

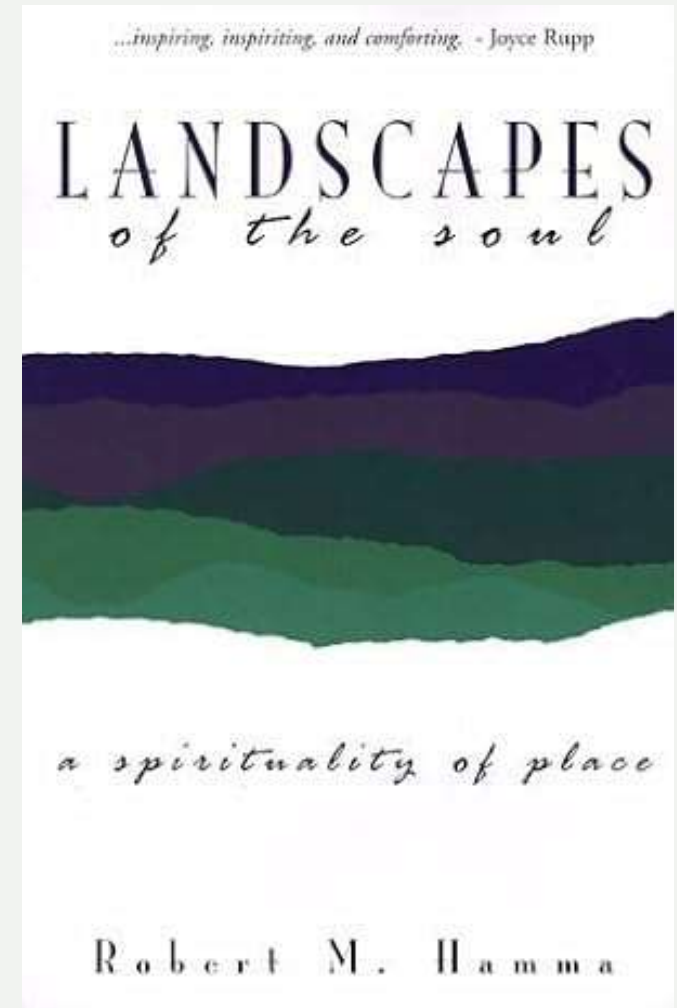


***A SPIRITUALITY OF  
PLACE: THE  
PILGRIM'S JOURNEY  
AND FINDING HOME***

*Steven L. Thomason*  
*Saint Mark's Cathedral*  
*September 2023*

# Selected Bibliography

Frederick Buechner. *The Longing for Home.*  
Robert M. Hamma. *Landscapes of the Soul:  
A Spirituality of Place*  
bell hooks. *Belonging: A Culture of Place*  
Killian Noe. *Finding Our Way Home.*  
Padraig O'Tuama. *In the Shelter: Finding a  
Home in the World.*



## Trajectory of the two-week series

- Place Matters
- Longing for “Sacred” Places
- Caring for Places
- Finding Ourselves in Wilderness Experiences
- Making Pilgrimage
- The Outer/Inner Journey of this Earthly Pilgrimage



# This Week

- Caring for Places that Matter to Us
- Finding Ourselves in Wilderness Experiences
- Making Pilgrimage
- The Outer/Inner Journey of this Earthly Pilgrimage



# Place Matters

- *“We are born and have our being in a place of memory...” –bell hooks, [Belonging: A Culture of Place](#)*
- *Place helps us with anamnestic memory which is essential to the spiritual diet*
- *Rootlessness is a persistent modern challenge*



## Listening to the Land: Place as Part of Ecosystem

- The Web of Life (ala Teilhard):
  - Geosphere (land)
  - Hydrosphere (water)
  - Atmosphere (air)
  - Biosphere (life in all its forms)
  - Noosphere (mind)
- “A taste for existence”



