

A photograph of a dirt road winding through a lush green forest. The road is light brown and shows tire tracks. The trees are dense and green, with some bare branches visible. The sky is bright and overcast. The text 'Poems & Things' is overlaid in white serif font at the top center. The author's name 'John King' is overlaid in white serif font on the right side.

Poems & Things

John King

by John King

Cover: The old homestead in Vineland, NJ where my wife grew up. The house is now gone.

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The following selections are insightful glances into my feelings and thoughts that have boiled to the top of life after seven decades of change, challenge, failure and success. For the most part these entries deal with family life or the 24 years I spent in ministry—which my wife called “church work.”

Every now and then I wrote something just for fun but I might call the major part of this work a personal profile into who I am or who I became in old age. The short stories are fictional with the exception of my thoughts of Daisy, a member of our church in Burgettstown, Pennsylvania in the mid and late 1970’s. The romantic poems are mostly about my dear bride of five plus decades, but there are a few other young ladies of memory I silhouette.

But the major purpose behind these writings are listed under the heading ‘Spiritual.’ My favorites, in order, are “Meet Me at The Gate,” “The Lane,” and ‘The Child I Was.’

John

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Spiritual

I long to see you
so that I may impart to you
some spiritual gift
to make you strong
— Romans 1:11

Autumn Leaves

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my
God. - Psalm 43:5 [Poem written 10/27/23]

How is it that this Autumn's leaves
Are resting on the Maple trees
The golden light the sun could share
Well, I must say, just isn't there!

Each year enthused I hope to find
That glorious lane that's tree-lite lined
The Sugar Maples I once knew
Translucent gems with yellow hue.

Their leaves in brightest sunlight wrapped
As if in sacred amber trapped
Encased in such a glorious rest,
A coat of many colors dressed.

So heavenly this celestial glow
Before God takes His quilt of snow
(This glimmer of an evening's light)
And tucks them in for winter's night.

* * *

Poems & Things

Beneath this canopy of leaf
All hope revives in strong relief;
Their brightest colors only sing
Of promises coming with the Spring!

With autumn colors our God brings
The restoration of all things,
Else why His canvas of sun brought slope
If not the sign of redeeming hope?

If life is painted with despair
And even God seems not to care—
Go find that sacred colored lane
Revive your hope in Him again!

As Enoch Walked

Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. -- Genesis 5:24 NIV

Lord, may I walk, like Enoch walked,
That You would merit praise,
A holy walk, impassioned heart,
To follow in Your ways,
As Enoch walked along with You
Communing as he went
While You conversed as friend with friend
In mutual consent
Until one day You would conclude
The friendship needed more
And Enoch past the threshold
Through Heaven's opened door.

So when this journey's end at last
Reveals what is to be,
May I, Dear Lord, like Enoch had,
Find myself as he,
In chrysalis all time transformed
Into that glorious day,
When evermore to walk with You
Is just one step away.

Lord, keep me from mere self pursuit

Poems & Things

With Heaven out of view
Instead may I stay true through life

By walking close to You.
And if perchance I walk this earth

Not mindful of Your grace
Still living on a temporal plane

And not a higher place,
Lord, raise me to that heavenly sphere

Where fellowship is sweet
On "higher ground," as once we sang,
I pray, "Lord, plant my feet."

For some this is a sudden change,

A fearful chasm wide
And not a painless final step

At this life's eventide.
But Lord, I pray, as Enoch had,

May I approach the gate
With quickened step and joyous shout,
"I simply cannot wait!"

Bible Study

Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? - Isaiah 28:9.

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? - Isaiah 53:1.

Theology: it speaks to me
Of the burden of weightier truth
When I wished to rehearse only cherished verse
That I studied in my youth.

But alas, there's grades, or doctrinal shades
Of meaning still to learn.
The best nuance for he who wants
To notice or discern.

This I hungered for, and all the more,
My mind between, betwixt,
At scholarly feet to be complete
I sat with focus fixed.

So I studied Greek—the geekiest geek—
And I studied Hebrew too.
And the learned texts and the most complex
Of the scholars' works anew.

But what has last as time has past
My life time now nearly done?

Poems & Things

What was I taught of the truth I sought?
What have I learned, my son?

Well, I have found .. some thing profound
In typological code
In bible lore or metaphor,
In hymn, psalm, chant, or ode.

And the ancient script in scroll and crypt
The Story is forever etched;
By poetic blush or artistic brush
Forever in splendor sketched.

