

The Courage to Be: Finding Ground When the World Shakes

Opening & Arrival

So, just in case you're not sure where you meant to be: what we're here to do is talk about **The Courage to Be: Finding Ground When the World Shakes**.

Let's take a minute and ground together. It's Election Day. There's a lot happening across the country. I appreciate your decision to be here for an hour and a half and to center into a larger story, knowing that what's happening around us and outside us is real—and that the shaking of the ground may be happening in your own personal life as well as in our collective life.

So this will, hopefully, speak to you no matter where that is for you. I'll share a little bit later about how I came into this work, but for now, let's just take a moment of silence and be here together.

You can soften your eyes if that feels right, or you can simply breathe—dropping an awareness of roots going down, all the way through the floor, through the earth, to the very center of the Earth. Grounding us. Holding us fast.

Recognizing that, literally, the planet is spinning and whirling through space, and yet we are held fast by love.

So just lean into that solidity of the earth.

And then, like a tree, come up through the top of your head and reach for the light above. Sense the way light and love pour down into us from Source.

Recognize that in our heart, we are at the center of both the vertical axis and the horizontal—reaching out, in our mind's eye or even physically, around the Earth, connecting us to every human, every rock, every stone.

At that intersection in our heart, we are aware of the both/and: that we are humanity and also more than humanity.

As Meister Eckhart says, *we are not God, but we are not other than God either.*

We are both matter and eternal energy.

So take a moment and open to this gathering we have here today. Some of you know each other; some of you don't. Allow our hearts to connect, knowing that we are one with each other and with all that is—even if our minds can't comprehend that, our hearts can.

Breathe into that mystery for a moment.

Now take a minute and notice what you're carrying right now.

Maybe it's a worry.

Maybe it's a to-do list.

Maybe it's a person.

In a few minutes, when we open our eyes, we'll take turns sharing where we are and naming what we're bringing into this space. We'll place it—physically or in our mind's eye—onto a stone, or onto the little altar space I've set up here. I don't know if you can see it yet, but I'll show you in a moment.

So breathe in: what do you hope for during this time?

And breathe out: who or what are you carrying as you enter here?

We'll take a minute to share—very succinctly, because there's a lovely group of us.

Those who are here in the room can place a stone. Those online can place something on your own sacred space.

If you're willing, just share: where you're joining from, what your hope is for this time, and someone or something you're carrying.

Participant Sharing (Names Omitted)

One participant shares that they're here because of everything happening in the world and the feeling of an earthquake under their feet. They're hoping to reduce the shakiness they've been feeling.

Another participant shares that they've been carrying a lot of angst and are hoping for lighter energy today. They mention connecting with the tree imagery during the grounding.

Another shares that they're here to learn—to slow down—and that they were invited by someone they know.

Another speaks of carrying burdens and wanting, at least temporarily, to step away from them.

One participant shares that it's their birthday and that this gathering feels like a gift to themselves—a chance to reflect and connect around shared concerns for the world.

Another shares that it's Election Day, that they're feeling troubled about the state of the country, and that they're carrying some health concerns, hoping to feel more grounded.

Another participant speaks of bringing hope for the United States.

One shares that they're carrying a deep sense of mistrust after being hacked and losing money, and they're longing for peace—especially peace around disappointment and shaken trust.

Another participant offers a moment of levity with a short birthday song, then speaks about seeing God clearly at the micro level but struggling to trust at the macro level. They name a longing for peace and trust, especially amid family health concerns.

Another shares concerns for the country, the Earth, and the suffering of people, and names a hope for grounding and peace together.

One participant shares that they're recently widowed and that grief and loneliness are very present. They're seeking connection, support, and a place to begin.

One participant shares that they live in Estes Park and are working with Elizabeth, and that both the relationship and the topic drew them here. Like many others, they're carrying a heaviness about what's happening in the country. They also bring to mind a friend from another time—someone from a more conservative Christian background who has been judgmental of their kind of Christianity. After a recent exchange, that relationship is very present for them.

Another participant shares that they're joining from Denver and are bringing a sense of hope—hope and peace that they're trying to hold within themselves, trusting that what's held internally can be shared outward, especially in a time when so many need it.

