

April 2026 Sermon
Embracing Possibility
The Cracking Open

- Season
 - Begin outdoors in spirit, even though we're inside
 - Season is genuinely unstable
 - frost can still come, blossoms can still arrive
 - What's actually happening in the earth right now
 - ground has been doing something invisible all winter
 - Something has been preparing that required no witness, no encouragement
 - bulbs that have sat in frozen dark all winter now pushing through
 - Seeds sitting in ground, neither dead nor alive in any way we'd recognize as living
 - now cracking open
 - seed doesn't know if it will succeed
 - act of cracking open, without certainty of outcome, is possibility itself
- Possibility does not arrive from outside
 - breaks open from within
 - breaking is not incidental to the process
 - it *is* the process.
- What germination actually involves
 - Seed coat — the shell — exists for good reason
 - protected the seed through what would have killed it
 - But at a certain point, in the right conditions, that same protective shell becomes obstacle to the life it was protecting
 - The shell was never the point
 - The life inside was always the point
 - The shell did its job
 - Something else is being asked now
- What is possibility?
 - often treated as optimism
 - cheerful bet that things will go well
 - more honest definition
 - possibility is a space not yet been closed

- lives in the unresolved
 - still becoming: possibility is ongoing rather than arrived
 - we don't require faith in a fixed outcome
 - do pay attention to what is still open
 - seed's potential not diminished by winter underground
 - but potential means change
 - possibility dwells there!
 - Are we also cracking out of shells?
- Story: Inanna's Descent (Sumerian) — 4000 years old
 - Inanna, Queen of Heaven, descends into the underworld
 - to pay honor to her dead brother-in-law?
 - or maybe to expand her own dominion?
 - risk - her older sister Ereshkigal hates her
 - instructs Ninshubur (servant) to seek help if she does not return after three days/nights
 - The First Gate
 - At the first gate, she is stopped
 - She cannot enter as she is
 - Crown (status, authority) must come off
 - crown not taken by force
 - surrendered as the condition of going deeper
 - At each of the seven gates must surrender something
 - Staff (control)
 - ability to judge outcomes by old standards
 - Necklace (social connection)
 - Breastplate (sexual power)
 - Gold ring (binding agreements)
 - Anklets (ritual movement)
 - The robes (persona)
 - Gate by gate, everything that defined her in the upper world is left behind
 - What's *your* crown right now?
 - What have you been holding as a marker of who you are and how you're doing?
 - What may need to be set down at the gate?
 - Not about giving up
 - About what you can/cannot carry through a threshold
 - Judgement
 - Inanna arrives stripped of everything

- judged for hubris by the seven judges of the underworld
 - killed by Ereshkigal (eyes of death, words of wrath)
 - corpse hung from a hook
- Ereshkigal
 - not a simple villain
 - is herself in pain
 - physical pains of labor
 - grief and isolation
 - unloved, abandoned, and consumed by deep loneliness and rage
 - death of her husband
 - neglected, dark aspects of life
 - that part of reality that the upper world prefers not to look at
- Rescue
 - Ninshubur appeals to the gods
 - several refuse to help
 - Inanna knew the risks
 - Enki, the god of wisdom, intervenes
 - creates 2 beings from dirt under his nails
 - the gala-tura and the cur-jar
 - genderless: can pass through the gates
 - carry food and water of life to revive her
 - they empathize with Ereshkigal's suffering
 - thus obtain Inanna's corpse
 - Inanna revived
- Return changes everything
 - Descent isn't the end
 - It's the beginning of clarity
 - Inanna sheds her external symbols of ego and power
 - faces her "shadow" self - Ereshkigal
 - becomes a more complete being
 - accepts vulnerability - becomes meat on a hook
 - more integrated, mature, and empathetic
 - from arrogant queen to humbled, wiser deity
 - learns to connect with human pain and suffering
 - no longer just the goddess of war and love
 - more profound figure understands life and death
- Price of wisdom

- You don't come back from genuine engagement with darkness unchanged, and that's not failure
- Tree and the Well
 - Innana helps tell us where we are. Where are we going?
 - Yggdrasil - the world tree
 - Tree holds the universe together
 - Axis mundi
 - Norns:
 - Verdandi: present moment
 - paying attention to what is
 - Urd: the past, that which was
 - the weight of what has been
 - Skuld: name is cognate with "should" and "shall"
 - invitation into unfinished possibility
 - Not will, not won't, but should, might, could
 - futures that are genuinely open, not predetermined
 - Possibility includes the possibility of failure
 - Skuld doesn't promise good futures
 - represents futures that are still open
 - more honest and demanding than optimism
- Fate or Wyrð?
 - Greek Fates: fixing a predetermined pattern
 - In a weaving model, "should" feels like obligation imposed from outside: fate pressing down
 - Norns are not weaving, but tending Yggdrasil
 - dip into the Well of Wyrð and wash the tree
 - in the well model, "should" becomes something more like potential energy in the water
 - Skuld's domain isn't a tapestry with a set design
 - it's water
 - takes the shape of whatever it flows into
 - responds to disturbance
 - carries ripples from events far away
 - can't be held fixed
 - future is genuinely fluid
- Impact of actions
 - Impact of resistance and activism
 - Is any of this doing anything?
 - Every action or act of witness and presence