In religious creed all are agreed
Though arguments abound
What God has done through Christ, His Son,
Alone to be renowned.

Blow Out the Candle

Written upon the funeral of a close friend's dad.

While men wait patiently for the dawn
Some still by candlelight labor on.
The glow, though dim, still lights the way
Faithfully until the break of day.
What man, though, lest his sense be gone
Would keep it burning past the dawn?
Would we continue by candlelight
While the morning sun is up and bright?
Why, no! When'er the sun's about
We simply put the candle out.

And should not God Who is wiser still
According to His eternal will
E're the candle of our life is dimmed
And the old wick is needing to be trimmed
As His Son arises in our sky
To let the flame flicker and die!?

This life is like the candle's flame
Faithfully it burns on all the same.
For, God trims the wick time and again.
But as it happens to mortal men
The candle flickers a bit and then
The light of this mortal life is gone
But just at the breaking of the dawn.

* * *

Poems & Things

He needs no candle who has the Son.
Or need of a moon? There is none
In the Kingdom of God where the Lamb is the Light
And the children of God there know no night.

The life is spent; the wick is worn?
But we await that eternal morn!
What man, then, lest his sense be gone
Would want it to burn on past that dawn!
Could we continue in candlelight
Though the Son of God brings the end of night?

When death is near and the angels come
To escort us to our heavenly home,
When the glory of God shines all about,
Lord, simply put the candle out.

The Child I Was

The early years for this little muddy urchin on the West Side of Buffalo, N.Y. were filled with sickness including life-threatening asthma and bronchial pneumonia. God chose to stay by my bedside until His peace signaled all is well. There was no greater time of life for me as when I was introduced to the presence of God. I shall be forever grateful. written 2/2020

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. — Proverbs 22:6 NIV

“within the core of each of us is the child we once were. This child constitutes the foundation of what we have become, who we are, and what we will be.”
—Neuroscientist Dr. Rhawn Joseph

There’s an adage told which was true of old

In the record of history:

That the child I was and the child I am is the child I’ll always be.

A proverbial thought that you and I ought

Embrace as basic truth

That the person we are is the person we were: the blueprint was set in
youth

Soft clay is best, we must attest,

Poems & Things

That the artist's touch can mold.
Formative years thus tell the tale of the man I am when old.

What youth provides is a lifelong guide,
A compass for the way.
What we'll someday be was formed back then and it's what we are
today.

That we cease to change should not sound strange.
We are like the sprouting oak
The prevailing winds decide the form that inspires the artist's stroke.

So how I was raised in those early days
When I was two or three,
The child I was and the child I am is the child I'll always be.

And I for one am a grateful son
For all that came my way
How the grace of God through good and bad made me what I am
today.

And now I'm old and if truth be told
I'll be forever glad:
How I fell in love with the Word of God when I was but a lad.

The desire to pray that I have today
And which is a part of me
Is the child I was and the child I am and the child I'll always be.

The First Christmas Day

[God reveals Himself to each of us in different ways:

By Proclamation: Luke 2:8-15

By Prophecy: Luke 2:36-38

By Providence: Luke 2:25-32

By Pursuit: Matthew 2: 1-2

All were private not public declarations of His coming. We need to discover the Savior individually. God has no grandchildren. God is a personal God.]

The shepherds were first and unrehearsed—

Their hearts overcome with delight;

With the Savior's birth there would be "Peace on Earth."

As the heavens proclaimed that night.

A chorus rang while the angels sang,

And enraptured the shepherds cried out,

"Let's go and see these things that be,

and what they are all about."

Indeed Anna knew of the Savior, too,

And cherished the glorious event.

The prophetic scroll was in her soul

For she knew what all this meant.

It was said of her that in constant prayer

she looked for the redeemer of men.

"This child," said she, "will set Israel free."

and her heart beat a loud "Amen."

Old Simeon devout was never in doubt
Such a consolation forecast.
Life may then cease and he'll go in peace
when he sees God's salvation at last.
So the Spirit concurred and his old heart stirred
like a thousand resounding horns
With a gentle smile he met the child
and he held him in his arms.

Then the brightest light in the Eastern night,
alerted some magi there
A journey planned through desert sand
on a vision and a prayer.
There was no dispute of their pursuit;
for, they read it in the sky.
They had gifts to bring to this youthful King.
And so should you and I.

Is there something more to the sacred lore
of that first Christmas day?
God's unwelcome surprise wrapped in humble disguise
asleep in a bed of hay.
While the world slept in sin, in that storybook inn,
unseen, unwanted, unknown
Lay the infant Son of the eternal One
Who occupies heaven's throne.

