

*Let every creature praise his holy name  
for ever and ever. psalm 145*

**Dear Beloveds:**

I hope this message finds you well, having enjoyed a Memorial Day weekend of rest, reflection and celebration. As many of you know our weekend was filled with celebration not only of those who gave their lives for our country but of the One who gave His life for all.

As such, my sermon was on praise and its transformational character. Praise changes us and causes us to touch the glory of God by participating in God's cosmic sacred nature.

One of the premises for this formational change is that when we get outside ourselves, when we let go of our ego, we meet our truest selves and we encounter the divine. It is then that we also encounter the truest parts of all creatures as God has imbued all creation with sacred nature.

These encounters outside our contrived security and with a holy mystery can be anxiety-producing. Jesus tells us to fear not for He is in us and we in Him. Moreover, the Holy Spirit has come upon us to lead us and inspire us toward this unity and divine state. We are always accompanied and assured in our journey.

David Brooks has written a book, *The Second Mountain*, which addresses this transitional process in moral and more secular terms. He suggests that we are all first or second mountain people. First mountain people think hierarchically and live for achievement and personal gain according to our culture's prescribed values. Second mountain people, either by crisis or by some revelation, are characterized by having surrendered at least in large part, their egos and live for a greater good which is usually a community.

It is my hope that we will all read this book this summer. It is my hope that we will engage in meaningful conversation about it in the fall. It is my hope that it and the Gospel message will help us to better understand what it means to be the beloved community and what it means for each of us and our identities.

We are all on a journey; we are people of the Way. May we hold each other and cherish our mutual desires as we cherish the God who cherishes us!

**Blessings on the Way,  
Martha**

**P.S. The following poem has helped me recently process the deep joy in the birth of our grandson Owen alongside some pastoral struggles with loved ones. I share it in the hopes that you too might be “filled with love and poetry” as we learn to “praise and surrender to the emptiness”**

**"Buoyancy" by Rumi (version by Coleman Barks)**

**Love has taken away my practices  
and filled me with poetry.**

**I tried to keep quietly repeating,  
No strength but yours,  
but I couldn't.**

**I had to clap and sing.**

**I used to be respectable and chaste and stable,  
but who can stand in this strong wind  
and remember those things?**

**A mountain keeps an echo deep inside itself.  
That's how I hold your voice.**

**I am scrap wood thrown in your fire,  
and quickly reduced to smoke.**

**I saw you and became empty.**

**This emptiness, more beautiful than existence,  
it obliterates existence, and yet when it comes,  
existence thrives and creates more existence!**

**The sky is blue. The world is a blind man  
squatting on the road.**

**But whoever sees your emptiness  
sees beyond blue and beyond the blind man.**

**A great soul hides like Muhammad, or Jesus,  
moving through a crowd in a city  
where no one knows him.**

**To praise is to praise  
how one surrenders  
to the emptiness.**

**To praise the sun is to praise your own eyes.**

Praise, the ocean. What we say, a little ship.  
So the sea-journey goes on, and who knows where!  
Just to be held by the ocean is the best of luck  
we could have. It's a total waking up!  
Why should we grieve that we've been sleeping?  
It doesn't matter how long we've been unconscious.  
We're groggy, but let the guilt go.  
Feel the motions of tenderness  
around you, the buoyancy.  
-- from [The Essential Rumi](#) by Coleman Barks