- Every march attended, every letter written
 - Every conversation, every time you showed up
 - sends ripples through the well
 - ripples reach the roots of Yggdrasil
 - tree is affected whether or not you can see how
 - no promise of victory
 - something more honest and more sustaining
 - *possible* futures are responsive to what flows into them
- Skuld isn't declaring what **will** happen
 - tending what **should**, given what the water currently holds
- Collective action
 - Yggdrasil isn't just a tree
 - it's the connective tissue of everything
 - the medium through which consequence travels
 - the well and the tree are functionally inseparable
 - what enters the well travels the roots
 - what travels the roots reaches every world simultaneously
- Problems of scale
 - corrosive feeling in sustained resistance
 - sense that individual or even collective action is too small to matter against enormous forces
 - Yggdrasil framework reframes that without being falsely reassuring
 - our actions don't just affect this moment, this political situation, or even this world,
 - they enter a system whose reach exceeds what any single perspective can track
 - we can't see all nine worlds from where we're standing
 - not a limitation of our action
 - limitation of our vantage point
- Vertical ripples
 - unfinished, fluid futures aren't **just** ahead in time
 - they're threaded through all levels of existence simultaneously
 - Possibility isn't only about what comes next
 - about what's resonating right now in ways we can't always directly perceive
 - actions don't just ripple outward horizontally

- they ripple through levels of reality
 - ripples travel in all directions
 - affect things you didn't intend
 - participation in something larger than the immediate situation
- Three images
 - Seed cracking open happens in the ground
 - in the roots, Yggdrasil's domain
 - Inanna descends through levels of reality
 - a vertical journey through worlds
 - axis mundi logic
 - Skuld tends the well whose water feeds the roots that connect everything
- Community as the Condition
 - well responds to what is cast into it
 - cracking seed responds to conditions
 - Inanna's transformation depends on helpers who choose to show up
 - the gala-tura and the cur-jar
 - tiny, powerless-seeming creatures
 - don't fight or argue
 - simply stay present and witness
 - empathize
 - Part of communal movement
 - presence to one another
 - showing up
 - small unglamorous acts of witness
 - it's what makes transformation possible
 - not heroism, but presence
 - Individual resilience has limits
 - Communal possibility
 - how forests actually work
 - mycorrhizal (my-kuh-RYE-zul) network
 - underground, passes nutrients between trees, sustains the ones under stress
 - Community's presence to one another, their showing up, is like that

- passing sustenance between those who are cracking open, and those who have a little more to spare right now
 - Possibility doesn't only live in individual hearts
 - it lives between people who stay in community
 - Honor small, unglamorous acts of resistance and care that don't make headlines
- The Cracking Open
 - seed's act of breaking
 - not blooming, but the breaking itself
 - that crack is the moment of vulnerability
 - before outcome is known
 - cracking open is not the end of strength
 - it's the form strength takes when it stops being defensive
 - shell had to be whole to survive winter
 - now wholeness itself becomes the obstacle
 - difference between protection and possibility
- Cracking open = embracing possibility
 - things not as they were yesterday
 - can't be if we are to fully embrace possibility
 - cannot hold the shell intact and also receive what's possible
 - something has to give
 - the process is not comfortable
- we haven't just been enduring: we've been cracking open
 - losses, frustrations, grinding repetition of showing up
 - those aren't obstacles to possibility, they're the mechanism of it
 - shell was cracking all along
- Not "keep going, it'll be worth it"
 - nobody can promise that
- Not false hope ("everything will be fine") but active hope
 - the kind that doesn't wait for certainty before acting
- the act of staying present to what is breaking open is the spiritual practice
 - Possibility isn't the destination
 - It's what you're standing in right now
- Personal shell examples
 - maintaining composure is the same as maintaining strength
 - appearing okay while doing difficult work.

- requiring a clear theory of change before your action is legitimate
 - Waiting for certainty before beginning
- scorekeeping: measuring your worth by visible outcomes
 - rather than the quality of presence and commitment
- Collective shell examples:
 - democracy as a stable background condition rather than something that requires constant active tending
 - progress is linear: forward is the only direction
 - what has been won stays won
 - separation between the human and natural worlds
 - assumption that politics and ecology are different chats
 - privatization of spiritual life
 - what you believe is personal and separate from what you do publicly
 - normalcy: the deep assumption that institutions will self-correct, that there are adults in charge, that the system has sufficient immune response
- April Light
 - The light has changed
 - The ground is doing something
 - Seeds that have been in cold dark are cracking open right now
 - without certainty of outcome
 - because conditions have finally shifted enough to make it possible
 - We are not being asked to be unbroken
 - We are not being asked to go back to who we were before any of this
 - We are being asked to do what Inanna did, what every seed does
 - to move through the threshold
 - to surrender what the gate requires
 - to trust not that everything will be fine, but that what comes through the cracking open is more alive than what went in
 - to trust that what we do, however small, will ripple outward in the well of possibilities

What you have carried here today has entered the water
What enters the water reaches the roots
What reaches the roots should travel all the worlds