There was nary a sound to alert those around

that a baby was born that night;
Without word or laud came the Son of God
as if hidden in plain sight,
While for her chosen part a young mother's heart
was guarded from public display.
Is there something more to this sacred lore
of that first Christmas day?

Such a private affair with no one there
as if God had deemed it so
Until He would invite those few that night
that were chosen by Him to go
Or according to lore it was only these four
who were waiting for his birth
(And these we knew were the waiting few
upon the entire earth).

Though the clarion call would welcome all,
yet only one by one.
As we loudly sing: it's a personal thing
to meet God's only Son.
So in different ways and on different days
those few were bid to come
For their hearts were stirred when God's call was heard.
They marched to a different drum.

Is there something more to the sacred lore
of that first Christmas day?
Oh yes, indeed, it's a sacred read.
Let each one find their way—

Poems & Things

By the prophet's word; by the Spirit stirred;
or some wise man's quest to know...
So, when God says, "Come!" to meet His Son,
We, too, will be quick to go.

On Forgiven

I just got up too early this morning with nothing much to do but pray,
meditate and then let my thoughts wonder..... They drifted lazily into the
feeling that regardless of how messed up life gets, forgive and be forgiven
brings true reconciliation with the past.

I set fire to my past,
Burned many a bridge behind me.
But that was never my intent
When I began this journey.

Old girl friends left with broken hearts
And some I even dissed.
Some left without a word from me
How loved they were, how missed.

Churches once my home away
May never see me back.
They held me once in high esteem
...Not since I got the sack.

One congregation is simply gone.
Some leave, some die, some disappear
And no amount of searching now
Can locate them, I fear.

Some churches are alive with change.
Some just carry on.

Poems & Things

But from where I can observe the work,
Old friendships are all gone.

And closest friends of yesteryear,
When friendships could be proved,
No longer call, no longer write.
In many ways they've moved.

But this is not a tale of woe.
Although I must admit:
I wish I knew just how they fare;
It bothers me a bit.

I started out to build my world
To make my mark for good
To give the hopeless brighter days
To help any where I could.

I started out enthused, excited,
A man infused with vision.
I saw just love and unity—
Not bitterness and fission.

Perhaps, life's friendships are not destroyed
In the fire and the smoke;
The forest floor contains the seed
Of tomorrow's grandest oak.

The blessed thought which gives me hope,
A future I can live in,
With all things finally said and done,
Is knowing I'm forgiven.

written May, 2018

On Heaven

There is grief work to be done in the present that the future may come. Walter Brueggemann, "The Prophetic Imagination" p. 119

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Luke 6:21 [Written May, 2018]

There's an unseen world that's impervious,
To the sadness of our day,
A world unknown and mysterious—
That seems so far away.¹

It is mostly a place that beforehand
We imagine in words of a song
Of a promised though never explored land,
Where we know in our souls we belong.²

We are dreamers who share in the promise
Of a beautiful world to possess—
Though for many a sad, doubting Thomas
They must see to believe it, I guess.³

It might seem whenever we're hurting
Much too fancy a thought to be true,
But "a place" our Lord is asserting

¹ Romans 8:23

² 2 Corinthians 5:8

³ John 20:28-29

"I go and prepare for you."⁴

Oh! The discourse of men can't explain this!
What assurance of infinite grace!
Words tied to this life can't make plain this
Gloriously incomprehensible place!⁵

If we try to interpret this picture,
This world in its wondrous array,
There is little, alas, in the Scripture
To redress any mournful dismay.⁶

So whenever our hearts sink in sorrow
Our eyes are awash with our tears,
Let us cling to a hoped for tomorrow
When God will have quelled all our fears.⁷

These are glories not seen but in vision
Of joys unimagined, unheard;
God's promise is God's sure provision
If we will but trust in His Word.⁸

The Spirit encouragingly whispers
Of glories outside of this realm.
For us who by faith become listeners
Of wonders that now overwhelm,⁹

⁴ John 14:1-2]

⁵ Philippians 4:7

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:51

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4:13

⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:9

⁹ John 16:13

* * *

Be assured, what this life must conceal,
In that moment, that one final sigh,
A new world God's grace will reveal,
"In the twinkling," Paul said, "of an eye."¹⁰

We shall enter to dancing and singing
Wearing righteousness as a white gown
With heavenly accolades ringing
And eternal life worn as a crown.¹¹

So when this life loses focus
In this heavenly world we shall sing—
Like the winter's flowering crocus
Announcing the coming of Spring!¹²

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:52

¹¹ James 1:12

¹² Revelation 21:1-5

Hide Me, Lord

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ... He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. ... The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him. Psalm 91:1, 4 [NIV]; Nahum 1:7 [ESV]

Hide me, Lord. for woes abound
That I cannot efface.
Your shadow, may my soul surround
Enveloped in Your grace.