WILDERNESS AS  
PLACE OF  
SPIRITUAL HEFT



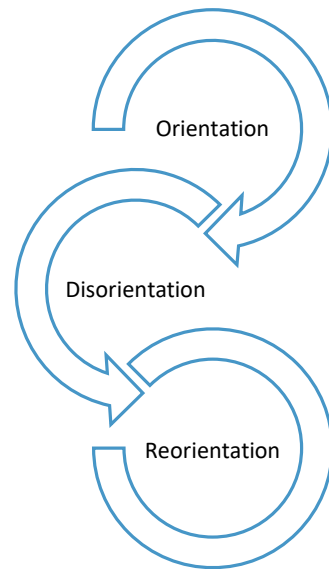
## Buechner: Wisdom in the Wilderness

- We are in constant danger of being not actors in the drama of our own lives but reactors.
- Instead of being whole, most of the time we are in pieces, and we see the world in pieces, full of darkness at one moment and full of light the next.





# Brueggemann's Model of Spirituality



- Biblical stories show this pattern
- It's the story of the human condition (great literature, etc.)
- Wilderness experience (desert)
- Dying to the old; but new thing not yet clearly known
- New thing (reorientation) never returns to exactly the old way

# Barbara Brown Taylor—Wilderness Experience

---



EVOLVING FAITH



# Breakout Groups

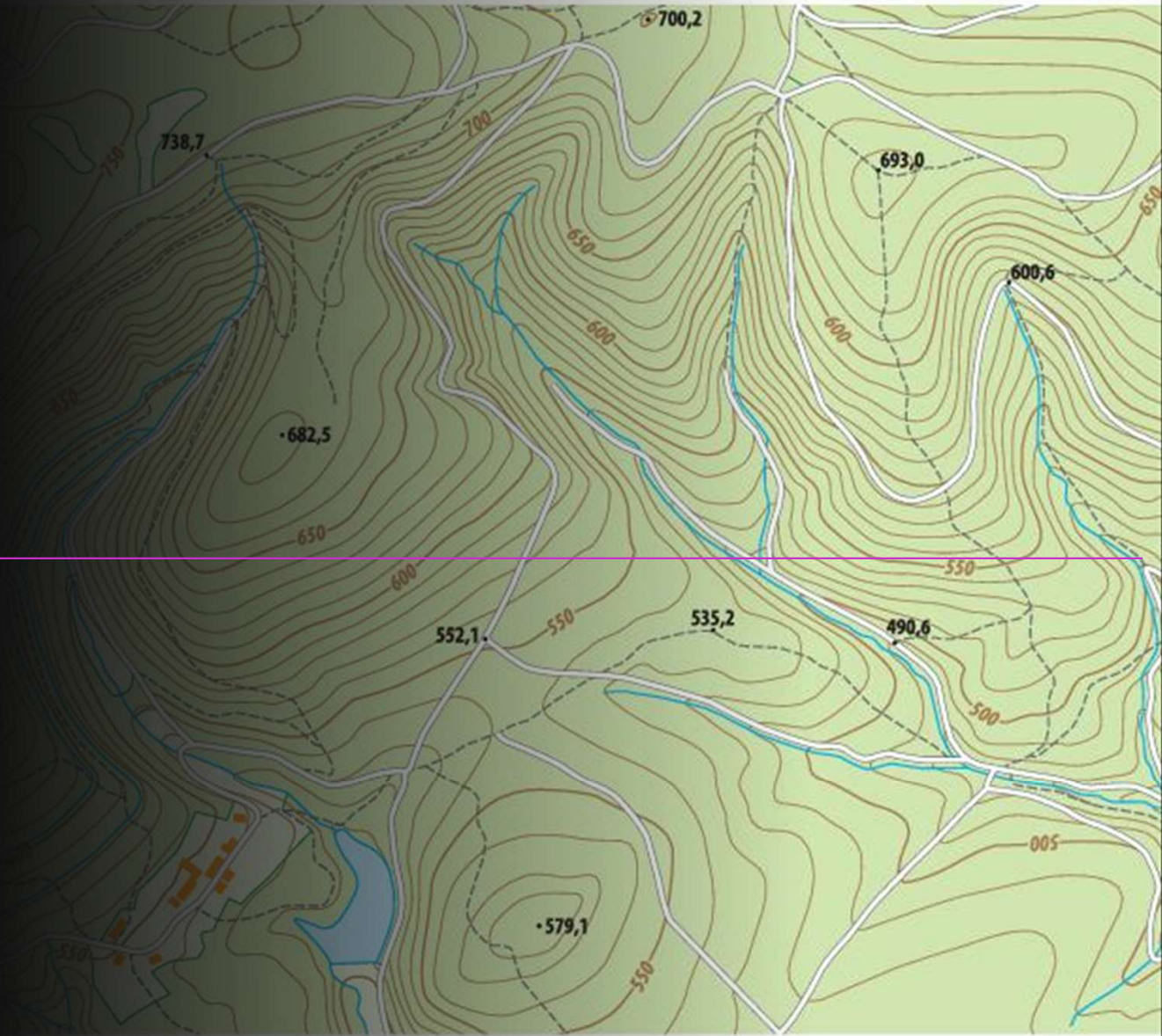
---

- What are your initial reactions to the podcast by BBT?
  - Do you agree with her that “grief is feral, necessary for vitality of the soul...to embrace the full terrain of living?”
  - Can you describe a time when you experienced “wilderness?”
- 



# Plenary Conversation

---





---

## Disorientation (Disorder, Wilderness, Desert)

- Human experience is not simply an articulation of the circumstances in which we find ourselves (static)
- There is inherent movement (flow, change and being changed)
- Brueggemann: two principle movements in life:
  - Out of settled orientation into a season of disorientation
  - Move from disorientation into new orientation (can we see it as a gift from God?)
- Not a one-time experience, but spirals of change in life (fractals?)
- We often may not realize we are in the wilderness till we are coming out of it into new orientation

