

The Rise of Silence

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TheTracklessPath.com

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Introduction

A vision of the thing that rises now
In the face of the impossible
To change the world
Through faith.

Walk Away

Walk Away Boy

I ran a little junk booth for a while. I went around and asked the yard sales to give me what they didn't sell, and some did. And then I sold it at the swap meet. And I made a few dollars.

Next to my junk booth was another junk booth. And the man who ran the booth was named Rod. Now and then, Rod would come and buy some of my junk to add to his junk. He was my biggest customer. And I was surprised that he bought my junk since he had so much junk of his own, about a fifth of an acre's worth, strewn out on plywood sheets atop little metal sawhorses, and more stuff underneath, and laid out on tarps. It was quite a collection.

People came and wandered up and down the isles of junk. Now and then, they'd want something. When we offered them a price, more often than not, they'd try to get it for less. After all, we were dealing in junk, people's leftover excesses. And the expectation was that we would let it go for nearly nothing. And in this, we rarely disappointed our clientele.

One day, Rod asked me to help him move some things. "I'll pay you twenty dollars," he said. And I couldn't pass that up. So we went to a long Quonset hut that was full of junk. I was amazed! The building was full of the types of things that Rod sold at the swap meet. And interspersed were little piles of rotting food, old papers, nudie magazines. "The lady that owns this place says I have to get out," he said.

The next stop was a motorhome, packed full of junk, and then a large storage unit packed from side to side and high up to the ceiling, and then an outbuilding in someone's yard. "Do you pay rent on all of these?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, "That's why I'm so broke."

"How many do you have?" I asked.

"Ten or twelve," he said.

Wow! I didn't say it out loud. But wow!

As we were lifting a weight set into my van, Rod complained. "This is hard work," he said. "I'm getting too old for this."

"Have you thought of doing something else?" I asked.

"Yeah. But I don't know what else I'd do," he said.

After a while, I started to wonder what the value of his stash might be. I started adding it up in my mind – just the few things that passed through my hands. And I quickly realized that even at garage sale prices, Rod might be a millionaire.

But the flow was all damned up. Too much in, and not enough out. And he seemed to lack the ability to put any real value on things. “It’s all junk,” he said. And it seemed like that was how he felt about himself. His face was dirty, his hair unwashed, his fingernails long. And he wore the same clothes every day. But there was no time to take care of what he had.

All the same, he was a busy man, stashing, hoarding, and moving it around from place to place. He sold an item here and there. And nearly every day, he bought more stuff. People stopped by his booth before going to the dump. They knew that Rod could not resist. He’d buy another pickup load full of junk with his last few dollars and go to bed worried about how he’d make ends meet.

And I had that strange but familiar feeling that I had been sent exactly to that place to witness Rod. “But why?” I kept asking.

After a week or so, I retired. I couldn’t take it anymore. And I made my way to our desert camp and sat behind the steering wheel of the van thinking about Rod. I wondered what it would take for him to turn the tide of his affairs. I realized that even if he stopped buying junk and devoted the rest of his life to the dispensing of his surplus property, he would probably die before he finished. And the canker of the dark and rotting places might just kill him in the process. The only solution I could see was to walk away from it all.

And then I thought about myself. “What am I still holding on to?” I wondered. And I wrote this poem in the spirit of that question and the desire to be free from the scarcity that binds us to useless things.

Walk away boy,
Walk away.
You'll never have enough
And you'll never find the thing
That you were missing.
Walk away.
You know that she's a fake
And that she lures you
With a dream.
Walk away.
And let them come

And carry it all
Into the hollow
Of their empty eyes
Where the darkness
Needn't bind you any longer.
Fly away.
Fly away, boy,
Into the brightness
Of the morning sunshine.
And let the coolness of it's rivers
Wash away the mystery
Of all you hoped to find there.
It is easier than you think.
And it is a breath away.
It is a moment.
It is now.

A week or two after writing the poem, a friend helped me close my junk booth. We loaded it all up in the van and in his truck and dropped it off at the homeless relief center. After they served the evening meal, they let the homeless take what they wanted.

The volunteer said that most of it was gone within 15 minutes. "One lady took the lion's share," he said. But he shook his head and chuckled. "I don't know what she will do with all that crap. She lives in a tent!"

Sweet Ruin

I am grateful for the thing I cannot see
For the good that lies
Just beyond the ruin
At my feet.
Sweet ruin.
Lovely the splendor
Of the plenty
Hidden deep beneath
The disguise of unwanted things.
Remember to be grateful.
Remember to rejoice
When ugliness you meet,
For it's He and His abundance
That hides and waits
With pockets deep
And gifts aplenty
For the one who can't be fooled
By the rough appearance
Of higher things.

When it Seems Too Hard

“When it seems too hard, stop” – A little key of knowledge, whispered to my heart on a day when I was suffering anxiety over a pile of bills and receipts.

When it seems too hard, stop.
And it is me alone
That I am trying to convince.
And it may be that you will not.
On and on you'll fly, perhaps,
Into that bright flash
Of brilliant light
That awaits “the faithful”
But I am not, faithful that is,
To the god of my own ambition.
I am a fickle follower,
A traitor.
And I both hate
And admire myself for it.
And it dies a slow death
Within my bosom.
In the meantime,
I chant the mantra
In the hopes that it will take.

Pied Pipers

Mourning the folly of friends and their bad choices. I am sure that some have mourned over me as well when I have danced to the song of pied pipers instead of listening to the still small voice that points the way to better things.

Why will you follow fools?
They play
And you dance
And in the end,
You both fall down.
And then you complain.
I love that thing most
That comes just before
They speak.
Silence.
Why not skip the rhetoric?
Why not settle for Silence?
She does not impose.
She does not imply.
She does not
Call upon dead others
To justify her lies.
But do not be deceived.
If you sit with her long enough,
She will speak
With words too terrible
To utter.
And then
You will either live or die
By what comes next.
For no one
Having heard her voice
Can justify their trust
In anything less.

A Word to the Polished

Be careful.

Do not be deceived into believing

That because the thing you speak sounds right,

That you are right. It very well may be

That you are not.

For God looks upon the heart.

And truth is independent.

It needs no proof.

And the world doesn't need your arguments.

It needs the thing that you would be

If you were not like the world.

The Price of the Ordinary

There are two worlds.
But to the untrained eye,
The inhabitants of each walk side by side.
The first world is the ordinary world.
Its constituents conform to societal norms.
They walk in time to the beat of the loudest drum.
And they are motivated by the desire for personal profit.
Like I said, it's the ordinary world,
Ordinary people wanting ordinary things
And doing what they have to do to get those things.
And then there is the other world.
For now, the other world is relegated to the outskirts
Because they do not conform to societal norms.
They bend themselves to the will of a still small voice
That whispers out of the heavenly realm.
They are motivated, not by personal profit,
But by the desire for otherworldly gains.
But soon the balance will tip the other way
When the cost of ordinary becomes too high
And the returns become too low.
Ruin, in short.
Ruin will tip the scales.
But some will hold onto the ordinary world until the end.
They will cling to the rails even as the ship goes down.
I shirk to think of it.

Rush Rush

At the time that I wrote Rush Rush, I was packaging apples, peaches, tomatoes and greens. I worked for a fruit farmer who dabbled in vegetables. Long days, and little pay, but I enjoyed it. It was a family farm. Good people, honest work. And they let me park my little travel trailer next to the house that they maintained for the migrant workers that they imported from Central America. The migrant workers came to the United States on a special short-term Visa. And when the farmer was done with them, they would be shipped back to Central America. They had it worse, I thought, being so far from home.

