

“Rooted in Holy Ground with Living Water”

Exodus 3:1-5, John 7:37-38, Ephesians 3:16-19 & Psalm 46:10

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PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING Loving God fill us with your Spirit, your breath, your abundant life. Open our eyes to beauty, our ears to harmony, our hearts to love, our minds to wisdom and our souls to joy. Speak to us through your love letter to us the Bible and through one another. Amen

Exodus 3:1-4a “Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. Moses led the flock to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. The angel of God appeared to Moses in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. Moses looked. The bush was blazing away but it didn't burn up. Moses said, ‘What's going on here? I can't believe this! Amazing! Why doesn't the bush burn up?’” The text suggests that God had been trying to get Moses' attention for a while. How do you think God tried to communicate with Moses earlier? How many times do you think Moses missed God's communication? God's love is steadfast and everlasting. God never gives up on any of us. God keeps communicating always hoping to get our attention.

Exodus continues **Exodus 3:4-5 “When the Lord saw that God had caught Moses' attention, God called to Moses from out of the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ Moses said, ‘Yes? I'm right here!’ God said, ‘Don't come any closer. Remove your sandals from your feet. You're standing on holy ground.’”** Normally we do not think of a remote scrub bush in dessert sand as holy ground, yet wherever we perceive God there is holy ground, a way to listen to God. Removing one's shoes is a gesture of respect and honor, for Moses it was an act of worship.

Where and what is your Holy Ground? Where do you perceive God, receive forgiveness, learn, grow and renew your passion? How do you perceive God's hope? How are you inspired to live God's hope for your life?

- It could be holy ground when you are taking a walk when an idea occurs to you about some change you want to make in your life.
- It could be holy ground when you are reading a book, or watching a movie, when something suddenly comes alive for you.
- It could be holy ground when you are in the midst of an argument, when something clicks inside your head, and you remember that you love this person causing you to have a low anxiety debate and celebrating your common ground.
- It could be holy ground when you have a day off from work, away someplace, giving you the opportunity to find yourself again.
- It could be holy ground when you are busy with the responsibilities of the day when a child asks you to read her a story.
- It could be holy ground when you are in the midst of trouble, frustrated over the woes of life, then you receive a call from a friend.

Music, art, a delicious meal, people, anything, anyone might be your holy ground. Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes, “Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God; And only she who sees takes off her shoes—The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.” Holy ground is all around you. God is working in your life and speaking to you.

My favorite place to go growing up on our farm was the lake. It was a small lake, only seven acres, however it seemed big to me as a child. It was secluded in the center of our property surrounded by trees and a short distance from an old growth forest. I have numerous fond memories of the lake. I caught my first fish there with my dad, enjoyed many refreshing swims and cherished numerous picnics with my family under a majestic weeping willow. In junior high, I built a shack on the lake shore and often would sleep at the lake during the summer falling asleep to the loud rumble of the frogs. Taking the rowboat out was fun especially around sunrise in the fall when the lake would steam, then later reflect the fall colors. I saw an abundance of wildlife: deer, fox, ducks, geese, raccoons, beaver, otter, hawks, lynx, dragon flies and even an endangered snow owl made their home around the lake. Sometimes a black bear joined the group. My favorite spot was to sit on the overflow, listening to the running water, watching the sun glisten in the ripples and make spectrums in the spray. It was extra special right after a rain with that fresh earthy smell. I would dangle my feet in the current; the water felt so powerful on my feet yet so refreshing as water droplets

danced on my skin. My senior year in high school the overflow was damaged, so I spent from sunrise to sunset repairing it for a week. When I smoothed the last of the concrete, I carved the date, my full name and then a heart with just the initials of this wonderful young lady I had just started dating. I made the initials shallow just in case Leslie broke up with me, so I could grind them out. Leslie's initials can still be clearly seen today.

In hindsight, the lake was special because I experienced God there. It was my holy ground. God revealed creative beauty, mighty power, sustaining care, sabbath rest, and wonder filled joy. The lake is where I prayed. Although, back then I was not aware that I was praying. The lake is where I went to let go of anger, fear, and hurt. The lake is where I "let come" as I pondered and wrestled with choices until a decision emerged that was peaceful. In essence the lake is where I unknowingly listened to God. I experienced God's grace through the refreshing swims that revealed how God forgives, refreshes, and invigorates us from all our sins and mistakes. I experienced God's love through the love of my family and friends. I experienced God's playfulness through games, adventures, and discoveries.

Jesus explained that to live abundantly we should live like a lake. A healthy lake has an inlet, a constant water source such as a river or spring and an outlet where the lake pours out life. **John 7:37-38 "Jesus cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let them come to me and drink. Rivers of living water will brim and spill out of the depths of anyone who believes in me this way.'"**

In what ways are you thirsty?

How do you drink in God?

Jesus' desire is for you to be nourished, receive, accept, enjoy a growing friendship with God invigorating you to go on grand adventures of ever expanding love with God.

The Apostle Paul prayed for us and all people. **Ephesians 3:16-19 "I pray that from God's glorious, unlimited resources God will set you free with inner strength through God's Spirit. Then Christ will make God's home in your hearts as you trust in God. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep God's love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God."**

On Maui, there is a magnificent banyan tree at the center of Lahaina spanning two acres and multiple centuries. I had the privilege of resting under this hospitable tree. The day I was there it was shading an art fair with hundreds of people. People were sitting on benches, enjoying picnics on blankets, children were playing, a variety of food vendors were serving delicious treats and the canopy hosted numerous birds and critters. The tree has several medicinal properties, shades the entire block and has a colorful scarlet-red fruit. Last April, the tree had its 150th birthday. The tree is a beloved community hub at the heart of the city.

A wildfire destroyed most of the city. Several people perished. The tree was subjected to the intense heat of the fire, killing the fruit and leaves, scorching the ground and charring the bark. And its extensive roots are still sending sap up the trunks of the tree. Experts are hopeful that the tree will survive. It will need 3 to 9 months of rest and care before it will be able to start sprouting new leaves. For the tree to survive it will need the care of the community that the tree has cared for for decades. The tree needs help. The community is eager to save it. They are watering it regularly and will aerate the soil and nourish it with a compost tea micronutrient mix.

Perhaps your life is on fire and you are burned out. Then, you need rest. Ask for help. Accept help. There are seasons when one can help others and seasons when one needs to receive care. The nourishing life of God's love is always present for you to draw upon the energy of God's infinite resources.

If the tree dies, it will be resurrected to the glory of heaven reunited with the people of Lahaina that have already journeyed through the portal of death to everlasting life. Every good, loving, joyous aspect of life will live forever.

God is setting you free. God is making whole God's temple, you. You are God's temple. In the midst of the chaos, the fires of life, God is rooting you in love, love that formed the cosmos, love that sustains all, love that is eternal, love that heals, love that forgives, love that celebrates your unique goodness, love that will unite everyone, every tree and the entire cosmos in harmony forever.

The psalmist sings: **Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know God."** Sometimes God commands us to do nothing, simply to be. For the next 3 minutes we are simply going to be and know God in three minutes of silence. 3 minutes of silence

Amen.