Another participant shares that they've missed Elizabeth's wisdom and insight and wanted to return after learning so much from earlier gatherings. Like others, they're carrying political and environmental worries and are looking for a steadier place within themselves. They name feeling anger at times, even a sense of giving up, and hope this space might help them return to the center. They're also carrying concerns related to aging and deep worry for their grandchildren and the future they'll inherit.

So thank you, all of you. I want to honor everyone here—those nearby and those joining from far away—and the cares that bind us, both individually and collectively. I want to honor that we are not alone.

We are representative of many, many people across the country and across the world carrying similar fears and burdens.

One of the things that always blows my mind is that when the first person ran a mile in under four minutes, people all over the world started doing it. They didn't know each other, but once one person had the capacity, others did too. That always boggles my mind.

I think it's a reminder that what we do individually actually matters. It matters tremendously.

So while not everyone is ready—or wanting—to go deep in this way, we can offer this on behalf of all those across our world. As we grow our capacity, so do they.

I want to offer this whole evening not only on our own behalf—to find that stillness and to be that stillness in the world—but also to help others by building our capacity.

I'm going to do a little teaching first, and then we'll return to conversation. I'm going to invite everyone to mute—not because I don't love you, but because I do want to record this. I'm also going to shift the camera a little bit, just so the focus is here.

Welcome again.

Some of you have known me for a long time, and some of you don't really know me at all. When I prepared for this, what I kept coming back to was that this offering is less about cultivating personal bravery or stillness, and more about allowing our lives to have a deeper resonance—so that the ripple going inward is also the ripple going outward.

Scientists are very clear that vibration, or resonance, makes all the difference. In some sense, that's all we are—vibration.

Too often, many of us pick up our resonance from what's happening outside of us. And in times like this—when things are unsettling and deeply disturbing—it's hard to find peace because we're absorbing that resonance.

Mystics are just ordinary people like you and me. They're not perfect or idealized. They're fully human. But they learned to live from a deeper, truer resonance—one that impacted those around them.

Take Jesus, for example. People who lived with him didn't initially think he was anything special. What they noticed was something else—there was a resonance, a recognition. One person calls it a recognition energy.

Out of that came a sense of *wait—I want to know more. How are you living?*

They were living in an occupied city, in an occupied territory, without many resources. And yet somehow Jesus lived with a heart-open spaciousness that people gravitated toward. They said, *I want what you have. That way of being is appealing.*

Mystics are people who, across many contexts—some from concentration camps, some from plagues, some from extraordinary suffering—were ordinary people living ordinary lives who lived from the center out.

They recognized a deeper resonance and attuned to it rather than simply picking up whatever vibration was dominant around them.

This isn't about pretending we don't have fear. It's not about overcoming fear through force of will. It's about listening deeper—attuning to something deeper.

In fact, we all know how to do this. We've just forgotten. It hasn't been handed down well in recent generations.

We've divorced ourselves from the natural world. When we define nature, we often think of it as something *other* than human. But we are part of nature.

For millennia, people paid attention to the stars. They navigated by them. They lived by their rhythms and cycles. Now we've relegated that to the funny papers—one little snippet, ha ha, astrology, doesn't mean anything.

Mystics of all traditions—and I include poets here—are not confined to one lineage. A mystic is someone who lives this resonance. When they speak, they speak from that place, helping us find ground.

Some of you know me well; some of you don't. What brings me here is not that I'm an expert. I do have a lot to share—more than we'll ever have time for—but what brings me here is that I've lived this and found it trustworthy.

A very short piece of my story: I had a traumatic brain injury and had to step out of parish ministry. That came after I'd already done a deep dive into the mystics with remarkable teachers—Richard Rohr, Jim Finley, Cynthia Bourgeault—and years of reading and attuning to these teachings.

But then I had to live it. I had to let go and trust—not in outcomes, but in the way.

It was an extraordinary journey, and it continues to be.

Within a couple of years of leaving the parish, our youngest suffered tremendously over nine months and died by suicide in 2021. Walking that path, and continuing to walk with them now, I had to let go of my need for outcomes and find a joy not dependent on circumstances.

