



## Praise Song for Wide Open Space, by Omid Safi

Wide open spaces fill my heart with a sense of awe. It can be a plain, a desert, a view from a mountaintop, a vista. Somehow wide open spaces remind me of God's presence in ways that few mosques, churches, and temples ever have.

I have sat with this mystery for a while, wondering about what it is that touches our hearts so. Rumi said,  
\_ "Be empty of worrying.  
Think of who created thought!  
Why do you stay in prison  
When the door is so wide open?" \_

The opening feels to me not so much like an emptiness but an invitation, a beaconing, a call, a welcoming. Wide open spaces feel like being drawn into a place that's beyond place, a time beyond time. So many of the ancient sages have been saying this:  
\_ "As Above,  
So Below." \_

Somehow the wide open space here (below) serves as an opening to there (above) [...]

Maybe there is something about this love of wide open spaces that is a desire to be bigger, grander, more connected. There's something about the urge to lift up our gaze from the micro-dramas of our own life, and be more attuned to the larger rhythms of the cosmos, and the cosmic Artist.

We are meant to live lives that are complete and whole.

At least for me, this is the appeal of wide open spaces: a reminder of who we are, who we have been, and who we must become yet again. It's a reminder that we are not mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, as Martin Luther King used to say, but that there is something in us as vast as the whole cosmos. Somewhere deep in our hearts, there is a faculty that reaches out for the whole universe, because it is made in the image of the cosmic Artist.

This is what open spaces are: a reminder that our hearts are meant to be open, cast open, flung open so that the whole cosmos is reflected within.

