

# Kate Amoss: Gentle Breeze

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A Sermon for Seekers Church

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## Gentle Breeze

I bring you an offering that is more meditation than sermon. I will speak briefly and then give you an opportunity to drink in the silence.

As a doe longs for flowing streams

So my soul longs for you, oh God

My soul thirsts for God

For the living God

These are ancient words – over three thousand years old – and yet they still have warmth, breath and substance. I read them as if all the intervening time has crumbled like old parchment. I know the dryness in the throat, the restlessness, the longing, the urgency of the desire. I am more aware than ever as I go through my days that something is off, not right, or disconnected. I find some of the same feeling in the poem, Transcendental Etudes, by Adrienne Rich that Sherri Alms used in [her sermon a few weeks ago](#):

But there come times...when we have to pull back

From the rhythms we've moved to thoughtlessly...

And bestow ourselves to silence.....

cleansed of oratory, formulas, choruses, laments,  
static crowding the wires.

We cut the wires, we find ourselves in free fall..

But in fact we were always like this – rootless.....

This last week, our phone has not been working properly. Dry crackling static fills all of our conversations. Rich's phrase, "static crowding the wire" seems particularly fresh and vivid to me right now. I have been stuck waiting for Verizon to show up for two solid days. I am frustrated to find how easily separated I am from my own sense of well-being, how dependant I am on the conveniences of modern life. I wish that I could just cut the wires and bestow myself to silence.

Something snapped in me when Timothy McVeigh was executed two weeks ago. I could not bear to look or listen. I could not bear to see my own complicity in his death. I stopped reading the newspaper and I turned off the radio. When we fight evil with evil, we become evil. What would it be to cut the wires?

When we cut the wires, we find ourselves in free  
fall...

But in fact we were always like this – rootless.....

We were rootless. What is it to be rootless? Roots are the most vulnerable part of the plant, tender as a doe. They grow cell by cell into the soil, into the cracks in the bedrock. They long for water. Roots need darkness, solitude, silence. Roots understand the patient descent into the earth. Roots provide the anchor for the tree, the flower, the bush. Were we

always like this – rootless?

In the Old Testament reading for today, Elijah, our prophet, is feeling a bit rootless himself. He has fled into the wilderness and is sitting under a furze tree, “Yahweh,” he says, “take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” The day before, Elijah had put four hundred priests of Baal to death. He is caught in the old patterns of retribution and now fears for his own life. Walter Breuggemann has called the Bible an “endlessly strange and new text.” It seems endlessly strange and new to me that I could find common cause with Elijah. But when I read this story that is so deeply buried in history, I recognize that it is as if Elijah is living in the same moment of time that we are and something new is about to happen for both of us.

What would it mean to bestow myself to silence? In the story, an angel instructs Elijah to go to Horeb after forty days of wandering. He is to climb the sacred mountain and wait for Yahweh. First a mighty wind came, then an earthquake, and a great fire. Yahweh was in none of them. Instead, he finally came in the silence of a gentle breeze.

In the silence of this gentle breeze, we both begin to find our roots again. I realize as I write this that I have been searching everywhere for the answers except in my faith tradition. In my restlessness, I have spent months reading about the ancient goddess traditions, shamanic traditions and Hindu mythology. I am reminded as I always am when I preach that the Bible is the living word of the living God.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians this week, there is another promise of newness. "In baptism," he tells them, "you have clothed yourself in Christ. In Christ there is no East or West, Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female." Being clothed in Christ must be like being kissed by a gentle breeze.

Teresa Avila offers another way of imagining being clothed in Christ. Christ is like a cocoon that is spun around the silkworm. She writes, "The object of spinning this cocoon is that the silkworm/soul can then die to everything that is not God, and when she does she finds herself enclosed entirely in God: 'somewhere I have read or heard that our life is hidden in Christ.' When the silkworm soul has died to its old self, it is transformed and reborn as a white butterfly, psyche." We know something about cocoons that Teresa did not. When the larva enters the pupa stage, it actually dissolves completely and the firm walls of the cocoon are vital to its survival. At last, as it transforms, it can no longer be contained and it breaks forth from the cocoon and flies away.

Like the silkworm, one's identity as slave or female or Greek dies to its old self only to be reborn into complete freedom.

In the freedom of Christ, we remember that I am you, you are I and we are one. Our roots all search for the same living god that abides deep in the sacred soil of our planet. Teilhard de Chardin put it this way, "The deeper the level at which one encounters you, oh Lord, the more one realizes the universality of your influence. Our consciousness, rising above the circles of family, country and race shall finally discover that the only truly natural and human unity is the spirit of the earth."

I have deliberately kept my words short so that you would have a chance to bestow yourselves to silence, to know the gentle breeze, to clothe yourself in Christ, to dream the dream of roots. I want you to find the sacred place in your chest. Can you feel your heart beating? Is it warm? Is it spacious? Breathe into it gently and let the feeling flood your body until it begins to spill out into the rest of the room.

I will end with this prayer by Teilhard de Chardin:

*Glorious Lord Christ: the divine influence secretly diffused and active in the depths of matter, and dazzling center where all the innumerable fibers of the manifold meet; power as implacable as the world and as warm as life; you whose forehead is of the whiteness of snow, whose eyes are of fire, and whose feet are brighter than molten gold; you whose hands imprison the stars; you who are the first and the last, the living and the dead and the risen again; you who gather into your exuberant unity every beauty, every affinity, every energy, every mode of existence' it is you to whom my being cried out with a desire as vast as the universe, " In truth you are my Lord and my God."*