

Reflection on Mountain Tops and Peak Season
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I have stood on Mount Nebo in Jordan across the Jordan and like Charleton Heston I have seen the Land of Promise from up high. I saw the green valleys and the deserts stretch across the land as far as the eye could see. When I heard that Moses never got to this Land of Promise I felt sorry for him---after all that wandering, all those days with those stiff-necked people always complaining. Instead he was touched by God's hand and saw his back. That was his reward. Divine presence. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. also claimed during his last sermon that he had been to the Mountain top but knew he would not get there with his people. However, he knew that his people would get to the Promised Land some day. Some day.

Dear Ones, as we continue our collective journey to the Land of Promise, heaven on earth, where all God's people will be treated with dignity, respect and equal rights, I want you to take stock of where we are---how close or far are we from God's shalom for all God's people and creatures.

This Autumn is like no other most of us have ever gone through. We are in a global pandemic, the reckoning of racial injustice, and the collapse of our planet due to our misuse and abuse. On top we are in an election season that many say will affect our very democracy.

Yet in spite of all this, we've had a glorious fall. Some have said the best in years. The leaves have been brilliant---the reds have stayed red longer than usual and the harvest has been abundant. But now the leaves are beginning to fall from the trees and soon they will be empty. We've gone through the peak. We are not alone, Dear Ones. Hear these words from the German poet Rilke:

And yet there is someone, whose hand
infinitely calm, holding up
all this falling.
Can what has fallen as seed
become the flowering of new life?

Autumn's brilliance will soon be replaced by November's grey and later winter's white. We as a church have made the most of our freedom to worship ---outside all summer and now carefully inside but the Promised land of a pandemic less world still remains far off and all we have now is each other whispering hymns beneath our masks and smiling with our eyes.

So Dear Ones, let us celebrate in verse and song the season we are in today. Like the seasons, our spirit has many movements. After this peak brilliance is a call to let go, surrender. The leaves are our guides. Each of you should find on the pew a leaf. Later in the service, I will guide through a short guided- meditation that involves you holding this leaf. You will be invited to let go of things that no longer serve you, block you, or keep you from growing into your next best self.

Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves and this includes our non-human neighbors who share earth's eco-systems with us: the trees, the bees, and even bacteria. Let us live deeply and joyously into this season of harvest, sharing, and surrender savoring each.