# Leading from Within

*Reflections on  
Spirituality and  
Leadership*

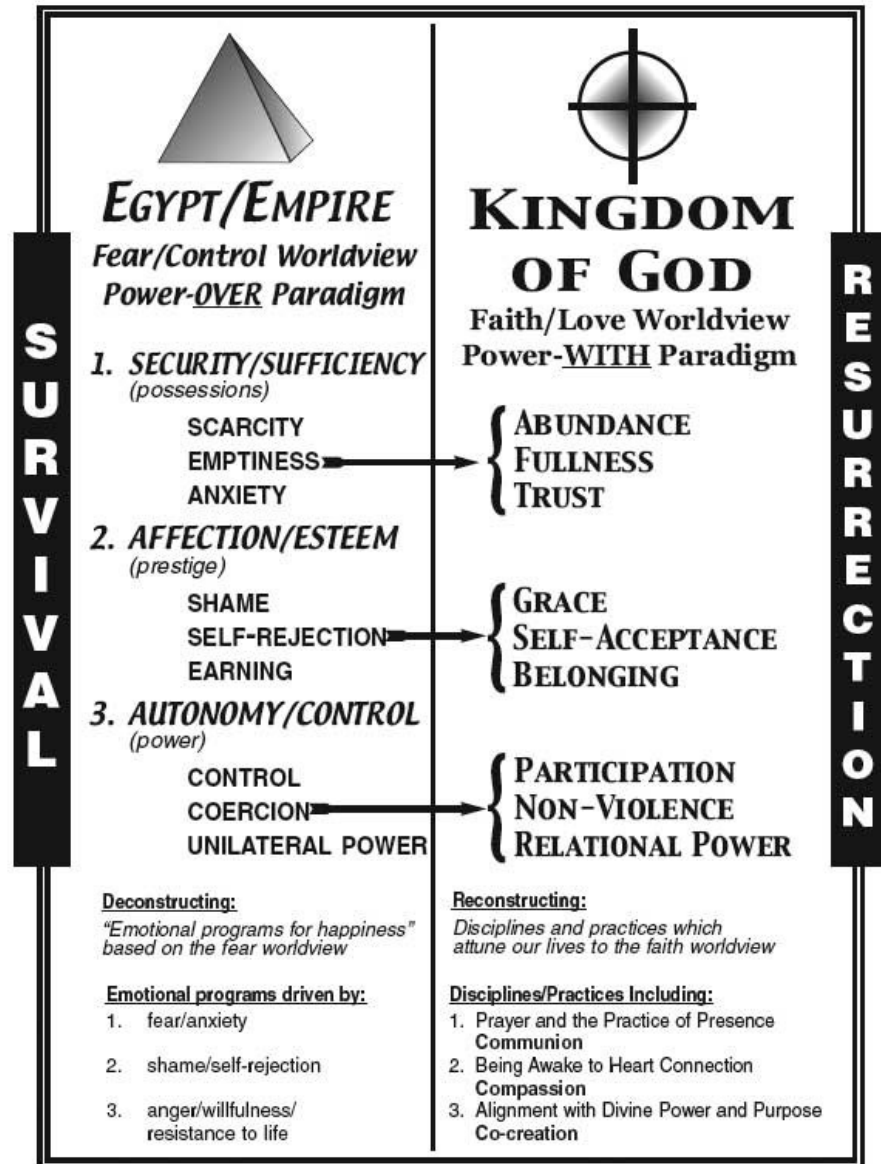
by Parker J. Palmer

Five Shadows to  
consider...

- Deep insecurity about identity and worth
- Universe is essentially hostile
- Functional atheism
- Fear of the natural chaos of life
- Denial of death

# Paradigm Shift for our Consideration as People of Faith...

The Exodus is about God's Dream for a Transformed World





## Made in the Image of God

“...no matter how much the world shatters us to pieces, we carry inside us a vision of wholeness that we sense is our true home and that beckons to us.

— Frederick Buechner





# Gerald May

- ▶ "Searching beneath anxiety, one will find fear. And beneath fear hurt will be discovered. Beneath the hurt will be guilt. Beneath the guilt lie rage and hatred. But do not stop with this, for beneath the rage lies frustrated desire. Finally beneath and beyond desire, is love. In every feeling, look deeply. Explore without ceasing. At bottom, love is."  
(Simply Sane, p. 87)



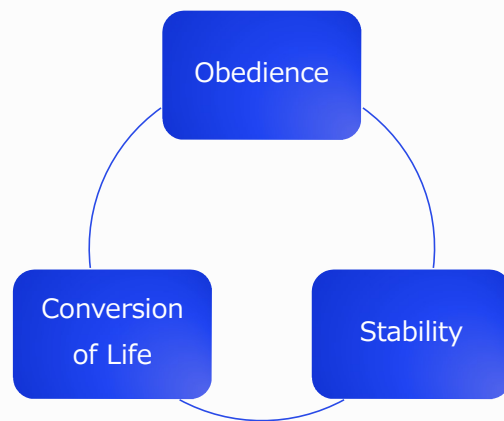
## Pilgrimage as Spiritual Practice

“to be on pilgrimage is to move into a world where the dividing line between past and present, between this world and the next, between what we call sacred and what we call secular, dissolves.

*The outward journey is also a journey inwards.”*

-Esther de Waal

# Benedictine Sensibility





Celtic cross, Inis Mor, 7<sup>th</sup> C.

"To be a pilgrim means to be on the move, slowly,  
To notice your luggage becoming lighter  
To be seeking for treasures that do not rust  
To be comfortable with your heart's questions  
To be moving toward the holy ground of home  
With empty hands and bare feet.

**There is a road that runs straight through your heart.  
Walk on it."**

*-from Tourist or Pilgrim? by Sr. Macrina Wiederkeh*



# T.S. Eliot, Little Gidding

...Quick now, here, now, always—  
A condition of complete simplicity  
(Costing not less than everything)...

With the drawing of the Love, and the voice of this Calling  
We shall not cease from exploration...

Padraig  
O'Tuama: Yearn

...and I've sworn by heaven  
and darker places  
to find my way through  
these nighttime cages  
and I've come out  
fighting angels  
kissing demons  
chasing strangers.

I yearn for home...

...I wonder if all my longings  
could shape for me  
a ship of hopes  
to carry me  
on these seas of homeward  
yearning.

I yearn for home.