

Kailua Christian Church
Sunday, October 1, 2023
Message: " An Examen Prayer"
Rev. Irene Willis Hassan

Scriptures:

Exodus 17:1-7

17 The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" **3** But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"

4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."

5 The LORD answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. **6** I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. **7** And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

John 4:7-14

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Sermon: An Examen Prayer

Last week, we talked about the Salt and Pepper shakers and how even the most stable, blessed lives need to be cleaned and filled weekly. This week, we'll do an exercise together in cleaning and filling. Instead of doing a typical message where I teach you something from the Bible, we're going to be doing a spiritual exercise called the Examen. The Examen is an old Catholic type of meditation that I use nightly; it's an

exercise in reviewing your day or week with intention and lifting up the spaces of gratitude and growth to God for renewal.

If you are reading this instead of listening to me guiding you through it, I encourage you to join us on Zoom this Sunday because spoken is a better guide than written for prayerful meditation, as spoken words allow you to turn your mind off more thoroughly. If you're unable to Zoom in, intentionally read this letter slowly.

Settle into your seat, get comfortable. Close your eyes if you feel like it, but if you don't trust your neighbor not to steal the ono pupus on the potluck table while the rest of us are doing a spiritual exercise, you are welcome to keep your eyes open. I want you to focus on relaxing every part of your body, starting with your forehead. Imagine that you have a ball of light sitting directly between your eyebrows. Let that ball of light open and wash over your temples, and your eyebrows, your eyes, your sinus cavities, your ears, your nose. Notice any aches and pains you have in those places and let that light touch that pain and wrap it in healing. Relax those parts of your body. Breathe in the healing and breathe out the pain.

Continue allowing that light to move down your body, relaxing you and healing you. Breathe in the healing and breathe out the pain for every part of yourself. Imagine the light moving down your jaw, unclenching it. Allow it to move through your neck and shoulders, letting them fall if they're hunched up. Breathe in deeply and then breathe out fully. The light is traveling into your chest and your stomach, your lower back, washing all those places with healing and allowing them to let go of the stress you're holding onto this week. Breathe in, breathe out.

Allow the light to travel down through your arms and fingertips, your legs, your toes. That light is now allowing your feet to let go of the places they want to walk, allowing your hands to let go of the emails they want to write, allowing you to let go of the things that your hands and your feet think you need to be doing instead of being present here in this moment. It's ok if your mind wanders back to those things that this light is trying to release you from. Acknowledge that ache, acknowledge the anxious thought, and then let it go. Breathe in, breathe out.

You are now in a state of being fully present with God and having the ability to hear Him more clearly. The anxiety you hold in your body is being held in His light, and if only for these few minutes, you have permission to let the ways your body reacts to stress be still. In this space, I want you to think of the rocks in your life that you're trying to squeeze water from.

Maybe the rock is your health, or a loved one's health. Maybe you're feeling anxious because you have little or no control over the outcome of what happens to our bodies. Trying to overcome the battle against a scary health concern or chronic illness sometimes feels like squeezing water out of a rock. Breathe in, breathe out. Maybe the rock is at work or school. Perhaps it's a project that seems insurmountable, that brings you home tired and unable to really turn it off. Maybe you're worried you won't accomplish your goal, or that you simply don't have the energy to work on it

anymore. Breathe in, breathe out.

Maybe the rock is in your relationships. Perhaps it's a child or grandchild that's struggling in their lives and you feel helpless watching them. Maybe it's your spouse, or your parents, or even a loved one who's passed away and you just desperately want to connect with them but they feel so far away. Breathe in, breathe out.

As you consider the difficult rocks in your path, whether it's health, work, relationships, or something else, hold it in the center of your mind. That rock is sitting in a safe place with God, being held in love and care of His infinite compassion and wisdom. Now review your week and think of a recent moment that was about that anxiety-producing rock. In that memory, where are places that you are resisting God? Where are places where you're not listening for God at all? Allow God into the spaces of that memory that you did not let Him in at the time. Let God hold that moment for you. Breathe in, breathe out.

Now imagine an actual rock sitting in the middle of the space in your memory. Imagine God breaking that rock and water coming flowing out of it. Let the water wash over that memory and flush through your body as it's fully relaxed in His loving care. Breathe in, breathe out.

Allow that memory to be washed away by God's living water, slowly dissolving from your internal vision. The anxiety of it may still flicker in your mind, and that's ok. Acknowledge it and then let it go into that Holy stream. Breathe in, breathe out. In that empty space in your mind where the anxious moment was washed away, imagine it being filled with a memory of joy or gratitude from this week. Maybe you had a celebration with your grandkids, or you laughed over a meal with old friends. Maybe you completed a goal or attended an inspiring event. Maybe you learned something new. Maybe you simply sat quietly with a loved one and saw their beauty shining through what may now be an older, more aged face. If you struggle to find a moment of joy from this week, ask God to open His joy to you and invite it in. Allow that moment of joy and gratitude to fill your mind and rest there in that moment.

Think of that person, or that accomplishment, or that event, or even simply the longing for joy, and consider for a few moments everything you overcame to be with that person or fulfill that goal. If you struggle to picture a recent moment of joy, imagine something beautiful that brings you hope as you picture it in your mind. Did you find God placing moments in your life that allowed you to enter that space, or meet that person? Where are places that God broke rocks in your life to achieve that joyous moment? In what ways did you submit to His plan, that resulted in this beautiful thing in your life? Breathe in, breathe out.

Now imagine God's living water washing that memory away, sending it down through your body and filling it with His joy in you. Allow that love to fill you and remember that you are God's creation and He delights in you. Let the memory wash away in your body and replenish you. Breathe in, breathe out.

Now open your eyes, and if your eyes are already open, come back to the present moment here in this space. As we prepare to leave our own minds and memories and

come back together for worship, remember that God has the ability to break rocks in our lives and wash us clean from the debris. God has the ability to nourish us with the Living Water when we make space for Him. Yes, the rocks in our path still exist when we walk back out those doors – but with each other and our united faith in Jesus, those rocks feel less heavy because He gives us the strength to break them down with his Living Water.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

We stand in awe of your boundless power and unfathomable grace. Just as you once opened the rocks in the wilderness to provide living water for your people, we pray that you would open our hearts and lives to receive the living water of your Spirit.

Pour forth your life-giving stream into the arid crevices of our souls, quenching our spiritual thirst and bringing refreshment to our weary spirits. Break open the barriers we have set up, the hardness of our hearts, and the doubts that cloud our minds. Let your living water flow freely, washing away our sins, doubts, and fears, and filling us with your love, joy, and peace.

May this living water transform us into vessels of your grace and love, enabling us to share it abundantly with others who are in need. Help us to be conduits of your compassion and healing, offering the refreshing waters of hope to those who are parched and desolate.

Thank you, Lord, for being the source of life and sustenance. We praise you for the living water that quenches our deepest thirst and restores our souls.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who is the living water, we pray.

Amen.