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SERMON ON “*LISTEN FOR ISLAM*”

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I remember the first time I visited a mosque. I was really nervous. Curious, very curious, but nervous. I wanted to have an open mind and an open heart but, despite my best attempts, these heavy questions about women, oppression, power - these questions filled my pockets to the brim and weighed me down as I walked through the doors.

My experience at the mosque that day was rich and I could share with you how welcomed I felt, how I was wrapped in love and hospitality, how generously they shared their spirits and how open this community of fairly conservative American Muslims was to my group's curiosities and questions, - but what I really want to share with you is about the moments when we prayed together.

I followed the women to a small room down a few carpeted steps. Thinking we were just going to sit quietly by a side wall while the women prayed, when they invited us to participate it was unexpected. Many thoughts began spinning through my mind, “Do I participate? Do I have to agree completely with Islam in order to take such a posture of prayer? I don't even know what they're saying.”

But then I heard the call to prayer...and it was this *beautiful music*. The sound of this singing in Arabic plucked a deep heart-string within me and all of the swirling energy in my mind dropped into my heart.

Have you ever had one of those moments when a song comes on the radio, or at your home, or maybe an experience with a choir at church and something about it is just so beautiful that it can bring you to tears - and release a swell of unexpected emotion - for reasons that your mind doesn't totally understand? Well, it was like that. This was that kind of song.

With a full heart I took a position behind one of the women and perched on my knees. Guided by the sound of this beautiful music I focused on my breath and when I bowed and rested my forehead gently on the earth, I surrendered into capital “L” Love. I felt gratitude for feeling loved and for the capacity to love others.