There is, I'm told, a secret place
Far away from all concerns
Where life's a gentler, sacred pace
For which my spirit yearns.

A higher place above the storms—
Oh Lord, I long to hide—
A shelter from alarming harms.
Where I might safe abide.

There is no other sheltered rest,
No refuge from the gale,
No garrison, no eagles' nest,
No place outside the veil.

* * *

The voices of unnumbered crowds,
Their constant echoed din
Those threatening sounds in blackened clouds
Of cruelty, and sin.

Beneath Your Shadow, may I be,
Oh Lord, and in You hide
At peace within that secrecy
While learning to "abide."

Hide me, Lord. for woes abound
That I cannot efface.
Your shadow, may my soul surround
Enveloped in Your grace.

The House of the Lord

Even back then, I wanted to write! And poems are the short of this desire.

I must go into the House of the Lord
As ivory has decked her walls
Where splendor arrays the woven work
Of carpet upon her halls.
The saints of old in grandeur stand
Within her tinted glass,
Within her sacred shrine to view
Sermon or holy mass.

And seated upon the maple pew
The Christian with saintly grace
To match the beauty of the House
Of the Lord attends his place,
Where priest or pastor fills his own
Behind the podium
To bring to mind medieval grace
In silvery tone'd hymn.

Memorials are many there
In the House of the Lord—and oh!
The beauty if the artist's hand
That ever made it so,
Memorials that bring to mind
How Christ before was there

And spoke throughout the reach of time:
'My house is a house of prayer!'

I must go into the House of the Lord
With hallowed memory,
A sacred song within my soul,
A prayer, a melody.
Within I must in vision find
The Holy, the Divine,
I must go into the House of the Lord
And make His glory mine.

written 1965

Joy Comes In The Morning

For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. [Psalm 30:5 RSV]

"When in our Father's happy land / We meet our own once more, / Then, we shall scarcely understand / Why we have wept before." - Mary B. M. Duncan, 1825 - 1865

At Lazarus' tomb the Savior stood.
(The man who made the blind to see.)
The mourners thought they understood
For, dead is dead; so, let it be!

There are some things that sorrow knows
We cannot change, nor try restore;
That's just the way the story goes.
The lesson taught in ancient lore.

But have you met the Savior, friend?
Most don't know what to think of Him.
His stories have a different end
No matter how they might begin!

While Mary wept, with angry snort
The Savior cried, "Where does he lay?"
His nostrils flared a sole retort
His angered sorrow on display.

* * *

There's much of faith to learn, I fear.
Glistening on the Master's face
With aching heart a sacred tear
Seemed oh so late and out of place.

Though not for Lazarus was His grief
As Thomas learned, he only slept,
But for the masses' unbelief—
How God for His creation wept!

David shared in sacred verse
That sorrow only lasts the night.
Let sadness try and do its worse!
Shouts of joy come with the light!

Must joy be earned by us forlorn!
Its price another night of tears?
How blessed are all the saints that mourn
Who thereby know the Savior cares.

Yet David's tears might be his own.
Mankind's inherited mortal flaw
But this to God is not unknown
For grace eclipses every law

Indeed the Savior comes along.
Though lifetimes pass in those four days!
With Him will come the eternal dawn
When sorrow turns to endless praise!

Just a Taste

On the word "arrabon": "He has also sealed us and given us the Spirit as a down payment [an arrabon] in our hearts." - 2 Corinthians 1:22 Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

Just a hint of happiness
Just a taste of life
So few of all the memories
Of honeymoon and wife.

A midnight kiss, A flowery stroll
Too few and far apart;
Too many sorrows in between
To satisfy the heart.

Romantic interludes all too few
Regaled in verse and song
In hungers oft for more of all
The things for which we long.

Just a hint of happier times
Of love and fantasy
Just a taste of dreams fulfilled
Too old, too soon, ... too me.

But hope is born in darkest nights.
Longings and dreams are one.
And should not God give just a taste
Of better things to come?

* * *

The longings of the soul are real
Love's cravings will not die.
It is the plan of providence,
Designed for the by and by.