Parents often say we're only as happy as our happiest child. When your child is deeply unhappy and may not survive, you're forced to ask: *What is it I live for?*

The mystic path held me when my world fell apart—when my worst nightmare came true. This is not a bypass. We still feel everything. It's not about pretending things are fine.

It's about feeling fully and also knowing you're held by a deeper resonance. It's about continuing to listen to the song of love even when your heart is breaking—because then it breaks open into a larger space.

This may not mirror the collective suffering we're facing right now, but it is real. It's tangible. It's trustworthy.

Many mystics lived through plagues, camps, persecution, and profound loss. They speak from having walked through fire and still finding beauty.

Paul Tillich, the theologian, says:

“Courage is the affirmation of one’s own being in spite of those elements of existence which conflict with it.”

So part of what we're doing here tonight is asking: *Where is our center?*
What is the basis for our way of being?

Typically, many of us have only known how to ride the waves of what life brings. On a good day, we're good. On a bad day, we're not. When we lose our job, we're not in a good place. When we get a new job, we are. We ride the waves, right—of the surface of the life we're actually living.

And there is a deeper dimension.

I remember when I was scuba diving. You know, you'd get to the top in Hawaii and it would be choppy. But even if it was choppy on the surface, when you got down to the bottom, you'd sway a little, but it wasn't choppy. There was just a kind of, *oh, okay*. I'm in this ocean. I'm one with this ocean, but I'm not being tossed about by it.

So part of this work—of this path—is: how do you drop to the bottom? How do you let go of what's at the surface, asking for your attention and demanding so much, and drop down into something deeper?

And it's not really that courage is about bracing ourselves. Courage is the courage to keep our hearts open to love, as opposed to shutting down when we're afraid.

Think about it—our whole bodies crunch up, right? We just kind of go *ugh*, and everything in us tightens. When we do that, it's very hard to make space.

Sometimes I'll even clench my hands and then relax them, again and again, just to remind myself: I am trying to cling to a control that doesn't exist. I'm clinging to an illusion of control. And the very act of clinging is, in fact, preventing me from experiencing what is.

So instead, allowing the emotions to rise and fall—and not riding them, because they won't stay the more we don't cling.

I remember with grief. My dad died when I was very young, and I didn't know how to deal with the grief, so I tried to push it away. That meant I was living under a blanket of grief all the time.

With Bee's death, I had learned by then to do something different. If I'm in grief, I'm getting Bee's stuffed animal. I'm putting on Bee's music. I'm looking at the pictures. I'm all in. I am all in to the grief.

And then it's clean. It washes through me. I've honored it. I still carry it—I walk with grief every day—but I don't feel suffocated by it.

So part of this path is remembering to feel the feelings, let them be, and release them. If you can even do this kinesthetically, it can be helpful.

I used to try to get my kids to punch a pillow. It didn't really work very well—it's not very rewarding. But if you really need to, it's like: what can you safely throw?

I had a friend who knew I was carrying so much grief I couldn't get it out. She took me into her basement, which was under construction, and handed me a six-pack—or maybe a twelve-pack—of wine glasses. She said, "I want you to take one at a time and throw it."

The first one, I was like—
But by the second one, I was just like—
And I still want a place for people to be able to do that.

There is something about noticing where you're holding it, and then moving—dancing, shaking, crying, hiking—allowing it to flow through you and not get stuck.

And being true to what's real—but not just the surface of what's real.

So allowing those waves to come through until you discover there's something more. We'll get to that with the exercise around fear in a little bit, so I'll come back to this.

Man's Search for Meaning—some of you may have read it long ago. Viktor Frankl was in a concentration camp, and he wondered why some people were relatively okay there, and some were not. He realized that when we can no longer change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.

I love this image of the tree with the rock—growing around it, emerging around it.

We do have it in us to try to change things for the better. We vote. We give. We take concrete actions to make people's lives better, to alleviate suffering. That is imperative. This is not pretending that nothing we do matters.

But we are often in situations we cannot control.

I couldn't fix my daughter's suffering. We don't know what will happen in our country right now. We may not be able to change it in the way we want or on the timeline we want.

