

Sacred Time and Sacred Places

We live in a world where we are swamped by methods of communication and yet we find ourselves unable to communicate. Silence is the missing and vital ingredient. Even as little as five minutes can be restorative and healing

How do we find a quiet place, amidst our busy lives, to enable us to find that restorative and healing time; what makes a place holy or sacred for us?

In spirituality there are places known as “thin places.” Thin places are places where people are known to experience or feel the mysterious presence and power of God. In the Old Testament diagram of the Tabernacle Moses built in the wilderness, there was an outer courtyard which led to a tented place called the Holy Place which led to yet another area called the Holy of Holies.

I believe that wherever we are God is. But I also believe that there are places where we may be more deliberate in our desire and efforts to position ourselves to have an awareness of God’s presence. When we come to church we come expecting to be *in* the presence of God, and to experience the presence *of* God because this is a place set apart for that very purpose.

However, when we think of the environment as a spiritual landscape we imagine mountaintops to be overwhelmingly places of God’s presence.

Have you ever been to the top of a mountain where it seems as though you can see forever? Have you ever been to the top of a mountain and seen its sweeping beauty? You stand there and slowly rotate 360 degrees and, no matter in which direction you look, you see the pure beauty of God’s creation.

I am told by people that go skiing that they have seen the sweeping panoramic magnificence from the top of ski lifts. In March Derek and I were trekking in the Himalayas when the panoramic views were breath-taking and in the silence and the stillness there were moments when we felt particularly close to God and as though we could see forever.

However, there are not only mountaintop experiences that happen on actual mountains; but there are what are called ‘mountaintop religious experiences’. These are those special times when we see with utmost clarity who God is. When there is no fog, no haze, there are no trees, no obstructions, and there, just for a moment, in that mountaintop experience, we see with utter clarity a vision of who God really is. We know instantly in absolute surety that the vision is true.

Whilst I was surrounded by the snows and peaks of the Himalayas I was reminded of Martin Luther King, when, in his most famous sermon he said, “ I have been to the mountain. I have seen the promised land.” King had a vision of the promised land where all races would live together in peace, as brothers and sisters in one family, a vision of God’s creation joining nation to nation. “I have been to the mountain and seen the promised the land.” Martin Luther King had a vision; he believed the vision and he gave his life for that vision.

Visions, moments of truth and clarity: to be able to see past the hindrances and the possibilities, to be above the fog and the haze, to know in all certainty that God loves us and he has a purpose for us.

I wonder how many of us have experienced King's type of mountain and have had similar visions knowing with absolute certainty that they are loved by God and that they are part of God's creation.

If more people had listened to Martin Luther King and shared his vision I think the world would be much better and a kinder world than it is now. If more people had paid attention to his words there would be more people in the world who would know what it really means to love one another; to understand God's kind of love that is totally unconditional, that only asks that we love him in return.

Holy moments make for holy places wherever they may be and are where we can pray prayers of thanks, offer words of encouragement, apologize to someone, even say, "I love you." They maybe moments that change a bad attitude, or perhaps feed a stranger, share our faith or even begin a new course of action that helps us to take a step in the right direction, or drop someone a note. Wherever we are and whatever we are doing, God is there with us in the high places and the low places.

When we stand atop our own personal mountaintops surveying the majesty before us from north and south and east and west, it makes us marvel at the wonder and works of God. However, the real challenge for us is to **pay attention** so God can **get our attention** transforming holy ground places into holy ground moments..

And you know, it really is true, that if you do climb up to a mountaintop, you just may see forever. Amen

Prayer

Lord, you are always there
waiting for us.
May we never be too busy to
find time to spend in your presence.