Just a taste of heaven's wealth
The Spirit's *Arrabon*
There must be more; death cannot mean
All spent, all done, all gone.

This life indeed adds just a taste
A taste of heavenly things
A taste of love, of dreams fulfilled
The song the lover sings.

Let patience calm my longing soul
I cannot be in haste
Content to say as well I know
This life is just a taste.

written 2017

The Lane

The lane led from the main road unto campus where I spent 3 years preparing for ministry. I used to take walks along this path conversing with God. It now symbolizes to me all prayer.

On peaceful days 'neath bluest skies
Or worries led where sunlight dies
It mattered not in bliss or bane
With God beside I'd walk the lane.

I shared my heart as oft we strolled
And that's a story never told:
My joys and sadness, virtue, sin
I begged His ear time and again.

No task dare drew my heart away
From this hour at the end of day!
For, the sweetest time of all was when
I'd walk the lane with God again.

The lane in symbol speaks of more
Than what it was. In Christian lore,
Is this the path the Savior said
Is the narrow road of which I read?

I walk this lane with Him where few
Return this way to walk it too.
No angered crowds to dare impeach,
His garment's hem within my reach.

* * *

And somehow like a healing balm
His presence brings a lasting calm
As I walk with Him where troubles cease
And He bestows a lasting peace.

And maybe near my heavenly home
There is a path that I might roam
I'll ask my Savior once again,
For old time's sake, let's walk the lane.

Written 2018

Life In Him

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. - 1 John 5:11.

Written during a poetic dry period [April 2019] But we throw little away...
Then I finished the last stanza in 2021.

On distant shores 'cross beckoning seas
Where lies all youthful dreams,
Travelers set their vision's course
But nothing's what it seems.
While seeking exploration's prize,
Possessed with driven zeal
Excited for desired things,
They boldly set the keel.

Yet distant shores seemed in retreat,
Though gentle breezes blew,
Unchartered worlds of greater things
Just never came in view.
And finally, they came to rest
Upon an unmapped shore
And life reduced to mundane tasks,
Alas and nothing more.

* * *

Utopian dreams of endless bliss
 In some far distant land
Will never prove far better than
 What God has put at hand.
Why endless searches far and wide
 To where you've never been?
While treasures of a worthy life
 Are only found "in Him."

The Lord's Return

For this is what the Lord Almighty says: "After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye— Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling. -Zechariah 2:8 & 13

Within the Mountain of the Lord
The great majestic voice is heard.
She travelth a quaking earth
And giveth genius Godly birth.

Oh may the mountains shake again,
The chasms bellow deep within
The nations tremble in the sod
Of the earth the Lord hath trod.

Ye rivers! Dare ye hold your dead!
For no one save the Lord hath said,
'Give up, give up!' And ye shall give.
The Lord hath spoken. They shall live.

Within the apple of His eye
The Lord s visioned drawing nigh
And with the kingdoms' anguished groan
The Lord is rising from His throne,

Give ear, oh earth, for now I see
The Lord in all His sovereignty
Has risen from the royal throne
To take possession of His own.

All heaven echoes with the cry
of Love and cringes neath the sigh
Of wrath to him who dares draw nigh
To touch the apple of His eye!

Ye children of the King of Kings,
The highest heavens anthem rings:
'Reclaim your field of golden hue,
The field the Lord hath given you,

For you the Pride of Zion's God
And now the glory of His rod
And yours the genius of His throne.
The Lord returneth for His own.

written 1966

The Lore of Forevermore

Life is real! Life is earnest! / And the grave is not its goal; / Dust thou art, to
dust returnest, / Was not spoken of the soul. ...

Lives of great men all remind us / We can make our lives sublime, / And,
departing, leave behind us / Footprints on the sands of time; — Henry
Wadsworth Longfellow, 1838

“The Soul is eternal” is the watchword of the human heart because so much it
enjoys are yearnings strengthened through the years.

Longfellow did state in '38
The grave is not life's goal.
His writing terse in poetic verse
Spoke of the human soul.

And although he meant we must not lament
That death for each is planned:
May others inherit our life of merit
His *“footprints in the sand,”*

There's more than that, this caveat,
When talking of the soul
I must agree in reality
That *“the grave is not its goal,”*

* * *

Beyond the veil there's another trail
That extends that sacred strand.
I do not guess, I must confess;
There are hints within the sand.

The forest haunts, those endless taunts,
That continue to extol.
As nature sings of many things
That thrill the human soul.