But then I laughed as I looked around myself. I was not so different from them. I too was away from home. Though I lived an hour away, I could not afford the commute, and so I had brought my little travel trailer. And I lay there alone in the dark, because the lights didn't work, and listened to the music and the chatter that drifted over the rock wall from the house. At least I could go home on the weekends, I thought. Yes, we were the same, the migrant workers and I, each of us working hard for our little paycheck, and sending it home to the ones we loved, and each of us endlessly chasing the dream of a little security that never came. The likelihood was that in a year from now, we'd be doing the same thing or something similar, and two years from now, and ten, until we couldn't do it anymore.

And I wondered how many of the masses of men had lived their lives that way. And as I contemplated these things, I was struck by the futility of it all. And I wrote this poem. And as I wrote it, an image came to mind of a sea captain bellowing at a bunch of peasants as they dragged a boat along a waterway by ropes. Later, when I was looking for an image to attach to the poem, I found a painting by Ilya Repin called Barge Haulers on the Volga. It turns out that that was actually a thing. Russian peasants were hired to pull boats upstream on the Volga River. Who would have known?!



Barge Haulers on the Volga by Ilya Repin (1873)

Rush Rush
Said the Captain,
The Son of a Captain,
Whose Father was Captain before

We drive for the
Nethermost edge of the world
Where we'll meet
The great captains of yore.

We are told
That they wait us
Where ne'r a hiatus
Is known on that distant black shore.

But the devil will greet us
And slyly entreat us
With the lie
Just a little bit more.

Time

Time...

There is enough of it
If you believe it so.
Sufficient is the day, remember?

“Watch out!”
The world clamors.
“There are a thousand tomorrows
To be looked out for!”
But really, there are not.
There is just today.
Just now in fact.
“But if you don't
Scheme and plan
And fret and frown,
You'll surely die!”

How they drone on!

There is only one way
To deal with bullies.
If death it is,
Then death it must be!
After all, what alternative is there?
To hurry is a kind of death:
To die to the only thing
We really are, whatever that is.
And whatever it is, it's now.
And if perceived at all,
It can only be perceived
In the space just between nothing
And all that we are not.
Can you find it?
Just here. Just now.
And let the world fly away
To the castles they build
Between the dark brown earthy now
And all the light blue empty dreams
Of tomorrows that will never come.

As for myself, let me die
To all that is not now
Bury me deep in the soil of today.
And remember when I'm gone...
That there is time and plenty of it.
If you only believe that it is so.

Refusing to Unbe

From my childhood,
It hasn't changed.
The clouds still roll
In the heavens
And wind shakes the branches
Of the trees that line the highway.
And the warming spring
With its stubborn,
Willful,
Obstinate insistence,
Refuses to unbe,
Or even to bend
To these lower fables
That propel the hosts of men
Toward the abyss.
When was it
That we became
So adult
As to believe
That there is anything
So important as these?
When did we lose track
Of that childlike faith
That lies upon its back
Of a summer day
And wastes it away
In musing?
I don't know,
But I think we lost
A thing not worth losing.
And, call it folly,
I'm going back,
Back to the days
When I believed
That someone,
Somewhere
Was looking out for me.
Will you come?
Will you leave the thing

You think you want
But can never really have
For the pace
That sees
The April breeze
In the clouds that float o'erhead?
I'm leaving.
And if you contemplate it for a while,
You'll agree
That the time for departure has come.
We'll leave.
And we won't come back
Except in the reflections
Of sunlit leaves.
It's there we'll meet
The lost ones here below
By refusing to unbear.
We'll warm them
With the love
That remembers
When they could also see.
And one by one,
We'll gather them
To the thing they lost
Until all who will,
Refuse to leave.
And then we'll shut the door behind us.

Only the Beginning

The time is soon coming,
If it hasn't come already,
When you will be torn from all your comforts,
From all that is familiar,
And exiled into a strange land.
It is inevitable.
And all those who will not suffer themselves
To be thus exiled will die the death
Of proving beyond doubt
That the thing they always feared they were
Is who they truly are.
But remember,
That it was for this time, for this reason,
That you were born into the world.
For our inheritance is not unto comfort, but adventure.
And the greatest and last adventure of them all
Lies not in things you can achieve,
But is found behind the fearful curtain
Of things you cannot see.
It is only there that you can know your weakness
And it is only in weakness that you can be made strong.
And only when you thus discover
That you are nothing,
That you are small,
Can you find out
That One
Is more.
So don't complain
When they bind you hand and foot
And carry you where you would not.
For exile is only the beginning.

Not Wrong

It is not wrong
To leave your house.
It is not virtuous
To cower.

A Change in Economics

When I was young, my father studied conspiracies. People called them theories back then. And Dad spoon-fed me on tales of doom and destruction. I still don't know how many of them were true. Some for sure, for many of the things that he predicted are playing out before my eyes. But I don't know that all of that talk about the end of the world was good for me. It held out the end as if it were a cliff that fell away into nothing. But there is never nothing.

Since that time, I have watched others do the same thing. They watch the news. They study the red moons. And they talk while the day lasts about the time when it will all collapse. And I suppose there is a place for that. But not in my heart. I am not so interested in ends as in beginnings. And the end of one thing is the beginning of another.

Personally, I look forward to the new economy that will emerge when this one falls away. There is nothing to fear but fear itself. And I have begun to see great promise in the world that will remain when all of our worldly investments fall away.

It's just a change, that's all.
And the end of one thing
Is always the beginning of another.
And this time, something better's coming
If you have eyes to see: a new world.
But for this great and last change to be absolute,
We had to grow fat on lesser things -
And finally
It's ready,
So that when it falls,
It will be complete.
And that is perfect.
For the thing that awaits
Is the very thing we were longing for
With all of our devices.
And early in the morning
On the day after it all comes down,
On a street corner perhaps,
Before the sun is fully up,
Someone will be selling something.
Eggs perhaps.
And somewhere else,
Someone will be giving something away.

Or trading for the thing he needs.
And the world will go on living, breathing, interacting.
For economy is an eternal part of existence.
It goes on, to spite the fall of nations,
To spite the end of worlds.
But this time, the winds of fortune have changed.
Already, they blow in the direction of those
Who work in the service
Of something more
Than the pursuit of personal profit.
So don't lose heart when the towers fall.
It's only the beginning of something better
Than all that we thought we served
When first we set our hands to the plow
And decided that we were man enough
To look out for number one.

You Won't Find it Here

You won't find it here
He heard the Spirit say.
And he looked up from his device
To see the altar call.
But nobody prayed
Accept a few.
And it was a strained prayer
Between the teeth
Mingled with the desire for praise.
And the seats were empty
Except a few:
A yearner here.
A tempter there.
And a little band of those
Who wanted to prove that they were right.
"It has forsaken this place," he thought.
And he raised himself to leave.
And as he left, he heard the preacher say
That "We are the only ones."
And the people all said "Amen."

On the Outside

Increasingly, people find themselves on the outside,
Outside of politics,
Outside of religion,
Outside of institutions in general.
And this is because institutions, at their worst,
Demand complete allegiance, complete fidelity.
It is like a marriage.
But it is not a marriage.
Marriage unites two different but complementary things,
The man one thing,
And the woman something else another.
And united they are ONE.
Separate, they are bereft.
But the institution, the party, the sect,
Is not looking for the thing that it is missing.
It is looking to duplicate itself,
To multiply its narrow intent.
There are many who would embrace certain institutions
If only those institutions would not insist
That their particular views
Must reign.
It is a doctrine of
"We are right because it's us!"
And where else can you stand
But on the outside
When such insanity reigns.