What we can always do is change ourselves—and how we show up can make all the difference.

This is that resonance again.

Are we picking it up from what's around us? The more we feed the outrage-and-fear cycle, the more outrage and fear we feel. And we're not doing anyone any good.

The system we're in right now depends on outrage and fear—the clickbait, the “Can you believe what they did?” and “Can you believe this?” It’s like we’re vying to outdo one another in outrage. And it’s addictive.

There are very real reasons to be concerned. I’m not pretending what’s happening is okay. But when we stay in the cycle of outrage and fear, we become part of the problem. We’re not breaking the cycle or choosing a different way.

Part of that choosing is realizing that we are conductors. What’s in our field gets communicated, whether we like it or not.

You know how with kids—it’s *do as I say, not as I do?*

Kids pick up on what’s real. They don’t care what we say; they pick up what’s real.

And we do too.

When we’re anxious and fried, we start scrolling.

We’re not actually shifting that energy when we stay in reactivity. We’re just being a conduit for the lightning.

A bird sitting on a wire isn’t a conductor for electricity. It’s when we’re in that hyper-vigilant state that we need to go for a walk, disconnect, listen to music, spend time with friends, and reset ourselves—because what we’re doing otherwise is amplifying either a deeper resonance, which we’ll keep coming back to, or the chaos itself.

What we focus on grows.

So this choosing to ground in love is not denial. It’s conscious alignment.

That’s what made the difference for those Viktor Frankl describes. They were all in a horrific situation, but some magnified the bad, and some shifted it. They changed not only their own internal experience, but the experience of those around them. They found ways to love anyway.

Etty Hillesum is an incredible example of this. She was a young woman in Holland—not initially in a concentration camp, but in a precursor situation—and we have many letters and journals from her. She had this extraordinary capacity to recognize that, despite everything, life was still full of beauty and meaning.

She even looked at her prison guards and saw them as real people. Even though they were doing despicable things, even though they were behaving in terrible ways, she refused to dehumanize them in the way they were dehumanizing her.

So part of what we're talking about—and we'll do this more deeply on retreat, because we just don't have enough time here—is that we all have a core that is one with God, one with all that is. And we all have layers of patterning, conditioning, ways of framing and seeing and believing.

Etty was able to recognize that who she really was lived deep inside—and that this was true of every person, even when their outer layers had been shaped by ideologies that justified dehumanizing others.

She was unwilling to see people only at the surface. She could see them at their center.

Think about it: many of us aren't even aware of the ways we're conditioned by the lives we've lived—the places we've lived, the schooling we've had, the experiences we've had. If we were born into someone else's life, we would be very different people.

The way I see the world is directly shaped by my experiences—the things I've read, the people I've encountered, the losses, the gifts. That's very different from someone who grew up in a completely different context, with polar-opposite experiences.

So part of this journey is letting go of defining ourselves by externals and instead defining ourselves from that core center—and learning to see each other that way too.

There's much more here than we can touch tonight. But part of it is this: when we unhook from the chaos, we can let the storm pass through without it consuming us. And then we actually can make a difference—for those around us and collectively—in ways that have real impact.

When we're stuck in the small self—our anger, our reactivity—we lose that capacity. We give up our freedom and fall into reaction instead of choosing how we act.

It's relatively easy to choose love when things are going well. Even then, we still bump into each other and create misunderstandings. But the real quality of love emerges when the situation is very, very hard.

The quality of love is profoundly different when the conditions are difficult—and that difference ripples outward.

Cynthia Bourgeault talks about this. Gurdjieff talked about this: conscious labor and intentional suffering. There's something about the density of this plane—about how hard love can be—that gives it more power than if it were easy all the time.

That's why the mystics are so powerful.

Someone like Etty Hillesum. Someone like Julian of Norwich, writing in the midst of the plague and saying, *All shall be well. All manner of things shall be well.* The world was falling apart then, much as it is now.

And yet she dropped into a larger truth—a deeper truth—that said there is a bigger story than what is vying for our attention.

What we focus on grows.

Choosing, in the face of the extraordinarily hard, to affirm that there is still beauty, still grace, still love—this is profoundly countercultural.

