

Wild Geese - Tree Walk # 1 Base Script

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Part One

Opening Prayer

Holy God

Three and One

Creator, Created, and Creating

We ask to see this world as you would have us see it.

We ask to feel this world as you would have us feel it, smell it, hear it.

Speak to us in this language of this place

Call us by name

Call us home into your world

Help us love this place

Take a few breaths.

Notice what is around you

Note - what draws your attention?

Why? What do you see there?

When you are ready, start to walk.

If you are in a woods, a forest, even a park or street with trees

Please pay attention to the trees you encounter.

What do they look like? Tall and thick? Short and still stretching up? Old and twisting? How are the branches? Thick and few down low?

Take about five minutes or longer if you want.

Hit pause, I'll wait as long as you need.

Part Two

Genesis 1.11-12

Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every

kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.

In the 1990's, a young biologist was trying to figure out why a stand of newly planted Douglas Firs were not thriving like they should. They had plenty of room and sunlight to grow in the replanted clear cut. But instead of thriving, many were dying. Dr. Suzanne Simard started looking at the Mycorrhizas, a network of fungi that connected the roots of trees, all the trees. A PhD student at the time, Simard built a convincing case that all trees in a forest were connected to each other via the fungi. Information about the health of individual trees were communicated via the fungi. It turns out that healthy trees could exchange nutrients and chemicals that feeds distressed trees and fend off opportunistic insects.

In his book, "The Hidden Life of Trees," German forester Peter Wohlleben also explores how trees communicate not only via the fungi connections but also by sound, chemicals, and electrical impulses. When he walks through the forest near Hesse that he manages, he sees whole communities of trees where older trees nourish younger baby trees to encourage slow, careful growth that sustains a tree life of over 400 years or more. Wohlleben takes another step and sees trees that are experiencing the world like any other animal and making choices about how to be in the world like any other animal. Wohlleben suspects that memory and thought, if it exists, somehow lives in the root system. At any rate, it is safe to say that the most important part of a tree is underneath our feet and hidden away from our eyes.

The interconnection of everything in a forest raises another question - is a tree simply a tree or is the whole forest of trees a whole unit? The question of connectivity keeps showing up. Even our own bodies are hosts to microbes and bacteria by the millions, each of whom also work for the good health of the whole. We are systems. The whole world is a system of systems. We are all communities, each of us as well as our families, cities, countries, the back yard, the farm, and the wild wild forest.

Even God is part of a community - somehow a part of the trinity of Father, Son, Holy Spirit - Creator, Created, Creating. Does it surprise us that a community God would want to create and love communities in our world?

For the next part of the walk, I'd like to suggest that you might keep an eye out for all the connections you can find. Think about the natural space around you. What do you find that belongs to each other? What do you see that belongs to you and you to it? Where do you sense God in all of it?

Part Three

If I could, if I had my desire - this would not be a recorded meditation and you would see me walking with you and others. Most of Christian spiritual practices are intended to be experienced in community and I miss it intensely. Community helps us stay connected to God in healthy ways. The community of Christ is much like an old growth forest. We are connected to Christ and each other through the connective threads of the Holy Spirit. We are prompted to sustain each other, to move material and emotional resources so we can all live a healthy life together.

I miss that weekly affirmation of how we belong to each other and to God and to all the green growing plants around us. I miss you.

Eventually, we'll gather again. We have to. It is how we were made. Until then, we can still gather in the world God has made. We remain connected and will continue to nurture each other.

In the meantime, we can always send loving care and support to each other by prayer. For the next part of this walk, ask who needs to be prayed for? See who drifts into your mind and heart. Ask God to be present with them and to send what is needed. Ask God to be present with you and send what is needed. Ask God what you can send to others. Ask God nothing. Sometimes silence and noticing is enough prayer.

This is the last stop before the end. The next segment is the blessing so if you plan to leave this natural space you may want to end your walk next to your exit.

Part Four

Blessing (Sam Hamilton-Poore)

May the Creator give you eyes to see the new creation springing forth.

May Christ give you ears to hear the laughter of new life.

May the Spirit set the feet of your heart dancing to the rhythm of resurrection.

Resources

The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate - Discoveries from a Secret World, Peter Wohlleben, English copy 2017 William Collins.

The Social Life of Forests: Trees appear to communicate and cooperate through subterranean networks of fungi. What are they sharing with one another, Ferris Jabr, New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/02/magazine/tree-communication-mycorrhiza.html>

Blessing is from *Earth Gospel: A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation*, Sam Hamilton-Poore, 2008 Upper Room Books