Don't Rise

Considering the inherent corruption of the mammon motive.

It's not worth it,
But all the same,
They rise to fight.
They rise and rise and rise again,
Day after day,
Fearing the time
When they must fall helpless,
As do all eventually,
Into decay.
And with every rise
They sacrifice a little more
To the machine,
At first begrudgingly,
And then with steam,
Until finally,
They chant in time
To the grinding of its wheels
And march along in silent disregard
Of the ones it crushes
Beneath the mass
Of its enormous frame.
And you would think
That it was all there was
Of the world
For how they rise and rise.
But it's not worth it!
Stay down!
If you can't rise
To something more than that.
Stay down!
And die if you must!
But do not live to serve
The grind
That drives the souls of men
To hell and to the grave!
Oh man! Don't rise!
And let that great machine

March on without you!
Let it grind
The bones of the poor
Without your pushing it along!
Oh man! Is it not worth your life
To be free from the blood of these?
Don't rise, oh man!
Don't rise.

Sharper Eyes

It is not what you think.
You count the miles
And tally
The receipts,
But you do not see
The measure
Of what They say
You'll be.
And when you think
Yourself behind,
You look to books
And study faces.
And all of your glory
Is no more
Than the reflection
Of the fallen.
And the pot stirs round
A witches brew
Of boiling vomit.
And in each man's eyes
The ghastly
Countenance
Of the lost.
The skin
A ghostly pallor,
Each a demon
Set to devour
His neighbor.
But to yourselves
You're not that bad.
And the eagles look down
Upon you
From high above
And perceive
With sharper eyes
The earthbound hosts
Grubbing about
In the dirt,
Digging

And tilling it up
In search of silver,
And they turn
Their eyes away
In shame
And fly away
To the mountains
Where they mourn
The loss
Of His supreme creation.
And all the while
You fret
Your bottom line
And fear the day
When it all collapses.
Yes, it is not what you think.

The Last Exodus

The time has come for each person
To traverse their own wilderness path,
And through that experience
To create their own sacred remembrances,
And thus keep alive the truth,
Not of what God did for a people far distant
And far removed by time and culture,
But of what he did for each of us.
And just as the children of Israel observed the Passover,
We too will remember, from moment to moment,
How God spared us
While thousands around us were slain
Because they would not suffer themselves
To be led out of what they thought they were.
And this is the Last Great Exodus
That Jeremiah was talking about
When he said:
"Therefore, behold,
The days come, saith the Lord,
That it shall no more be said,
The Lord liveth,
that brought up the children of Israel
Out of the land of Egypt;
But, The Lord liveth,
That brought up the children of Israel
From the land of the north,
And from all the lands whither he had driven them:
And I will bring them again into their land
That I gave unto their fathers." Jeremiah 16:14-15
And this Last Exodus
Will change the hearts of the people.
It will bring them to have hearts of flesh
And not hearts of Stone
Because it is not only a journey into a geographical place
But a journey into the very heart of God.

The Completeness Doctrine

There are many
Whose faith relies upon a completeness doctrine.
They believe that the truth may be found
The way a shiny pebble may be found
And captured
And carried away in one's pocket.
They see the acquisition of Truth
As an event and not a process.
And so once they believe that it has been secured,
And bound up within the creed,
They relax into the knowledge
That it is theirs to keep, and theirs alone.
But they do not realize
That such truth never comes alone.
It is always accompanied by falsehood.
There are wolves among the sheep.
And ignorant among the best of us.
So that no framework is without its flaws.
And it is our job to look within
And seek help from the divine
To weed out all that is not true,
Not for the sake of setting others right,
But so that we may see the truth
More clearly for ourselves.
But know that when you do,
There will be those who will renounce you as a heretic,
And all because you cannot swallow
The completeness doctrine.
They want you to be all in,
Or nothing.
But for those of us who want the truth at all costs,
That is not enough.

Where are You From

Where are you from?
It's hard to say
He said.
Here and there,
Everywhere.
Is that ok?
Well yes.
But it's unusual.
I guess,
He said.
But that is how it is.
It's who I am:
Unfettered,
Except perhaps
To the thing that you avoid.
It is that one thing
That compels me
To be so many things,
Principally, the one you need.
Just here
Just now.
Is that ok?
Well Yes,
But I don't know
How to place you.
Does it matter?
He asked.
Well no.
But if you're unfettered
How will I know
Your customs?
How will I
Make your sign?
You won't,
He said.
You are not prepared
To be so many things.
And it's enough
Today,

To try to be
That thing that is needed
Just here.
Just now.
And what I need from you
Is nothing,
The thing that you avoid.
Can you leave
The thing you are
In favor
Of the something more,
In favor of another's customs
In favor of a foreign sign
If so, then there's a chance
That one day
You will join my people
And learn our customs,
Share our signs.
But I warn you...
There are those
Who will not have it
For they cannot stand
To have the thing that they avoid
Paraded in front of them.
And when they've cast you out
For not being wholly theirs.
Then you'll be prepared
To join the host of those
Who bear no emblem
But truth itself,
That truth that sees the beauty
In the customs
They despise.
And then you'll fully
Be what's needed.
Just here.
Just now.

The Valley of Ruin

Ruin is a gift.
Within the context of ruin,
One can reassess and recalibrate.
But the unrepentant will not do that.
And I cannot help them here.
I do not speak to them.
But for those who've always known
That something wasn't quite right
With all their self-made glory,
Ruin opens the portal
To transcendence.
It breaks down in preparation
For that which God will build up.
It kills and strips to the bare bone.
In preparation for a more glorious resurrection
When sinews and flesh will come up upon them
And we will live and not die.
But the path to such things
Does not lead down roads of glory.
It leads through the valley of dry bones,
Through the valley of ruin.

The Coming Generation

There is a generation coming
That will forsake this modern culture in its entirety.
And the culture will forsake them as well.
They will be the new dissenters,
The peaceful rebels,
Traitors to all that man has aspired to be.
But they will rejoice to do without.
And they will put their whole trust in the Great Unseen.
For they will have no other choice.
And He will be to them
All that the culture promised to be.
But unlike the culture, He will deliver.

Each in His Own Tongue

Today you are bound by a law,
The imperfect law of the group.
And that is fine for those
Who serve the whole
For the sake of holding things together.
But know that the truth you keep
Is tainted by such a motive.
You must learn to serve the Highest One
Who cannot be bound by groups
Of fearful tainted souls.
And if you do enlist to serve
The one who groupless is,
Do not be surprised when you are stripped
Of a people.
Do not be surprised to find yourself alone
For a time.
It is the way of all those
Who cling to truth for truth's sake,
And to no other.
And it is a lonely road,
Fraught with what appears to be
Endless difficulties.
But eventually,
If you do not forsake your guide,
You will arrive
To an innumerable company of friends,
Each their own - their own, that is, and His.
And together, a motley crew,
You'll worship - each in his own tongue
The One.

The End of the World

Listen,
And this is just for my friends,
The strange sort who have fallen out,
Don't think you'll save it.
You can't.
And for heaven sake,
Don't believe that they can save it.
They say they can
But they get paid to pretend it's so.
But they can't.
Just accept that it is over.
You'll feel much better when you do.
And don't feel so bad
It wasn't yours to save.

