

**Rev. Nathan Detering**  
**“Holy Ground Has No Fencing”**  
**November 12, 2017**

*“Here is the world; beautiful and terrible things will happen.*

*Keep our hearts tender.*

*Keep our eyes soft.*

*Because this is what we are about:*

*We know there is no answer but to love one another.*

*We bear witness against unnecessary destruction.*

*We gather in community to practice being the person*

*The world is calling us to be.*

*We cannot do everything,*

*But we can do something, and that something is not nothing.*

*So forget your perfect offering.*

*There is a crack in everything*

*That is how the light gets in.”*

When we went into the concert the air was still still,

With only light breezes flowing around the curved edge of TD Garden

(Gaaden),

But after the opening acts started and finished,

Singing to the half-full and half-interested arena,

And the Rock Stars took the stage,

romping and rousing in a cacophony of sound and light,

And the now full arena held up the glow from our smart phones

To show communal praise,

Those phones having replaced the Bic lighters that were used  
Just ten years ago before these phones were invented in 2007  
and took over our lives,  
You could feel, I could feel, ever so slightly in the stillness  
Between rock anthems as the Garden  
Seemed to shake and quiver...*is that wind outside?*

But never mind, the music was so good.  
And what was also so good was that we were in that space  
All together...the band thanking us for showing up despite the  
understandable fear,  
Because remember this was right after the mass shooting in Vegas,  
And before the mass shooting in Texas, these now the brackets  
That seem to frame the sentences of our lives, one after another  
After another.  
Can the politicians please dispense with the ‘thoughts and prayers’  
And actually do something????

But don't veer there yet Nathan, don't veer there yet congregation...  
Let's stay there together in the Gaaden full of all of those people –  
young and old, suburban and city, parents and kids, Trump shirt  
there, gender-queer teen there, tattoos there, chinos there...  
black and brown and white –  
All standing up together, all singing the same song,  
All in one voice,  
and even though the song wasn't Kum Ba Yah,  
And even though diversity matters less about ratios and numbers

And more about who has and doesn't have power and privilege (more on that after worship with our guest speaker Sarah Mayorga- Gallo),  
What I did notice was how rare this is in my life these days,  
How rarely this is to find myself with people not necessarily like me,  
Me the suburban-housed, fleece-vested, Subaru-owned,  
Progressive-politics as long as those politics don't ask me to change  
Too much-ed  
that has so much company in these zip codes  
Of 01770 and 01746 and 01760 and 02052...  
I mean, never mind Trump's border walls,  
we have fences and border walls keeping us apart from each other all the  
time, yes? Yes.

*Good night Boston!!!! Says the lead singer. Stay Boston Strong!!!!  
Go home safe!!!*

And the lights blaze on, splashing out that One-Voice,  
Less-fenced off from each other feeling like cold crash of water,  
which is more than just a metaphor  
As we pour out down through the Gaaden out into the midnight  
Night,  
Doors opening into flash and flood and wind and rain  
Coming from every direction except from up above.

*Can the ground rain up? Is that possible? Well on that night it was.*  
You remember this night don't you?  
This night three Sundays ago, after the best ever sermon duel that I had with  
Rev. Heather (and that I won by a mile),

That saw a tropical front push through from down south into our globally  
Warmed New England like the hot breath of a sighing, sad God  
And ripped and whipped all of us, including all of us coming out of that  
concert,  
Back into the corners and back walls of our separate, fenced lives,  
Including me and family, back into the black Subaru,  
Dry and traction controlled for the hour-long journey out of the city  
Back home,  
Back through giant ponds of pooling water on the Pike,  
Back past cars stopped and idling under the overpasses,  
Back around tarps and trash and torn trees on the road,  
So much litter, so much mess, so much storm,  
Which, let me say it plain, is how the last year has felt to me (and you)  
Since the politics uncovered the truth that we are not,  
Despite pledges to the contrary in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, One Nation Under God,  
But that we are, instead, separated and sequestered,  
Gerrymandered and gentrified,  
Zoned and zillowed, right?  
White in Holliston and Sherborn, black and brown in Framingham,  
Trump voters in Springfield, Berny out in Amherst, Hillary along  
The 128 corridor,  
All border walls everywhere, fences all around...Do you see them, do you  
feel them?

And god, that oft-used and abused name that I feel sorry for,  
God not above, I believe, but right here down on our level, at eye level,  
God on this holy, sacred ground that doesn't feel all that whole or sacred

Sometimes...

God with us on the layers of the ground and in the autumn litter,  
God chasing us out of our fenced-in back yards and telling us to get out,

Go-on, GIT,

Git past your fear and fretting,

Git past your comfort zones,

Git past your resignation that you can't make a difference,

Git past the pinwheeling worry that wears us out,

Git past the clinging to the way it always used to be,

Git past the resentments,

Git past the self-pity, the disappointments,

Git past the frustrations, the waiting, the comparisons of ourselves

With others

Git past the unproductive anger,

Git past the grudges,

Go on git past the loneliness, the isolation, the privatized pain,

Get out, go on, git...take your body where your beliefs are,

Get past your fences, people, open the gate

love where and when it's hard,

forgive someone you don't want to, love somewhere you hate...

Go on, open the gate, and git...

Which is why I don't being a religious person...

Because our faith, our church is always asking me to do things

I don't want to do.

Maybe you know what I mean.

After a fitful night sleep, the storm churning my ears  
And the concert churning my ears,  
My body all abuzz with noise and vibration and base and wind,  
I awoke the next morning into the blue, black dawn before everyone else.  
Normally as I descend the stairs the dog,  
who is kept behind a fence at the bottom of those stairs,  
is there waiting for me with his wagging love.  
But this time he was not there.

Instead I found him in the kitchen, staring alert and attentive out the  
Glass panes of the back door,  
His ears perked and eyes not blinking into the fenced-in back yard.

*What do you see, Shaka? What do you see?*

I squint. My eyes not being they used to be, I squint harder.

*What is that?*

*What is that?*

*Shaka, stay here...*

Push him out of the way.

Open the door, wind still humming, and climb softly down the stairs of the  
back deck.

And though I know not all of us know the Bible that well, you might  
remember Moses, right?

Moses, the shepherd, who one day saw the burning bush

Ablaze but not consumed with fire, and heard God call him,

Saying *Moses, Moses, remove your sandals, for the place you are standing  
Is holy ground.*

Which I think of, somewhere back in my mind, as my unslipped

toes touch the bare, wet ground and I walk closer...  
to see the heaving brown body  
Curled there in the corner of the fence...  
The heaving, breathing body of a baby dear,  
The storm having frightened her from the woods  
So that she bounded over our fence and pushed her back  
In the corner, where she curled up afraid, quivering, alone,  
Separated.

Backing away, shhhh, I go to the gate, unlatch it,  
And try it open with the dog's leash.  
And then I tip-toe back, naked toes in wet ground,  
And come up close, her eyes on mine, her body heaving,  
Her legs quivering and afraid,  
Shhhhh,  
And I hold my arms open, shhhh...and she stands,  
And she stares around,  
And the dark is barking fierce,  
But we are quiet together, and I point to the open gate,  
Because clearly deer know hand signals, right?  
And she begins to walk, and then, at a burst, she bounds  
Toward the gate, soundless and quick,  
And there, through the open gate, she goes...  
Out from fear, out from isolation, out from being held in and held back..  
And toward release, she goes...toward freedom, toward fear no more.

How might we be different if we followed her? I wonder.

How might the holy ground be made more holy?

What would change? Amen.