We don't outgrow, as well we know,
These things that are fraternal;
In sight and scent, not senescent,
Indeed, they are eternal.

The human heart is torn apart
When what it finds is lost.
A final breath that ends in death?
...Exacts so great a cost!

Love cannot conceive, I do believe,
In time of being grounded;
Love only grows which surely shows
Its spirit is unbounded!

So, to begin, let's look within
There's nowhere else to start.
And of the lore of forevermore?
Only ask your heart.

Meet Me at The Gate

My thoughts moved to the testimony of many a child of God when they closed the record of this life with the awareness of Jesus' presence to escort them to glory. This is my prayer.

This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. Psalms 118:20

This is the gate of heaven. Genesis 28:17

Refrain:

Meet me at the Gate, Dear Lord, Meet me at the Gate.

When the race is run, The battle won,

Meet me at the Gate.

Oh Lord, to see you standing there

My sole request, my only prayer.

Oh Lord, that blessed touch of grace

When I have walked the way called strait

To see you in that heavenly place

Awaiting me beside the gate!

My hope alone in life and death,

If life is short or should I wait,

Through many days to final breathe,

To see you standing at the gate.

Life's sorrows in its final hour
Release their hold upon the soul
And every grief will lose its power
When finally You complete the scroll.

Life's trials were a faithful friend
That I with widened eyes might see
What living hope and faith contend
A glorious welcome awaiting me.

To see the saints who went before
A joyous thought to celebrate
But now I long for nothing more
Than see you standing at the gate.

Refrain:

Meet me at the Gate, Dear Lord, Meet me at the Gate.
When the race is run, The battle won,
Meet me at the Gate.
Oh Lord, to see you standing there
My sole request, my only prayer.

The Message

Written about the Bible in sonnet format.

From Genesis until the final book
Inspired by prophet voice and hallowed poem
What heralding apostles undertook
of grace, of love and our eternal home.
The Word of God lives on with sound advice,
The counsel of a God who cannot lie,
The wisdom of the ages written twice:
The Old and New brought to us from on high.
No shadow of the false is ever cast
Upon this text so rich in deity
This book that will forever written last
Extends beyond this life's reality.
Proclaiming in the grandest ever scope
In wondrous ways to us a living hope.

written May, 2018

CHAPTER ONE
My Thanksgiving Poem

On Prayer

Written for my book: *Talking to God: How I Found Peace.*"

The Proof, indeed, that God is there,
The guarantee He's true,
Is only found in a life of prayer.
It's the same for me and you.

In grievous depth or joyous height
By prayer keep one eye on God,
His peace within the darkest night
Is the Shepherd's staff and rod.

And then: take counsel in His Word
In tearful times, rejoice!
More oft than not in prayer is heard
The Shepherd's reassuring voice.

I cannot tell you what His will;
No theology or creed
Maps out the path He takes, and still,
He does what He decreed.

How oft we seek but what is lust
To dream of better things
And prayer seems but a carnal trust
And faith enriches kings.

* * *

But that's not prayer, No! Not at all;
Our wants but misplaced greed!
No! Prayer is mercy's clarion call
For God to intercede.

Man's greatest thoughts are only crumbs
Of providential fare.
The banquet spread of blessings comes
As an answer to a prayer.

The heavens shout, "Look here! Look here!"
And thunderously skies applaud.
In standing ovation above this sphere
Acclaiming the works of God.

But yet much disbelief persists
In the slight of the skeptic's pen.
Yet prayer, unswayed, by faith insists,
"Expect God to create again."

Yet miracles are not the clue
Of God's empowered Word.
His creative genius does imbue
Each prayerful cry that's heard.

To walk with God as Enoch had
Speaks not of spiritual pride,
But a life's awareness thru good and bad
Of the God who walks beside.

So, talk to Him! That is the key!
Seek Him; for, He is near.
The God Who others cannot see
For you, He will be there.

written 2018

Psalm 139

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. 5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

You know my life, Oh Lord, the things I planned.

You know my thoughts whatever I intend.

Your tender touch is, from Your guiding hand,

Too wonderful to fully comprehend.

7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Where could I go and You, Lord, are not there?

If I should flee away in panicked flight—

My darkest hour in depths of deep despair—
An everlasting hope shall be the light.

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

In secrecy You framed me for Your sake.
I praise You, Lord, for fearful are your ways,
You still abide each morning I awake.
Unnumbered thoughts of mercy all my days.