The Falling Leaves of Promise

I wrote this while working as a transport driver for a funeral home. We were located in a county with a large population of indigent and transient people. My job was to go out into the desert and bring back those who had died in their cars or vans or camper trailers. Most would say it was gruesome work, and it was, but I loved it. It felt more like a calling than a job. And that was a common sentiment in the industry.

I remember going into the chapel side of the funeral home when nobody was there. I would sit in the silence and soak in the sacredness of it. It was the same feeling I felt when I was taking care of someone who had died. I loved that part of it.

But there were things I didn't like, like the politics and the increasingly corporate nature of the business. The owner was the son of a funeral director. But he was more entrepreneur than undertaker. And he treated it like a business. Several years earlier, he had bought his father out and proceeded to "expand the business". He bought funeral home after funeral home. He centralized. He consolidated. He turned it all into a finely tuned machine, well, kind of. Sometimes it seemed that he was buying mortuaries faster than he could run them. But he didn't seem to care. His eyes were on some distant goal that kept moving further and further away as he approached it. And mortuaries were not all he owned. He bought sandwich shops and strip malls. He expanded, expanded, expanded. And as he did, he streamlined everything toward the goal of profitability.

Luckily for me, my little branch was not profitable, or if so, the margins were slim. And on top of that, we were ninety miles from the home office and our county had strange laws and rules that made it so that we had to do things differently than the rest of his mortuaries. This meant that I was left alone for the most part, which suited me perfectly. I did all the transports. I pushed paper around in the office. And now and then, I even met with families, a duty which was usually reserved for the funeral director who worked forty minutes away.

And since I was on my own, I didn't really notice the corporatization of our industry as much as those who were closer to the home office. Traditionally, undertaking was a family business. But things were changing. Several years before, the other funeral home in our small town had been purchased by a large corporation that was quickly gobbling up the independents. The last I knew, there were over 2800 mortuaries in the network. And to spite our owner's ambitious inclinations, we were very small apples in comparison.

But things were about to change. There were rumblings among the employees. And upper management was acting funny. They stopped having me come into the office, and they started letting things go. The sign blew down and they didn't fix it. Somebody vandalized the front of the funeral home and they did nothing. And they transferred the woman who

had babied my little branch along to a different department and put me under a transport supervisor ninety miles away. Almost overnight, my little branch stopped feeling like a funeral home and started feeling like a place to process dead bodies – ship them in, ship them out, and do so with as little cost to the company as possible. It was disturbing. But still, I felt called to stay.

Until a few months later. I came to work one day to discover that we had been acquired by a larger corporation. Instead of ten, we were now two hundred funeral homes strong. And then it all made sense. I was actually relieved since the previous owner had obviously checked out early. And my hopes rose upon the winds of change.

Unfortunately, I quickly discovered that the new owners were just a larger version of the old regime. Like the corporation that owned the other mortuary in town, they were gobbling up new assets as fast as they could with little regard for the individual problems of the entities they acquired. Everything was streamlined for profitability and the sacredness that had pervaded the profession was sanitized by policy and blind protocol. The old sentiment of "from our family to yours" was gone. And it was sad to watch it disappear and be replaced with cold unfeeling numbers. At least the old owner had been raised in the business. He and his father had once been undertakers, trusted servants of a community that they served. And a portion of that remained even as he shifted his focus to other things. But now it was gone.

The difference was so stark that many employees moved on leaving those who stayed with double the workload as the new management scrambled to find new people. One woman who left, a funeral director of twenty years, said that she was checking out of the business and out of the rat race altogether. It had all become too corporate. She was going to get a little camper, park it in a friend's yard, and take a part-time job so she could do the things she loved the most, paddle board on the lake, and spend time with her daughter. I wrote this poem as I thought of her and others like her.

By this time, I had also given notice. I finally felt as if I had been released from the calling. And I wondered what the company would do. It's not easy to find people willing to get up at all hours of the night to take care of dead people. But the scarcity of help seemed to be ubiquitous. Everywhere I looked, companies were short-handed. People were working less, checking out, moving on, going home, and giving up on the rat race. And something felt strangely right about it.

"It will leave chaos in its wake," I thought. "And perhaps that's exactly what we need."

One day, very near the end, I came to work to discover that our landlord had walled up the entry to the chapel from the office side of the funeral home. It was an accident, a

miscommunication from one of the lawyers of the old owner. But I wasn't surprised. So many important details were falling through the cracks. And as I stood there looking at the wall that blocked the entrance to the chapel, it seemed ironically fitting. The sacred thing had been severed. And I knew that it was only time before it all began to come apart at the seams, not just the funeral industry, but every enterprise that had forsaken the sacred thing in favor of nameless goals that served the bottom line.

They are moving out, one by one,
From the system that promised so much
And now cannot deliver the pleasure that it promised.
And as they do, they leave chaos in their wake,
Precious chaos, like the heat that beats down
Upon a smoldering mass of leaves.
I always loved the Fall, so silent, so pure.
So reminiscent of a thing I couldn't place
Except in the memory of other cool and dying days,
And in the precious recollection
Of childhood feasts of love,
Of family, and of all that exists when work is put away
And we remember what we were working for.
And perhaps that's what they are doing,
Going home to the reason,
Forsaking the scream of getting more
And choosing family over the press and pressure.
If so, then I look forward to the dark and fertile soil
With which God will plant his garden
In the Spring that follows
His Long Winter.

Burning

Did you know that it is coming to an end?
The good, the bad
It is coming to an end.
And it will all be consumed in fire,
All of your plans,
Your devices,
In beautiful, resplendent flames,
In preference to the thing you thought you wanted
But believed you could not have.
And if you can let it all go,
You may have it.
But you must,
Let it go, that is.
Otherwise, you'll burn hot
With the memory,
And prefer the burning
To deliverance.

Letting Go of Earthly Pleasure

They blindly imbibe in earthly pleasure
But that won't work for long
Because all earthly bliss
That does not unite us
In heavenly bonds
Will end.
And the end is close at hand.
And the day will come when you will need
The help of unseen helpers.
For that reason,
The best strategy is to forego momentary pleasure,
To forestall the impulse toward the profane
And wait upon deliverance
Unto the sublime.
And if you can't,
To seek the help of God.
But the prophets and the sages
Have been saying that for a long time.
And perhaps we now must reap what we have sowed.
Surely...the time has come.
And the message has gone forth.
And the end is at hand.
And perhaps in that
Some, if not many, will be redeemed through suffering.
But how black the night that comes
You do not know.
For the world will be wrapped
In what will appear to be endless night.
So that, in comparison,
All that which you believed to be evil
Will shrink increasingly
To ever paler shades of grey.
And some will run headlong
Into all that they feared with a will
And with loathing of the light.
And others will turn with yearning hearts
Toward the unseen place of glory.
And when the darkness has had its way
And the world with all its pomp

Has descended into the pit.
Then, with key in hand,
The mighty one will come and seal all those
Who do not love the light
Unto the thing that they desire.
I shudder to think of it.
But there is hope for them
Who have not killed the truth within.
And may heaven shed its mercy upon them
In whom still lives the love of light!
And deliver them from darkness!
One step at a time.
For there, just on the other side
Of that great night to end all nights
Shines the brightness of a world reborn.
And you do not know how bright it shines!
Its pillars rise heavenward
And glisten in the light
Of everlasting truth.
And for all those who can forego
The delights of earthly pleasure,
Or at least begin the journey
Toward the holy place,
There awaits unseen helping hands
Ready to lift them up and point the way.
And the time is now.
The clock has already tolled the hour.
And the only thing left to do
Is to turn the refiner's fire up
And discover who is who.

