

Spiritual Engagement: Dirt and Doubt

- *REFLECTION: How long have you been calling to God for help, with no answer? How is your heart?*
- *OBJECT: Hold the compressed and dry soil disk in your hand. Etch a “!” or a “?” with a pencil or the end of a match. Allow this mark to express your lament to God for such fallowness.*
- *PRAYER: Inhale: How long !/? | Exhale: Oh Lord. | repeat 3 times*
- *CLOSE: Allow God's presence to hold and penetrate the compressed and dry parts of you. Close your prayer with the promise that God's “radiance is like the sunlight.”*

Thanks Kaiti. Hi, I'm pastor Lydia Shiu and I'll be leading us through the Spiritual Practice this morning. We come into this place of worship and prayer from many different places. Some of us are coming from a tough week. Some of us, maybe from deep grief of loss and pain. Some of us from a regular busy week.

Some of us are seeking deeper joy and hope. Some of us, looking for solace or a balm to provide a respite for our souls. No matter where we come from and what we're looking for, God meets us here. In our questions and in our exclamations. In our longing and in our satisfaction. In our petition and in our prophesying. Because the beauty and the truth of the journey for God's people is that we can hold both, the 'not yet' and all that is to come. The harsh realities of injustice and the hand of justice at work even now. The broken tired hearts and hearts filled with gratitude. In death and in resurrection, we are, in Jesus.

So, however you find yourself this morning, I invite you, to this Spiritual practice, the practice of bringing our spirit to be honest, to be open before our God, with all that we are and all that we hope for, with the expectation that God will meet us here.

For me, I've had a hard week. I learned that there was a shooting in Atlanta. A man killed 8 people. Oh my God. I learned that 7 of the 8 were women. Oh Lord. 6 of them were Asian. 4 of them were Korean American. Uhmuhnah. Oh my mother in Korean. An exclamation of surprise. It's horrendous enough, people being killed and gunned down, and furthermore, for me, the victims' race and ethnicity hit me even harder. And with the pandemic last year, Asian hate crimes have increased 150% in 2020, and more than stats, I've heard more and more stories of fear..... So..... this one, death of these Asian women at Asian owned businesses hits me hard. I called out to God. Oh Jesus. Because the news triggered something I feel often, but like in a shot to heart kind of way, racism and sexism that makes me feel... feel... I don't know, makes me feel angry, sad, anxious, afraid, and other stuff....

Today's spiritual practice is from our Lent Bible Guide, coupled with the Lent Bag, a bag of items that we've been inviting you to interact with in this season as you pray, meditate, ponder. Today we use this dry soil disk, if you have it. If not, feel free to go out later and find some dirt and do it on your own. For now, you could even just use a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. If not, just use your hands and finger.

The spiritual practice for the first day of week 5 asks:

How long have you been calling to God for help, with no answer? How is your heart?

So I invite you to put into the chats now, the more general question, "How is your heart?" in a few words. Feel free to, Switch your chat settings to 'Panelists & Attendees' so everyone can see your response. If you'd like to keep your response private make sure the chat is set to 'Panelists Only'.

For me, my heart is sad. I'll read some of yours.....

Thank you for sharing.

With all that's been said, let's try this tactile embodying of that prayer.

Hold the compressed and dry soil disk in your hand. Etch a "!" or a "?" with a pencil or the end of a match. Or write "!" or a "?" on a piece of paper, or in your hand. Allow this mark to express your lament to God.

And now, let's do the breath prayer together.

Inhale: How long !/? | Exhale: Oh Lord. 3 times.

I'm going to do it in Korean for me, cause I just feel like calling out to God in my mother tongue today.

Inhale: 언제까지

Exhale: 오주여

Allow God's presence to hold and penetrate the compressed and dry parts of you. Like this dried compressed dirt. Maybe it will drink water and expand one day. Maybe with some sunlight and a seed, it might grow and flower into something beautiful. Though for now, it is dirt. Maybe it will become more.

Let's Close our prayer with the promise that God's "radiance is like the sunlight."

Like the Sunlight of spring that's been shining the past few days, even in the midst of the dark news in our world, Let us receive the sun, let us melt our cold hearts, and be warmed up by God's loving light. Amen.

I'd like to close this time with the names of the victims in prayer together.

- Soon Chung Park, age 74
- **Hyun Jung Grant**, age 51
- Suncha Kim, age 69
- Yong Ae Yue, age 63
- **Delaina Ashley Yaun**, age 33
- **Paul Andre Michels**, age 54
- **Xiaojie Tan**, age 49
- Daoyou Feng, age 44

May you rest in peace. Thank you for joining me in prayer everyone.

Let me pass it off to Pastor Ivy for our message today