

For the Workers Late in the Field

Poems of Encouragement for Such a Time as This



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Ansel Adams - Farm workers and Mt. Williamson

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DEDICATION

To the Metaphorist of metaphorists, the Original Poetry Man, Artist, Musician, Muse--the Word
Made Flesh--and all those who labor in the harvest with Him.

***1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

(John 1:1-6, ESV)

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All poetry has been featured on my blog: www.pnissila.wordpress.com under the categories “poetry” and “Christian poetry.” Some have been revised slightly. A comma here, a word there.

POEMS

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For The Workers Late in the Field

Do not forsake your furrows,
for wheat is nigh to mills,
the tares are near black-tipped,
and merchants wait their tills.

Do not abandon harvest,
though sky is bruised with storm,
though winds sweep up the branches,
and rain in torrents forms.

Don't fret to hear the mockingbird,
discourager or cad,
or noisome howling spirits,
your pain but makes them glad.

But know the night is close,
the owner, riding fast
to see your face at twilight
and gather in at last.

Beware the Borderlands

Beware the borderlands
of thoughts, and words and deeds,
of slippery slopes,
forbidden roads
where shine their wares and creeds.

Beware deception lands
where fakes and shills and snakes
lead and guide,
ensnare and blind,
with whate'er it takes.

Beware the conquered lands
of beauty, bucks, and brawn,
where white-washed tombs,
those, roadsides strewn,
await with gaping yawns.

Beware the borderlands.

Forsaking Not the Assembling

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...

God needs naught else

to craft, create,

to draw from depths

spread infinite

from love unseen

to replicate.

Yet here a little,

there still more,

through wombs of time

in flesh and form

He sparks to life

the countless born.

He shares His breath

with blood and bone,

opens eyes,

imparts a soul
to search His depths
and learn their own.

Now find you those
of kindred mind,
for who seek Him
have gifts to guide
and offer, too,
His love in kind.

*...exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day
approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

To The Cross

Some come early,
some come mid;
some come in the nick of time—
finally knowing Him nearby—
as the Good Thief did.

Some come joyful
some in grief;
some in waning reverie
glimpse the ethereal light and ask,
Is there a place for me?

And Jesus says,
Yes, yes, *yea!*
I have waited all this time
to see for whom I paid the price,
for whom My blood bought grace,

for whom I showed,

in flesh like you,

a priceless coin

paid in your stead

that you would come home, too.

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves,
it is the gift of God—Ephesians 2:8*

His Yoke

Some say we bend the neck
to the yoke of Christ,
but I think He bends to us.

Like a wedding gown
fit to the body,
not the body to the gown;
like a crown
fit to the head,
not the head fit to the crown;

*like His cross fit for the sinner
not the sinner for the cross.*

For this is like Him,
meek and low,
yoked near, breath close,
come to us below.

And when our field
is harvested,
the oxen gone to barn,
(and loosed as well, *our* yoke)
we'll rise arm in arm,
both knowing now as known,
swift at last to rest,
swift at last to home.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:29-30)

The Kraken* Revisited

The Kraken fattens cell by cell,
by thought by word and deed.

In murky depths,
hid grotts and caves
to seed and feed and breed.

But comes an afternoon or morn
or silent moonless night,
the ne'er-sated beast
will surface break
to twist and roar and die.

No longer will the canker spread
to unsuspecting parts
but the power greater,
truth in hand,
will vanquish rotted hearts.

“The LORD works out everything to its proper end— even the wicked for a day of disaster” (Proverbs 16:4, NIV).

*A response to the poem “The Kraken,” by Alfred Lord Tennyson

Lift Him Up and They Will Come

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (John 12:32)

From brick and mortar,
 hearts of stone,
from wilderness and
 broken home;
male and female,
 Jew and Greek,
pilgrims all, the proud
 and meek.

*For young and old
do always seek
what list'ners hear
and blind eyes see...*

And then are others
 gone ahead
 to show the way
 where Jesus bled—

for love flows still,
beck'ning yet—
until that day when
none are left.

Old tell new
He is the Light,
Who, for you,
was crucified;
He is the pearl, the coin,
the crown,
by faith, through grace,
our par'dise found.