Two Things

Thank God
That you are two things.
If not, you would be one
And that not His.
But the day is coming
When you will have to choose,
Everlastingly, everlastingly.
And then
You will be one
And not two.
Oh God!
And if one, then whose?
Not yours, Not yours
But His
Or his.
And better to be two
Than one
When the thing you are
Is not the thing it is.
But better still
To forsake the phony one
For the One that truly is,
For you cannot be two forever.

The Last Great Age

There was the Stone Age
And then the Iron Age.
After that came the Middle Ages
And then the Industrial Age
And the Information Age.
And some claim
That the next great age
Is the Augmented age:
The age when AI will tie us all together
With augmented faculties.
It is a manmade Utopian ideal
To which many of the brightest minds
Are bending their wits at present.
But the augmented age will fail.
It is too complex for man to handle.
It is a Leaning Tower of Babel.
And when it falls,
Confusion will follow in its wake
And from the ashes will then rise
The last great age of man:
The age of gifts.
And for those with eyes to see,
The seeds of this last great age
Are being planted even now
In the hearts of those who choose to live
By the gifts of God and man.
It is the only utopia there ever was or ever will be.

The Lady of the Wood

When I wrote this, I didn't publish it right away. It was too strange, too edgy. And I was not sure I knew what it meant completely. If I did, I couldn't describe it. And so I put it away.

Six months or a year later, I found it as I was sorting through old files and I published it to my blog in a moment of rash abandon. A good friend read it and responded with a raised eyebrow. I couldn't blame him. It is a strange poem. And here it is for you to read and raise an eyebrow. Or not.

She stands on the edge
Of the sacred wood
At the end of the trail
Where the lumberman stood
When he felled the last
Of the sacred trees
And then fell down dead
Of an April breeze.
And when he died
She looked upon him
With dispassion.
Do you fear
The lady of the wood?
You should.
Did you know
That she awaits your ruin
And does not fear
Your deepest displeasure.
To her, it is the sweetest song.
It is the music
That turns round
The clock
That unwinds itself
And soon will stop.
And on that day
The lights will go out
Upon the town.
And the hosts of the forest
Will come down
And claim the thing
That was lost.

And what will you do then,
When there are no more
Towers left to topple?
Better to make friends
Of the forest folk
While there's still time.
But I warn you;
To step into the sacred wood
Is to relinquish the thing
You most fear losing.
It is for that reason
That few ever go there
Except to try
To take it down.
But in that
They are disillusioned.
For how can one hope
To destroy the magic
Of the wood
That lies beyond perception?
In the end,
It is only their connection
To the sacred
That is lost,
And the hollowed forest
Remains untouched,
Safely guarded.
It is reserved
For the believers
In such things.
And she is the queen
Of the mystic realm
And it is her
That will lead
The spirits
Into battle,
Not to conquer,
But to watch them die
Of an April breeze
And not to flinch

As the unbelieving hosts
Sever the final string
To that which they believed
They worshiped.

Get Out Before It's Too Late

The world is polarizing. People scamper to join the "right side". But they do not yet realize that the only ones who will not be destroyed in this last battle are those who opt out of conflict altogether and choose a kingdom that is not of this world.

Get out before it's too late!
The fight is only beginning.
Get out before it is too late!
Or you will lose.
All will lose.
Get out before it's too late!
You don't know what you are facing.
For if you hurl yourself into this kettle
You'll discover when it boils
That all who fight in this last battle
Die like lobsters in the pot.

Into the Unseen

The Rise of Silence

Loud voices, powerful players, and dark collusion can change the tide of human affairs. And the everyday man or woman may feel helpless to do anything about it. But we are not helpless. Silence is on our side.

They believe that we are no threat,
And they are right.
Yet little do they know
The power of Silence
Though immersed and surrounded by it.
They rarely notice and certainly never give ear.
For there is too much to say,
Too much to do,
Too little time.
They are too busy
Doing good
To hear.
While all the while Silence grows
With deafening stealth until...
Silence only knows.
But those who listen hear.
And wait.
For the end
We all suppose.
The end when noise
Has worn itself out,
When words have had their say,
When scheming, toiling, and anguish cease,
When all that's left is deathly Silence,
That will be the day,
The day when silent
Hearts are still
And noise is done away.
And then break forth Eternal Day!
When Silence speaks
And earth bursts forth in radiant life
The fruit of silent, suffering, souls.
Thrice proven through woeful noise.
And then crying, weeping
Covering ears,

The chattering horde will hide
In rocks and hills
And corn whisky stills
With the one thing they can't abide.
For hide as they will,
The Silence, still,
Will find them there and chase them
God only knows where,
Till Silence reigns
From plane to plane
And peace be our reward
For bearing the grief
Of their unbelief in Silence.
Yes, they believe that we are no threat.
And they are right.

What We Wanted All Along

There are times when I wonder who I am, what I am.
Do you?

The Ojibwe call God the Great Mystery.

And He is. And so are we,

Especially if He's done a work in us.

And it becomes hard to tell

Where our faults end

And He begins.

And isn't that a mystery?

I would have expected to find Him in my strength

And in all the things I longed to be for Him.

But He was not there.

Instead,

I've found Him in the weakness that I try to avoid.

And I wonder, "is this the thing that He was after?"

I am convinced more and more that it is.

And isn't that mysterious? Surely.

And it makes me wonder

What great mysteries await the world

When the towers fall, and we discover

That at the end of all our strength is weakness.

Perhaps, though we didn't realize it,

That is what we wanted all along.

The End is the Beginning

Have you ever felt called to spend your means in an endeavor that appears to have no hope of working out? I have, over and over. And I have seen miracles. After a while, you find yourself rejoicing even before the miracles appear.

I crossed a finish line today,
The end of all that I can do.
I have obeyed.
I have done everything He asked.
I have spent my means, down to the last few dollars.
And now it is in His hands.
And though I have not yet seen
With my physical eyes the miracle,
It does not diminish my joy in His deliverance.
For my end, I know, is only the beginning.

There Were No Books in the Beginning

There were no books in the beginning.
And he stood upon the hilltop garden
From which flowed all life, all truth.
And the life giving waters flowed forth
To water the four corners of the earth.
And did not God say that it was good?
And I believe that he was right.
And so that is where I am going,
Back to the garden.
I am done with facts and formulas.
I am done with calculations.
I will drink from the stream
That flows from God Himself.
For I am not wise enough to interpret.
I am not keen enough to see. I am lost.
And not even your brightest minds
Or earth's brightest souls can save me.
You say that you will translate it all again,
And that this time you will get it right,
And that once you do
That we will find Him within it's pages.
And the books pile high,
But they will not reach heaven
Though you build a tower past the clouds.

Where Books Fall Short

Only the lesser part of Truth can be bound up in a book.
The greater part must be revealed by the Holy Spirit.
It is the sealed portion promised
To all those who have faith
Like the ancients.

The King of Unseen Things

I don't believe the things I see with my eyes.
The eyes deceive.
For they do not show those truths that yet will be.
Instead I trust in the bright hope of unseen things.
And as the world descends into darkness,
I will keep my eyes fixed
Upon the truth that lies beyond.
In this there is hope,
So that, though my body be crushed
By the weight of deceitful appearances,
I will yet rise to meet
The King of unseen things.

