar on your island amid the seas of today?

I encourage you today to make an altar – a holy space in your home. I pray that what you construct there would externally give expression to the internal truth Thurman writes about.

Prayer: Constructing and creating God, help open my heart, awaken my mind, and move in my life to find sacred space within and around. May the altars of my world internally and externally help me echo Jacob, “Surely God is in the place and I didn’t realize it.”

Morning Meditation ~ Inspiration – Prayer

One of my favorite prayers is the one of St. Francis:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Part of inspiration is taking words and adopting and adapting them. We can re-write beloved prayers and psalms and hymns to help give expression to what we are feeling. For example:

Composing and conducting God, strum the strings of my heart.

Loosen the tension of blame and shaming myself as well as others.

When my jaw clenches, help me breathe deeply.

Break through the balance sheet mentality of who deserves Your love.

Help me live the questions of faith as a holy part of the journey.

Let Your hope interrupt me so much that I laugh.

Let Your light shine brightly on my path, illuminating the next right step.

Let the melody of my life be in harmony with Your holy symphony.

Grant, O God, that I might not crave praise and power, as much as to share grace.

Grant, O God, that I might not seek the spotlight as to be a lighthouse.

Grant, O God, that I might not live as only for myself, but for those who matter most.

O Divine dancer who shimmies and swirls in my life with the sacred,

Let today be inspired by You in all I do and say.

Amen.

Now...it is your turn. You can adopt and adapt this prayer or perhaps Psalm 23 or the Lord's Prayer. If you are wondering if it is really okay, you have permission (not that you needed it). And may you also know that by tomorrow you might need to re-edit your prayer/hymn again. May God's creative care awaken the words you need/long to share. Amen.

Prayer: Let the words above leap off the screen and land in the lives of everyone who reads them. Amen.

Morning Meditation ~ Inspiration - Pictures



It was supposed to rain. It was supposed to be a gray and gloom night. It was supposed to be an evening spent at home. But then, the rain never came. Then, the breeze began to blow refreshing air. Then, the sun began to set leaving behind a beautiful array of colors.

Inspiration is around us, but sometimes we miss the moment. Sometimes we stay safely inside (both literally and metaphorically). Sometimes we don't venture out. Sometimes we don't see the trace of God's grace because we are too busy looking elsewhere.

What do you see in the photo? What color leaps off the photo at you? If you stepped into the photo, what would you smell? What would you hear? What would you feel? If a photo is worth a thousand words...take a few moments to consider some, a few, of the words this photo provokes for you.

May this one moment that I captured on my iphone camera last Friday sing to your soul and open your eyes to the beauty around you.

Prayer: God who colors with all the crayons in the box, continue to open me to the ways You are at work in the world today still creating and crafting life. Amen.

Morning Meditation ~ Inspiration -Music

Last Sunday we sang the hymn: *God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens*. I invite you to read these three verses slowly, savor the words, and pause after each verse to consider what words inspire you? Which words/phrases confound or confuse you? What images dance in your mind? Here is the hymn:

God, who stretched the spangled heavens infinite in time and place,
Flung the suns in burning radiance through the silent fields of space;
We, your children, in your likeness, share inventive powers with you;
Great Creator, still creating, show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstasy of winging through untraveled realms of space;
Probed the secrets of the atom, yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life's destruction or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons, may it challenge us anew,
Children of creative purpose, serving others, honoring you.
May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor, well begun;
Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one.

A few lines that sing to my soul. First, in the first verse, the line, "We, your children, in your likeness, share inventive powers with you." This is an echo of Genesis 1, where God creates humanity in God's image. Since God is creative, we, who have made and molded by God, also have such artistic fingerprints of the divine on our souls. You may not think you are a creative in terms of painting or poetry or writing. But, I believe just trying to live right now takes creativity. Just seeing the sunset picture for yesterday and letting it sing to your imagination is creativity. Walking around your neighborhood and seeing the shades of green is creativity. Second, I am fascinated by how the second verse reminds us of the brokenness that can come from our human creativity. We can craft something that brings life or death/destruction. This is true not only physically but also with the words we offer. We hear this constantly, rhetoric that divides and describes others as less than. We may have traveled to space, but in the space of our hearts there is a mystery more expansive than any galaxy known. We need not board a rocket ship in order to travel thousands of miles, there are worlds within each of us too. Finally, in the third verse, "May our dreams prove rich with promise, each endeavor, well begun; Great Creator, give us guidance till our goals and yours are one." I could pray that prayer every day and never exhaust all it might mean for my life.

So, you have heard my reflection, please post a word/phrase you found powerful in this hymn as well as a few words about why. I can't wait to read what you say.

Prayer: Great Creator...still creating...continue to inspire and infuse us with Your holy grace and presence every day. Amen.