For nothing here,
no gain or shine,
could pay the price—
yours and mine—
so Jesus did,
lift'd in our stead;

salvation's cost

for us

He bled.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

After the Resurrection

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. (Proverbs 4:18)

It wasn't nails that kept Jesus on the cross; it was love.

Though evil howls
in putrid throngs
like clanging cymbals,
noisome gongs;

though it hides,
obscures its blight,
it but intensifies
the light.

Though it wantonly
enslaves,
freedom, higher,
lights the way.

Though they close their hearts

to see,
truth pulses
to eternity.

Shroud of Turin

Man of the Cloth

Infused

On finest thread—

Deity or deceiver?

From time to time

Some forensic pilgrim

Probes microscopic remnants;

Holding

Hope like breath

All strain to view

The body:

Is it the Man

Who split time, or

Some old thief?

In the end

Science claims

Neither relic

Nor remains;

Continues analysis—

And the faithful

Sing

Refrains.

Why the Stones Will Praise

I say to you, that, if these shall be silent, the stones will cry out! (Luke 19:40)

Though comes a morning undefined,
pale of sun and dull of shine,
what soars and flows seems moth and mud,
broken wing and brackish flood,
in the day of rock and rime;

though comes a noon of restless mobs,
clanging cymbals, sounding gongs,
assailing ears 'til close of gates,
shuttered windows, loaded freights,
in the day of stone and clod;

though comes an eve when rest still waits,
peace illudes and sight abates,
when sounds the day in silent rooms,
echoing strife, gathering gloom,
in the day of coal and slate—

*then comes the night to blanket day
in a firmament array
of brilliant globes and shimmering suns
that tell us whence all clay doth come
and why the stones will praise!*

The Bride of Christ

*She lift'd her head
and set her eyes
on his fair face
to realize
the love felt there—
not her for him,
though that was prized—
but his for her
that bids Arise,
Belov'd,
Arise!*

It's Always the Day to Choose

It's always the day to choose
to recognize Whom or who,
the One to seed, to bud and bloom,
the other to spoil the fruit.

It's always the day to choose
to look to Whom or who,
the One to clarify, lead and guide,
the other to riot in gloom.

It's always the day to choose
to believe in Whom or who,
the One to invite, revive and restore,
the other, forsake and refuse.

It's always the day to choose
to follow Whom or who,
the One to lighten, strengthen and free,

the other at length to doom.

It's always the day to choose

to yield to Whom or who,

the One to shelter, protect, embold,

the other at last to entomb.

So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts..."
(Hebrews 3:7-8)

Remnant

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings. (Proverbs 25:2)

So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. (Romans 11:5)

Light is brightest in the night,

treasures are hid in the day.

Epiphanies herald in smallest spaces,

truth, in nature's display.

In pomp and circumstance one king comes,

Another is mangled in hay.

Icons topple in barren places,

saviors in hearts remain.

The mind contrives, the heart conspires,

the powerful in neon proclaim.

The masses follow each shooting star,

but a remnant and One shall reign.

The road is broad the world pursues,

narrow the path of few.

By looking, the throngs see only shine

But the remnant, both what and Who.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)

Noel

In the completeness of time

(just in time)

He came one night

squalling, hungry,

swaddled, cradled—

and they

wondered

who

they held.

In the completeness of time

(just in time)

He came one morning

feeding, forgiving,

healing, restoring—

and they

wondered who

they beheld.

In the completeness of time

(just in time)

He came one afternoon

yielding, bowing,

bleeding, dying—

and they

wondered who

withheld.

But the prophets knew,

astronomers saw,

wise men understood.

And the shepherds,

upward gazed

while sheep grazed

on quiet hills,

knew, too,

on that first Noel.

In the completeness of time

(just in time)

He is here now

loving, longing,

leaning in

as close as we allow

that we, with “yes,” would

with Him in time

ever-stilled,

ever dwell.

Metamorphosis

(A Response to Nabokov's short story, "Christmas")

Testing air
for breath and flight,
man and moth emerge,
both lately from
the Crafter's hand,
each sheltered while He worked.

A sinew here
a heartbeat there,
in silence crafted He,
'til at the last
His breath He gave
into eternity.

A sudden burst,
a shock to life
when Crafter stilled His hand,
but gave His Spir't
to lead and guide
and clear ahead a path.