Home

I am not at home here.
I keep thinking that I will turn the corner
And find it in someone, something, some place.
But my people are not of this world.
And so, I keep moving, searching,
Now and then thinking
That I have found my place, my people.
But inevitably, I discover
That there are places they cannot go.
And each of them settles down into their own,
But I move on.
And two can't walk together
When one is called to stay
And another called to wander.
And so we part,
They to their congregation,
And I to my solitude.
And to the world, I am alone.
God alone knows that I am not.

The Trackless Path

The path to the divine is not an earthbound path.
You cannot follow another.
Nor can another follow you.
It is more like the path of birds.
It begins with a leap of faith
And progresses by faith.
And it is through gratitude
That you transcend all obstacles.

God's Paradise

I don't know why people content themselves
With this world when there is a better waiting.
And I don't know why they wait for heaven
When heaven waits for them the day long.
Was not this earth God's Paradise?
And might it not be so again
If only we believe?

We Will Not Miss a Beat

Modern Technology points us to the world of faith. It is a world much like God's world of miracles. In fact, it has been called miraculous. But it can be easy to forget that it is only a road sign, a mercy, to point our imaginations to the thing that He intends to do when we put away our unbelief. One thing for sure, we cannot find it by looking back, and especially not by fearfully hoarding earthly things out of a belief that we must store up against the day when it all falls apart. That was never His injunction.

We thought that we could find it by looking back,
But we cannot. It lies in the future.
And we will never turn around.
We will never look back.
We'll keep on moving forward,
With our eyes upon the thing that's coming,
Even as the world comes to a screeching halt
Because they cannot imagine any future
Not of their own making.
And some will attempt to bunker down
And retreat into the past.
But they will find that they cannot.
For there is no amount of hoarding
That can prepare them for what's coming.
But for those who choose the future,
This is only the beginning.
And if the world has been free with it's substance
Unto carnal pleasure.
We will be more free with our substance
Unto the acquisition of friends in heavenly places
And faith, and everything we ever needed
Flowing out from the unseen cache
Of God's limitless storehouse.
And as for technology, we embrace it
Wherein it serves to point us to the light.
And when the towers fall
And the world is weeping for their loss,
We'll erect new ones made of faith
So that upon Mount Zion,
We will not miss a beat.

A New World

When the glory of this world is fully revealed,

It will pass away.

And as it does,

A new and higher world will come.

Palm Trees

Written on a day when I was on the road and on the edge of faith, having spent the last of my money on a hotel, a strange and extravagant spend for someone in my position, but also needful. And I sat at the edge of the hotel pool looking up at the palm trees swaying in the wind.

Palm trees sway with the wind
And somewhere I cannot perceive except with other eyes
That see what eyes don't see
There stares a something, someone, down on me.
The last rays of pre-dusk sunlight
Catch the green palm bows and glisten.
And just there, not in the bows,
Or in the light, or in the tree,
But in all three at once, and something more in me,
I see that place. It gazes down on me.
For now, we wait,
The watcher and the seen
Until the day when the seen will also see as he is seen.

The River

Written just days before another journey, called to the road once again with no idea where it would lead and feeling grateful for the Old River that carries me along, grateful for the Spirit that shapes my soul and gives me life, and for the thing that I become by changing with His changes and letting him carry me deep into the valley, out into the Sea of His perfect intent for me.

I ride upon your current.
Where? I do not know.
But I drift along
With sky above
And you beneath
And without a thought, Old River,
You carry me away,
Deep into the valley,
Out into the sea.
You drown me in the tide
Of the thing I'm meant to be.
You are wiser than the mountains, Old River,
And taller than the trees,
For it's you that keeps on moving
Ever changeless in your changes.
And always being, shaping, giving life,
To everything you see.
Give me life Old River.
Give me peace,
Peace in knowing
That you know
Where we are going.
Peace in knowing
That I, though but a speck
Upon your current,
Am ever more becoming,
Ever changing in your changes,
Ever more a tumbling current,
Ever endlessly with Thee.

Tenuous

I love that my life is tenuous.
There is a comfort, a peace, in not knowing.
But it is different than the world's peace.
The world finds peace in things remaining the same.
I find peace in the winds that blow
From the unseen place
And carry me this way and that.
The world finds peace in the false belief
That it can preserve its life.
I find peace in the fact that I've already died,
And that I no longer care to preserve my life,
But trust that it is preserved to spite
And perhaps because of my sacred wanderings.
My peace is like a river, always moving, always winding,
Never knowing when it may drop like Niagra Falls,
Or empty out into the ocean and cease to be a river at all,
But be absorbed into the Great Unfathomable Beyond.
And I wonder if I make the world feel nervous.
They do not like the thing that I've become.
For that reason, I do not stay in one place too long.
I am a squatter in the world.
And the world permits me to be
So long as I keep moving on, moving on.
And so far, I have not made enough of a ruckus
For the world to cast me out into that eternal place.
And I am glad for that, because I love the world.
And I have a thing to say before I go.
And so, until then, my life is tenuous.
Thank God! I wouldn't have it any other way.

Coming in the Cloud

It lies beyond all that you can see,
Just there, where the darkness disappears
Into the unknown pitch.
That is the place that we seek.
It is the place we strain to hear.
And we serve an unseen King
Who speaks in whispers
Out of the abyss.
And we obey,
Come hell,
Or come what may.
And that unseen Kingdom comes.
It unfurls it's intent
In the willing movement of our limbs.
Oh to serve it with our members!
To walk in step to the unheard drum!
To move into the fray
With light and truth our covering
And faith unshaken our shield!
To live or die
In the service of this last and final King unseen...
Unseen for now.
But those with eyes to see
Behold him already
Coming in the cloud.

The Last Frontier

Sometimes faith is going about your business
When all hell threatens to destroy.
It is the kind of trust
That knows and doesn't need reassurance.
And the truth travels with you
In everything you do.
And every act, however menial
Becomes a prayer
Because you could be doubtfully pleading
For a thing you don't believe.
I wonder if this kind of faith
Is the last frontier.
I wonder if it is the final state
Of those who have traversed the trackless path,
That in the end, they rest in sacred knowing.
And all of their prayers are prayers of gratitude
For the truth of that which is,
And the truth of that which was,
And the truth of that which yet will be.

The Sabbath of the Earth

When we do not work at earthly things,
The things of every day of the week
Come together into one.
And this is the Sabbath of the earth,
When our worship and our rest
Mingle with the things we do for labor.
And godly labor claims the day of rest.
And though there be but few who now enlist,
Know that this work, this rest, will fill the earth.
Until the houses of worship go vacant.
And the sacred silence of abandoned things
Will claim them for the owls
And for things that creep and crawl in the night.
For we will worship at the grinding wheel
And we will labor in the service of the souls of men
In such a myriad of ways
That we will not be able to tell the difference
Between the religious and the secular.
For so it is with all those
Who serve the sacred wind that blows where it pleases.
They cannot tell from whence it came or where it goes.
And eventually, they lose track of the days of the week.
They abandon their calendars,
And forget to count their years.
And when they do, they grow both old and young.
And time, for them, is done away,
And all things are made new.