19 If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! 20 They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. 21 Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? 22 I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. 23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Lord, keep me from all evil and all harms.
Lead me, Lord, lest offense be found in me.
Enfolded safe within your loving arms—
You know my heart—Oh how I long to be.

Poems & Things

* * *

Refrain:

Lord, I am Yours. Your plan for me is just
Whatever comes, in You I put my trust.

The Sinner's Prayer

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
[Some manuscripts read: "...come with your kingly power."] -Luke 23:42

[The Penitent Thief, also known as the Good Thief, Grateful Thief or the Thief on the Cross, is one of two unnamed thieves in Luke's account of the crucifixion of Jesus in the New Testament. The Gospel of Luke describes him asking Jesus to "remember him" when Jesus arrives at his kingdom. ... He is officially venerated in the Catholic Church. The Roman Martyrology places his commemoration on 25 March, together with the Feast of the Annunciation, because of the ancient Christian tradition that Christ (and the penitent thief) were crucified and died exactly on the anniversary of Christ's incarnation.

He is given the name Dismas in the Gospel of Nicodemus and is traditionally known in Catholicism as Saint Dismas (sometimes Dysmas; in Spanish and Portuguese, Dimas). - WIKI]

Dismas, part of a thieving band—
But evil never goes as planned—
Bought himself a roman cross
His evil ways his albatross.

But next to him there chanced to hang
No member of his roving gang;
By providential thought and care
The Savior of the world was there!

How long before he realized

That there in death before his eyes
The king of Jewry—they called Him then—
Was dying for the souls of men?

And what might be the likelihood
That those around had understood
What God was doing in that hour;
They witnessed then that awesome power

Which caused the earth to quake apart
Then all around the darkest dark
Eclipsed the faithful noonday light!
And Dismas witnessed such a sight!

[Sometimes the greatest suffering
Belies the moment of the thing.
This journey on a road that ends
Must come to where real life begins.

Our cross becomes a sacrifice,
An opened door to Paradise.
A sacred place, a house of prayer
For all the while our Lord is there.]

Another thief who hanged beside
Thought perhaps, before they died
The Lord might rescue from this fate
Before in death it was too late.

But Dismas had a another sense

Surmising Jesus' innocence
"Our fate," he fessed, "is ours for sure
But something else is happening here!"

He heard that Jesus was a king.
But who would guess of such a thing!?
His kingdom, 'cross some distant sea?
And He now dying on a tree!?

Dismas mused that just in case
Jesus' kingdom is a place
(Though now for him, he must believe,
There was no hope and no reprieve.)

That he might ask for nothing more
Before he died (he might implore,
Perhaps on just a thought or whim)
That Jesus might remember him.

Did Dismas hear the Savior cry
"Forgive them, Father. So have I!"
And what about the "sinner's prayer"
That Dismas spoke suspended there?

No lofty terms, no thought out verse
No opportunity to rehearse
No dogmatized theology
He only asked "Remember me?"

I think there is no humbler tone,

Nor contrite heart before God's throne
Than he who asks the diadem
In kindness to remember them.

And Jesus promised mercifully
"Today, dear friend, you'll be with me."

"No better words," I say, "is there
That we might call, 'The Sinner's Prayer.'"

Tears

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18

... list my tears on your scroll— are they not in your record? Psalm 56:8

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more ... mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Revelation 21:4

written during covid, Sept., 2020.

Thank God for tears when sorrows overwhelm,
When life provides no solace to befriend,
No warm embrace of hopeful things to come,
A fear that threatens sadness without end.

Despair would hide what grace wants joyously known:
So tears are sent from God to wash our eyes,
To see His promise: we are not alone;
A contrite heart our Lord will not despise.

Our tears become a living, healing stream
To cleanse our hearts of what He disapproves,
To free our faith of what things falsely seem,
To learn the special way His Spirit moves.

God always hears our agony of soul

Poems & Things

He cares; for, broken hearts He will restore.
Our tears bear witness God will make us whole—
The language of our tears and nothing more.

Sometimes our tears are not our own but His;
The burden of our Lord we gladly share.
What's hidden from our view but clearly is—
Our silent tears embracing Him in prayer.

The day will come when tears will be no more,
Their ministry to us will be complete.
Someday when we are in the "evermore"
I'll miss that hour before His Mercy seat!

Three Hours

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. -
Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44

Why did my Jesus have to die?
Was I the reason? Was it I?
That hung Him there! Oh! Wondrous grace
That bore the shame of my disgrace.