And completed
man and moth,
of new voice and wing,
the one to praise,
the other, soar,
both new life witnessing.

"...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." -Jesus

*Drawn from [From Russia with Hope: Christmas in July \(Devotional\) | pmissila](#).

To the Manor Born Again

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

All that we may glimpse

down here

at mid-day sun

and midnight clear

that shines of gold

and sparkles well

may yet prove fool's

or diamonelle.

All that we may feel

down here

at rush of youth

and mellowed year

that lights the step

and warms the heart

may yet prove false

or fray apart.

All that we may know

down here

of trust and hope

and banished fear

is but a hint

of there and then—

the manor t' which

we're born again.

Who Fills the Void

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man. (Proverbs 27:20)

“The people know not

what they want,”

the corner baker said,

“You paint them

pretty pictures,

I bake them

loaves of bread.”*

The singer soothes

the savage breast,

the poet

calms the din.

But as Sheol, Abaddon

never fill

is man bereft within.

[But] the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking [of buying and selling and collecting and displaying] but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

*From a conversation in the [movie](#) based on the book *Girl with a Pearl Earring* about the life of Dutch artist Johannes Vermeer and a fictionalized story around his famous work. It was a brief discussion between Vermeer and the village baker.

A Verse for July

*Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:14)*

In July, we wait,
water, weed, and watch
through the hot, hazy days
in the drama of growth slowed
between seed and harvest,
in the greening.

But beneath,
thirsty roots gather strength,
push deep,
wait on the Lord of the harvest

Who in due time,
in the fullness of it,
brings the fruit.
Seeded deep in the wait is also
what the hungry soul knows
in the heat and the haze,

the watering, weeding, and watching:

*The Lord is good unto them that wait for him,
to the soul that seeketh him. (Lamentations 3:25)*

Epiphany

Somewhere in North Dakota
a young girl stands in her driveway
watching
as our train traces
the long curve west
around her land.

From my window seat
I watch her turn
and walk, slowly,
toward a brown house.

I wonder:
does she go back inside
to her chair and oatmeal
this morning
and ask—for the first time—
“Momma, where
does that train go?”

As our train lumbered west I thought about revelations tucked inside ordinary Tuesdays, about epiphanies winding alongside country roads. I wondered if what I had witnessed was such for that little girl, if, as the same old train rolled past at the same old time in the same old place in front of her brown house, she watched with brand new eyes.

I wondered if the eight-oh-five a.m. winding past to its usual destination became, suddenly, a string of possibilities she had never thought of before and if perhaps I'd witnessed that very moment in time for her.

Spiritual epiphanies—both sublime and subtle—can also occur amid the ordinary. Believers report visions but also fresh insight into well-worn verses, prophetic dreams or simply deeper understandings, mountaintop thrills along with rest in the valleys—even as God speaks through both Revelation's trump and, say, the cadence of an Amtrak ambling west on its appointed rounds.

And He speaks just now, perhaps, right in the middle of this collection of ordinary nouns and verbs [and poems]—but with extraordinary longing and hope: *“Call unto Me,” says the Lord, “and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know”* (Jeremiah 33:3).

Carpe Diem



Carpe Diem

An acrid burst
kicks up some dust
from a pile of calico leaves
as a late, sharp shaft
of ochre sun
surprises
a bed of these.

And I am barely six
again
in another
pungent scene
crunching leaves
beneath my feet
while shadows
dance in trees.

But 'fore the dark
tucks in the days
and owls

"Who-Who" (are these?)

a chilly gust
hints winter's night
draws close
from north and east.

Carpe diem.

[Image of fall leaves along fence](#) from publicdomainpictures.net

Advent

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land...

Yet out the shrouds of winter
a candle flicks and calls
to passers-by bereft,
whose hearts long iced
‘neath palls,
whose dreams long since
glazed o’er,
whose spirits long since
stalled.

Yet heard within the glooming
a thrush’s fluted song,
to passers-by bereaved,
whose requiems
long soft,
whose hope long since
greened over,

whose strains of youth

far off.

Yet out the frost-seared landscape

the earth sends up faint scent,

to passers-by

in winter,

a hint of nosegays past,

when hearts and hopes

were young,

and everything

would last...

...The light will shine on them." (Isaiah 9:2)