His Hiding Place

I believe that I have found the pavilion
That covereth His hiding place.
Or at least,
I have found a few of the principles
That define that place.
Not surprisingly,
It lies on the outskirts of the culture.
Surprisingly,
it moves and you must move with it.
But it is real. I have felt the shade of its sheltering canopy.
And I have also felt that shade move in an instant
And known that it was time to move on.

Unto the Impossible

Have you ever known a thing that only you knew,
A truth that lived within your bosom
And nowhere else?
It was a personal truth,
A thing that you needed to know,
A promise that kept you moving forward
Toward an unseen holy goal.
Did you know that such truths can die of neglect,
Especially when it's known to only you?
For it is more like a seedling than a cinder block.
It must be watered and fed by your belief,
By your continued repetition
And by right action.
And if you nourish the seed,
One day it will bloom for all to see.
It will manifest itself, not only in your heart,
But in miraculous deliverance unto the impossible.

A Message to the Weak

Our work is faith,
So do not be disheartened
When all that you can do is not enough.
The answer lies, not in your own capacity,
To think, to act, to be enough,
But in the unseen portals of divine providence.
So let all you do be done,
Not with the thought
That you will move the mountain,
But as tokens of belief.
And say:
I act today
In this small way
Because I trust that these actions, small and few,
Are the earnest for unseen rivers
Of divine deliverance.

Power and Freedom

You want to change the world.
And you believe that you can do so
Through a change in policy.
But you are mistaken.
Your doctrine is something like:
If only those in power
Could use their power
To profit me and those I love,
Then we would be free.
But such thoughts reveal a misunderstanding
Of both power and freedom.
Power resides in the ability to suffer well.
And freedom is its consequence.
The man who complains
Because he's being denied his rights
Has lost his rights already.
The man who knows his rights
Quietly lives by them.
He does not complain
When the powers that be
Don't acknowledge his work,
Nor does he use their rejection or disregard
As an excuse to not show up for work.
For he does not work for them.
And if, in the end,
His labors buy him no more
Than a seat in the gas chambers,
He dies a free man.

The Real Work

The real work happens
In the field of your consciousness.
So that, the things you do
And the things that come to you
Are an outward manifestation
Of an inward work.

In Spirit and in Truth

In SPIRIT and in truth,
That seems to be the message of the age!
It is finally time to look past the outward
To the inward thing that binds,
To forget the thing we thought we knew
And to grow bright in the love of all that warms us.
And it is a comfort to me
To know that I can't convince you.
The convincing time is past,
Though perhaps
When the heavens roar
And the tempest heaves the sea...perhaps,
But only that.
Until then, it is for the few
With eyes low enough to see
That all their claims are emptiness, unless,
They worship Him in SPIRIT and in Truth.

Returning to Not Knowing

I am so tired of trying to figure things out.
I have stared into the heavens wide-eyed
Until my eyes have nearly burned out of their sockets.
And it is more than my mortal mind can comprehend.
I surrender to not knowing.
How sweet to return to simple obedience,
To move forward acknowledging
that I don't have all the answers,
But listening intently
For the whispers of Him who does.

A New Hope

Have you ever heard the sacred voice whisper a promise that was to only you? I have. And I have sought to faithfully water my belief in those promises, trusting that they will come to spite the things I see.

Well, one day, I heard the sacred voice say that all those things would not come until I died and that I might not have long to live. And I believed. And that very day, I made two important choices, the kind of choices you make when you know you don't have long to live and realized that you must buckle down and get serious about what your life is about. And as soon as I made those choices, within the very hour, I heard the sacred voice whisper that perhaps death was not the only way. And I wrote this poem a few days later.

In the end, none of us know how long we have, nor how or when God will fulfill his promises to us. All we can do is believe that sooner or later, all that he has said will come to pass, and work while the day lasts.

I lay down my life.
But what does that mean?
I don't know. Or perhaps I do.
That I let go of all that I had hoped...again...
Which is all that He has promised,
At least my hope of receiving it in this world.
And in that, He says, there is hope
That it will surely come
When I am gone.
What a surprise?
And I feel it in my chest.
The promise that I haven't long.
And so I baby this old frame. I treat it gently
With the hope that I can get it all down before I go.
Work, work, work,
Writing down the words
That are etched upon this flesh.
And I hear the sound ring out from the unseen place.
I hear the call of Him whom I serve.
"Work, work," he says,
"Waste out what's left of your life
And let me be the thing that you desire."

A Thousand Years of Peace

For those who beat their swords into plowshares,
There is no need for Christ to appear in the sky.
He has already appeared within their heart.
Their thousand years of peace
Have already begun.

The Time When What Is Is

Contemplating outward rituals and the thing to which they point.

The time has come when what is is.
And you can no longer sanctify it by your ceremony.
Nor can you desecrate it
By coveting your own supposed power.
For that which was once bestowed on man
Shrivels in the bright light
Of His dawning.
And divine knowledge will finally give meaning
To all the symbols that approached the real.
So that, we will partake in the thing itself
Or die clinging to the shadow
That preceded it.

A Nation Coming

In the coming years
Understanding will blossom
While the world of the self-righteous
Is steeped in war.
And that war will end all wars.
Though I can't really call it war.
Mere killing is more accurate.
And the world will devolve into chaos.
And men will kill each other
In one wave of carnage
Followed by another.
And at the same time will rise
The banner of a new nation
Which is not of this world.
Its citizens will not take up the sword
But will sue for peace.
They will put away their differences
And love one another.
And eventually,
When the wicked have killed the wicked,
And there is no soul left
Who can be convinced of any cause
For which they will take a life,
The world will be at peace.

Tools for the Road

None Good

If we aim to be good
We are doomed to fail.
There are “none good”, Remember?
But if we aim
To do the right thing,
Just here,
Just now,
And to slay
That part of ourselves
That wants to be good,
Or to appear good
To ourselves,
Then there is a chance
Of being true.
Better to be true
Than to appear good
To ourselves,
For then we are false.
Then our case is hopeless,
For we have deceived
The one person
Who can lead us out
Of falsehood.

The Path of Peace

I asked God to protect me from evil and darkness
And I thought that meant that he would give me peace.
What I did not realize
Was that my plea for peace
Was really a prayer to make things easy.
I didn't know that the path of peace,
The path that leads out of evil and darkness,
Is narrow, with dangers on every side,
And that the thing to avoid was not pain,
But complacency.
For the real danger lies in the fact
That we are at peace with the evil,
And we are at home in the dark.
And we call it simply living.
And until he makes us weak,
Until the very appearance of inward evil causes us pain,
We are in danger.

Consensus

I no longer look for consensus.
I look to God. I do what I feel is right.
I obey the voice that rings out from heaven.
And there is peace in it
Because I have left off trying to bend myself in half
For the sake of aligning with those
Who cannot see what I see.
I seek to align myself with One.
And though I be alone in it,
I am alone with Him, and that is enough.

The Twist Ending

Your life is not what you think. Thank God!
And you have less power to change your fate
Than you might suppose.
But that doesn't mean that it is nothing.
Kindness is never wasted.
And love, though it be measured out by imperfect hands
Into undeserving vessels
Is still love.
And after all of that,
Who knows what faith can do?
Because faith in God is more than you.
And that is the thing that interests me.
We are players on the stage.
Our lines are written down.
But to believe that an unseen hand can change it all
Is the twist ending.

When You Know a Thing is Right

When you know a thing is right,
Not by earthbound means,
But from above,
Move forward.
Take a step
And then another.
Move slowly if you must,
But keep on moving. And if you do,
The fire of the promise
Will shine upon your path
And open up the way before you.
You will experience clarity and reassurance,
And further light will come.