And it is, truly, revolutionary.

One of the things that enables the mystics to live this way is their realization of the **Oneness of All That Is.**

We are not a drop in the ocean.

We are the entire ocean in a drop.

In the mystic understanding, there is an awareness that we are, in fact, one with all that is.

This is very hard for us to grasp when we've been formed under Newtonian physics—because I'm sitting here and I'm not over there, and you're not over there, and we all look pretty solid. But quantum physics tells us something very different: that it's all energy, all vibration; that we are not nearly as solid as we appear; that we are mostly empty space; that there is quantum entanglement; that there is a mystery our minds struggle to comprehend.

The mystics knew this too. They recognized that when something shifted in them, it actually impacted others.

Joseph Campbell's classic **hero's journey** is about going out, traveling far, slaying the dragon, and returning with something to offer the community. But the **heroine's journey**—which is available to all of us, not feminine or masculine, just *human*—is about integration. It's about wholeness.

It's about realizing there isn't really an "us and them," or "you and me."
It's about healing the split between spirit and body, between doing and being.
It's about integration.

This is where Aramaic becomes so helpful. Jesus spoke Aramaic, rooted in Hebrew scripture. Both are Semitic languages, and both assume **continuum**, not polarity.

If you said *masculine*, you also meant *feminine*.
If you said *light*, you also meant a degree of *darkness*.

Because there wasn't a light switch. There was no instant "on" or "off." Everything existed along a spectrum.

So when Jesus speaks about inside and outside, good and bad, neighbor and enemy, he's not talking in binaries. He's pointing to a single continuum. What's inside of me and what's outside of me belong to the same field.

I can't treat myself one way and treat others another way.
The way I treat the outer world is connected to how I treat the inner world.
The masculine in me is connected to the feminine in me.

This is a journey of **wholeness**.

It's very similar to the mystic path of realizing that if I insist *I'm the good one and you're the bad one*, we'll never reach wholeness. But if I can recognize that I hold a partial truth—and you hold a partial truth—and yes, I may be attached to mine, but it's still partial—then something opens.

Space opens for the other.

I want to pause in just a minute, but let me say one more thing.

Right now, we are collectively in a place of **breaking**.

There are cycles and patterns that have been in place for millennia. Phyllis Tickle once observed that roughly every 500 years, everything falls apart. Five hundred years ago was the Reformation. Five hundred years before that, the Great Schism. You can trace these cycles back again and again.

Astrologers would say this is Pluto in Aquarius—cycles that repeat every 250 years. Two hundred fifty years ago was the American Revolution. Two hundred fifty years before that, another massive shift.

We are in a cycle right now.

The systems we've relied on are breaking—and they need to break to make room for something new. Systems that rely on “my group over your group” are giving way—painfully—to something that says *we're all in this together*.

And systems don't change easily. They don't change when things are comfortable enough. They change under pressure. Powers and principalities exist to protect those already benefiting from them. They don't let go without resistance.

I sometimes think of it like a plane flying through turbulence. You want to be seated when you hit that rough air. Eventually, you rise above it—but you don't skip the turbulence.

Collectively, we're in that turbulence now.

The astrology is extraordinary. There are four or five major cycles converging that almost never happen simultaneously, and they're all happening now. It speaks to how much change is being compressed into this moment.

Over the last fifteen years—and especially since the pandemic—there's been a marked increase in spiritual searching, in awareness of oneness, in longing for something that truly grounds us. Resistance has also increased. But despite that resistance, we *are* moving forward.

What I hope today—and the retreat to come—will offer are tools and reminders. Ways to stay grounded in daily life. Ways to remember that how we live matters. That what we focus on grows.

There will be many people waking up. Many people realizing they were misled or caught in systems they didn't fully understand. If we stand there saying, “*I told you so*,” that won't help.

This is where the parable of the **prodigal father** is so beautiful—because all of us are in that story. Every part.

But you know that younger son—he thinks he's got it. He's hell-bent on living a certain way. And then he realizes he's in a pigsty, and it wasn't as good as he'd hoped. And he finally says, *well, maybe I could drag myself back, and maybe my father would at least let me take care of his pigs.*

So he turns back. And he does so in good faith, recognizing that where he'd been wasn't it. It wasn't the way to live.

