

Psalm 66: "Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name: give him glorious praise! Say to God, 'How glorious are your deeds! Great is your power that your enemies cringe before you. All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name'" (1-4).

During this pandemic, one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is daily walking with God. Divine walking fills you with unexpected gifts of spiritual transformation. It is the wedding of your soul with creation. The walk gives you fresh eyes to see, ears to hear. It is no longer a matter of gazing at the mountains or meadows and just admiring their beauty. No, there is something else deeper. A deepening sense of oneness with the earth, with the Creator. The place where God cradles and grows life, nurturing your soul.

This awareness began early in my lifetime, playing, exploring, and constructing everything from swimming holes to teepees in the forest. My journey rekindled when I went to a seminar at Saint Francis Retreat Center near Stoneville, NC. Along this two-year journey, we are to find a tree that speaks to us. At that time, I thought it was a strange request. Sitting with a tree, listening. We journeyed through the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter to learn creation's lessons.

This walk was a time of spiritual renewal and metamorphosis. My unnamed tree was my teacher. The tree I choose was a tall oak tree planted by a creek, undermining its exposed roots. Each visit, I marked its wounds from unsuspected cuts and storms. Where once its arms bled, now visible healing scars.

I remember sitting down next to this mighty oak with its serpentine limbs reaching toward the sky with its feet firmly buried deep inside the ground, listening. It had withstood the test of time. I remember trying to write a letter of thanks to God's marvelous creation.

*Dear God, I love this tree. I love the filtering of sunlight through its leaves, forming shadows of light and darkness. I love its earth song as the breeze rustles through the decaying leaves, the rhythm of crickets, the beating of wings, the play of squirrels on its limbs, and the flow of calming waters beneath its foundation. I love the rainy mist that bathes my face falling from the tips of its hands. I feel I'm a part of it, that it's a part of me. Here, surrounded by your creation, I hear you. Life is a gift. I feel connected. O God, is there anything you've created that can't pour into me?*

It was the beginning of my healing journey. It was a shout for me to come back and tend to my soul. This wounded tree made me realize as we begin to walk with God, to let go, to release the hurt and pains, old things past away, all things are becoming new. We become more aware. We begin to respect our bodies as the container of God. We find a deep reverence for the Holy within creation itself and ourselves.

Psalm 66 is a call to walk with God. A summons to return to earth and unearth the bruised, hidden caverns of our soul to find new life. The paradox of this exploration is as we explore the darkness, hidden blessings await. Walking with God who heals, rebuilds, and restores. It is the walk. It is then we can give thanks and praise to God. It's never too late to begin the walk with God.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. Psalm 150:6 (NIV)