Personal Scripture

Scripture is the Word of God.
And God speaks to those who listen.
Few listen, but those who do
Have heard no less than scripture.
They have heard the very Word of God.
And that Word is no less binding upon them
Than what we have canonized as scripture,
Perhaps more binding, for it is God's very word to them.
It is personal. And it is incumbent upon them
To heed and to obey.
And if they obey God's Word to them,
If they treasure their personal scripture
More than all the world,
Then God will speak again,
And again, and again, and again.
And His Word will spring up INSIDE them,
A spring of living water welling up to eternal life.

Listen and Obey

Can you hear the voice
That whispers out of the Great Beyond?
And are you one who, when they hear,
Believes and follows?
And are you willing to sacrifice your worldly things
For the sake of an unseen, felt, reality?
If so, then you will be taught of God and angels
As you listen and obey.

Don't Look Back

Keep your eyes forward.

Don't look back.

Let the dead past bury the past.

And love.

Love will resurrect all that

Which truly was yours, to begin with.

A New Job

Where are you?
Are you riding high on life?
Or are you low?
Do you stand upon the factory floor
Loathing your place in life
And wondering: "Is this all I'm good for?"
If so, then there is a better job for you.
Leave your present employer today
And begin work immediately
For the King of Unseen Things.
And when you show up on the factory floor tomorrow,
Choose to be grateful.
It's hell. I know.
It is so much harder than just showing up.
But it is the only way to brighter tomorrows.
And the only pay you'll receive
Is to know that you are good for something more.
For surely someone there will feel it,
And though they'll never know that it was you,
They will look upward and wonder
If it was God.

Purposeful Imagination

Religion contains certain performances,
Things people do in order to focus the mind
In a certain direction.
For example, the Lord's Supper.
It is intended to cause the initiate to imagine
That they are actually partaking of Christ Himself,
Ingesting Him and thus becoming Him
By continued partaking and remembrance.
If this is done intentionally,
It is an exercise of the mind.
It is a purposeful imagination.
And purposeful imagination has the power to transform.
The biggest struggle with such performances
Is that they happen but one per week, or month,
Or worse, only once per year
Or once per lifetime.
Better to weave such purposeful imagination
Into the fabric of every day.
Let every morsel be the blood and body.
Let every step be a renewal of our faith.
And thus perhaps, through constant remembrance
Be transformed by constant purposeful imaginations
Into the very thing He desires us to be.

Look Up

Are you at peace right now?
If not, take a moment to meditate, to relax completely.
And then look up from the plane of the earth
To the clouds above the horizon.
Now imagine better things,
Just there, just a little higher than the earth.
It's not so far from us.
In this way, you will join the work
That will raise the earth to a higher plain.
But only if the thing you see when you imagine
Is in keeping with His intent.
Otherwise, your light just might be darkness,
And if so, how great is that darkness.

Finding God's Pain

People make choices to avoid pain.
Some avoid immediate pain
Through pleasure-seeking
And mind-numbing choices.
Others make choices
To avoid future pain
By being responsible
And looking out for their future selves.
But if we choose to follow God into the trackless path,
We will discover that inevitably,
He will lead us to embrace
Not only the sweet but the bitter.
And it is only in this way
That we can be freed from our aversion to pain.
Only then can we come to be pained
By that which causes God pain.

Faith Comes First

Faith must come first.
So put it at the forefront,
Since results spring out of belief.
It's a matter of priority.
And faith is nurtured
In the dark brown fertile beds of peace.
And gratitude.
And trust.
So, you must relax into it.
It's a meditation.
And it takes time,
Not to say it takes a long time,
But that you must allot time for it
Before you start to work.
So that, when you begin to work
You do so peacefully,
Fully knowing that the work
Has already been accomplished,
And that your temporal labors
Are no more than tokens
Of a much larger set of unseen movements
That have been set in motion through faith
To bring the work about.

Like Birds

We are like birds
Flying heavenward.
And gratitude is the wind beneath our wings.

An Abundance of Choices

Sometimes it's the abundance of choices that's the trouble
We stress out over making the right choice.
We try to choose the perfect way.
But perhaps that's a mistake
Since the heart thing is the way.
The intent is the thing that matters.
And if the heart is right and the choice is wrong
That will sort itself out.
It will self-correct with time and experience.
And the idea that we must get it right before we start
Only keeps us from starting.

The Crops of Yesterday

I reap today the results of thoughts
Sown in the field of my consciousness
Days, or weeks, or months, or even years ago.
There is little that can be done
To stem the tide of such harvests
Once they have taken root
And been allowed to grow
Through repetition and neglect
In the unseen field of the things that I secretly believe.
To tear them up once they manifest themselves
In outward things is tantamount
To an attempt to turn back nature.
So instead, I will accept the bitter harvest
Sown in my ignorant youth,
And sow better and more deliberate thoughts
Into the field of my consciousness today,
So that they may grow up unseen
And manifest themselves,
Through passage of time,
In better tomorrows.

Just Our Evil

The world's on fire.
It's burning high into the night,
And that's ok.
It always has been that way
Somewhere.
And while it grew
Into a hideous, gruesome sight
And men's souls
Were weighed in the balance
And found wanting,
And they lost themselves
In passion,
At that same time
Somewhere
There slept the infant
In the cradle
And the mother
Picked away at her needle work
Beside the fireplace.
And the Papa
Loaded wood into the box
Beside the fire.
And there was perfect peace somewhere,
And all because they minded
Just their business
And dared to choose peace
And to believe
That what evil fell beneath
Their own eye
Was just their evil
And didn't seek some evil far away.
But now-a-days, they import evil
And rouse themselves
To foreign passions
Ten, fifty, a hundred, thousand miles away.
And the baby screams
For want of mother
While Papa, Mama browse for other evils
And miss just the evil

That they might have only thwarted
The one beneath their noses,
The evil of their very own today.

Hesitation

Hesitate and the world weeps.

Old Things

I cannot shed old things
By looking back at dark mistakes.
And yet, they tug at my coat
And beg to be understood
As if I could figure them out.
But I can't figure them out.
They make no sense.
And when I try,
Dark clouds gather
And if I am not careful,
They portend doom from which
My mind must grapple to escape.
And so I don't look back.
I look forward to the bright light
Of all that He has promised.
I step into the sunshine,
And then into the sun,
Hot and scorching.
And it burns away the old.
But I do not notice
Except in retrospect
That old things have fallen away.

Flow

Water flows
In one direction.
If you desire
Means to flow
Into your bosom,
Let go.

Surrender

Don't give up.
Don't give in upon surrender,
For we are not creatures
Who do it naturally.
And it is the only way
To freedom.

Softening

Sometimes a monster is not what's needed.
And sometimes we come at a problem with a knife
When what we really need is a pillow.
And sometimes the giants fall
Like a rock
To the sound of silence.

He Speaks On

You believe
That you can stop His mouth
From speaking,
But you can't.
His words cannot be capped
Like a jar full of grasshoppers.
He speaks on.
And if you are not listening,
Moving, stepping out upon the edge of faith,
Sooner or later,
The Life which once you found in part, will cease,
And die within your stony hearts.
And then there is nothing left
But to memorize and to recite,
And pretend you are alive.
When you are not.

Jonathan McCormick is a traveling poet and storyteller. He publishes a poem or story every day. If you would like to follow his work, you can do so here:

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