And the dad? He's so excited. He's been waiting. He can't wait to throw the robe over him and throw him a party. *Here's the ring.* Because what matters is that love wants all of us in—together. That's the point.

Love says, *okay, yeah, you screwed up—but let's move on. Let's figure out how we help you live into who you really are again.*

And then there's the older son, so burned by envy and rage, so full of judgment. He can't welcome because he's full of his own self-righteousness: *I did it right. I didn't leave. I figured it out.*

Think about that in the way our world is right now. In any given moment, we can be any of those pieces, any of those players. We're meant to see ourselves in all of them.

But as our world breaks, and as we wake up from this collective nightmare, we're going to need to be grounded in a love that's rooted in something more than *we were right.* We're going to need a resonance deeper than simply *I want this to go away.*

Because we're in it. We're in it.

I've shared with some people this understanding we all know—that a butterfly comes from a caterpillar. But what scientists have discovered is that all along, inside the caterpillar, there are imaginal cells—dormant butterfly cells.

Butterfly cells and caterpillar cells have nothing biologically in common. These dormant cells are hiding in the caterpillar, and during metamorphosis they begin to break open. But as they do, the caterpillar cells recognize them as invaders and attack them.

And that resistance makes the butterfly cells stronger.

The attacks increase. The butterfly cells multiply. They band together. They *need* the resistance in order to grow strong enough to become something entirely new.

So if we can recognize that the turbulence we're in right now has a purpose—that we are outgrowing our caterpillar-ness and stepping into a new way of being—it may feel impossible or

far-fetched, but that is where we are headed. And it's happening sooner rather than later, whether we like it or not.

I realize I've talked a long time—so I apologize. I do have some simple daily practices, but let's open it up for conversation first. Sometimes the practices work better when there's a frame to hold them.

What would be helpful at this moment?

Someone shared that they already feel more hopeful—because there's a context. A sense that there *is* a purpose to all of this.

Yes. Unfortunately, death and resurrection—if you identify as Christian—but even simply looking at nature: things die and are reborn. Energy remains; form changes. We have to lose one thing in order to allow the next to emerge.

Another person reflected on resistance making us stronger—like resistance bands after surgery. You don't avoid resistance; you use it to build strength.

Yes. Exactly.

Someone else connected it to bone health—how strength actually comes from pressure, not avoidance. And how the butterfly story reframes resistance as necessary.

I appreciate that so much.

And my yoga teacher—whom I often hated in the moment—used to say: *failure is our friend*. Because if you don't hit failure, you don't know what needs to grow. You don't know what capacity is now required of you.

So when we hit failure—individually or collectively—it's an invitation to say, *okay, what needs to grow here?* I don't particularly love failure, but I've learned to embrace it.

And I think that's where we are collectively too. We have to test what's not working so we can grow new ways of seeing and doing.

Then someone asked a really important question:

“Can you explain grounding?”

So, we spend a lot of time in our minds. And our minds can be very useful places, but they can also be dangerous many times. I don't know if you've noticed this, but we can live in the future or live in the past.

So we can awfulness. I'll use the example: after Bee died, every event became, *I don't have Bee on her birthday*. That was the first thing. But then I thought, *oh, but all the future birthdays, and all the future holidays, and all the future everything*. And suddenly I wasn't just dealing with what that day brought, which was hard enough. I was compounding it by all the future possible days that weren't even happening yet.

So being grounded is, in part, being present.

Our minds tend to awfulness. They tend to run forward or back. They spin around problems because they like to solve problems. And so grounding is, in part, being in your body. *What am I actually feeling right now?* Because in any given moment, we have enough for that moment.

Sometimes you need to say: *What am I hearing right now? What am I feeling? What are the sensations? What's the taste?* It's really about grounding into our bodies. Because often, when there was trauma early on, we learned to exit our bodies energetically—*no thanks, that doesn't sound fun*—and so we kind of abandon ourselves.

Being grounded means coming home to ourselves and being really present. It may be that you're in something hard, but even that is aliveness. You can live that by paying attention: *What is the quality of this pain? What am I really feeling? What am I really experiencing?*

Certainly being in nature is a huge way to ground. But basically, it's dropping out of our head and into our heart and into our body—into a reconnected place—so we're not just spinning.

Very often, I'll worry and worry and worry about something, and it never happens. And then I've burned all that time anticipating something that never actually occurred. I've missed hours, days, months of living something else.

So part of this is noticing that our brains want to work a certain way, and that's fine—but it's not the only reality. Being in our bodies, being in our hearts, being present in the moment helps.

Sometimes I imagine roots—literally dropping whatever I'm carrying into the earth and releasing it, trusting that if I need to pick it up again, I will. But I don't need to be spinning.

Participant question:

So how would you suggest we be more grounded in our bodies? Is it yoga, meditation—what helps you?

Elizabeth Jameson

Over my life, I've done different things at different times. I don't know that there's one right way. I'd say: pay attention to what calls to you.

For some people it's listening to music. Or turning off all the lights, putting music on, and dancing a little. For others it's literally putting their feet on the earth, or their hands on tree bark—feeling texture.

Yoga is great, because if you can let go of everything else, you're focused on what your body is doing in that moment, and the thoughts slow down. You become present.

I'd say try embodied things. Artistic things. Imagine some possibilities and see what sparks your joy.

What this really is, is falling in love with what you're doing and being present to it. That could be anything. Gardening. Washing dishes. My son used to wash dishes for an hour, and I'd say, *what are you doing?* And he'd say, *look how the water flows—it spills over here, then goes there.* He was having a meditative moment at the sink every night.

So it's the quality. What draws you? What expands you?

I've found painting recently. I'm not a painter, but it's been interesting. Or SoulCollage. Some people like variety; others like to return to the same practice for decades. I've done a lot of centering prayer, and I've also found I needed other ways of being present in different seasons. And that's okay.

A very simple thing you can do in the moment is noticing beauty and giving thanks.

Giving thanks is far more radical than we think. Even on your darkest day, you can give thanks for the warm mug in your hands. The more tactile and small your gratitude, the more present you are to aliveness.

For a long time I practiced *One Thousand Gifts*—literally writing one to one thousand and then starting over. Bee died shortly after my first cycle of that, and even in my darkest hour, I could still find things. The muscle memory was so strong it held me.

We're used to looking for problems. Criticizing. Skimming over beauty. Gratitude shifts that.

Normally I would have broken us into groups, and I'm sorry I didn't—I kind of blew right through that. That will happen on the retreat. There's just so much to share.

I want to offer one more piece. Gerald May says: *The only thing we truly have to fear is not fear itself, but our fear of fear.*

He writes about a moment of absolute terror—thinking he's about to die—and suddenly being overwhelmed with gratitude. He says:

Life, thanksgiving, love, power—each cell of me shining with life. What makes me afraid might be deadly, but the fear itself is wonderful. Fear is life energy. When you get down to its bones, fear is love.

It's our fear of fear that paralyzes us.

What I discovered, too, is that this love—this deep love not dependent on surface things—has no bottom. We're afraid we'll hit ground, but instead there's an endless pool, an endless space of love.

Whether we're in this life or out of this life, there is only this reality of love when we wake to it.

Closing reflections

Someone shared appreciation for the way this held both the macro and the micro—thank you.

Another shared receiving peace. And I just want to say: this is a daily practice. It's not one-and-done. It's paying attention to what we're putting out into the world, and what we're taking in.

When we unhook our well-being from outcomes, we cultivate a stability that isn't dependent on circumstances. A deep well. A joy that doesn't rise and fall with the waves.

The ocean is not calm right now. This is not a still season. And that's why this grounding matters.

I'm grateful to all of you—for your openness, your willingness to live from this resonance, and for being part of what's helping shift our collective consciousness.

Soon we'll all be running four-minute miles.

Let me close with a blessing:

*May what we carry be held in love and transformed into light.
May we root so deeply that the storm itself becomes our teacher,
and we become the light in the world.*

Thank you all so much.

Amen.