The sky turned dark; the noonday light
Had fled and turned the day to night.
Three hours passed, a doleful gloom.
While soldiers feared a pending doom.

The earth convulsed in like travail
Which tore in two the Temple Veil,
While Jesus hanged with tortured breath
In writhing pain awaiting death.

Three hours passed and we surmise
The air recoiled to hear His cries
"My God! Have you forsaken me?"
His soul's unutterable agony!

Might God have turned away, displeased?

Yet God alone must be appeased¹³

The guards confused to what this meant
In terrified bewilderment

The women stood, eyes blurred with tears
While others mocked with heartless jeers.
Three hours slowly slipping by
Beneath a prescient, darkened sky.

"Mother, Please go home with John
He'll be to you a faithful son,"
The Savior raised himself and gasped.
"John, take her home." He softly rasped.

One thief beside with nought to gain
And thoughtless of the Savior's pain
Wished Jesus when the sun had set
Would remember that they two had met.

But now His thoughts upon that Hill
Were prophecies He must fulfill;
For, Jesus knew with labored breath
Most surely He was nearing death.

To finish all, one thing comes first;
He raised himself and said, "I thirst."
"All is fulfilled!" He loudly cried.
The Savior bowed his head and died.

* * *

¹³ Isaiah 53:10-11 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

So, why retell this Friday's tale
We know too well our Lord's travail
Extended in this sacred lore
Three hours! ...Nothing less nor more?

The Savior surely bled and died
And this has never been denied,
Yet no one wrote in prophecy
The hours foretold would number three..

No sacred text by faithful scribes,
Yet God must know and God decides,
That Jesus hang upon that tree
Until He finished hour three!

Three hours filled with painful cries
Denying certain death its prize!
Three hours which no scholar thought
Had any message worthy aught.

Yet after this extended stay
The centurion was overheard to say,
With resolute assurance laud,
"This truly was the Son of God!"¹⁴

This sacred truth is never known,
Except it comes from God alone—
As Peter learned, you must recall—

¹⁴ Matthew 27:54 (NIV) When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Else no one knows. No, not at all!¹⁵

So when we read the centurion
Confessed the Savior God's own Son
If I might be so bold to say
This was his soul's salvation day!¹⁶

God's patience knows just when to move
And He will wait.¹⁷ Does this not prove
God wanted this one guard to know?
It took three hours to tell him so.

¹⁵ Mt 16:16-17 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

¹⁶ Jn 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

¹⁷ James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The Valley

Psalm 91 reveals how protected God's people are when danger threatens our peace. Psalm 23, the Shepherd, not just Angels, walk beside us through that valley.

No mountain peak will ever rise
Unless a valley forms both sides.
Though vales forebode such fear and dread
A higher plane lies just ahead.

The terror as we bivouac there
Belies an answer to our prayer.
Of higher ground should be our praise
But darkness now obscures our gaze.

No dangers in the valley stalk
But guardian angels beside us walk
God's shield and buckler, a faithful friend
Protect us to the valley's end.

And be it said, we serve a God
Who also owns a staff and rod
Who surely knows His sheep by name;
And leads them to that higher plane.

Transformed in His Image

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. - 2 Corinthians 3:18 [poem written 10/27/23]

My heart possesses a want to see
The Savior's image formed in me;
The garment of a sinful past
Put off and thrown away at last.

I'd cease to serve the devil's whim
Have nothing more to do with him!
To become as Christ my sacred quest,
The blessing of all blessings blessed!

Some preachers say, though, we will sin:
The old man still alive within.
If this be truly now the case,
Then what of God's redeeming grace?

With unveiled face, Lord, let me see
Your glorious image formed in me
The reflection of your loving face
The wonder of transforming grace!

* * *

My heart cries out, “Lord, May it be,
The Savior’s image formed in me;
The garment of a sinful past
Put off and thrown away—at last!

Zephaniah

Based on an introduction to Zephaniah in Walter Brueggmann's "An Introduction to the Old Testament"

God's Sheep

The prophet makes no mention of God's people as the sheep of His fold. [Psalms 23] The reason I choose to describe Judah's salvation as a rescued lost lamb? Jesus did. [Mt. 18:12-13 ; Jn 10:7, 11, 27; 21:17]. I am also more comfortable with the Hebrew term translated "lie down" in 3:13, which the lexicon tells us is "used of quadrupeds." In Genesis 29:2 it is used specifically of sheep. The word "eat" here means "to graze." Also, the words "scattered" in 3:10, "oppressed" and "lame" in 3:19 remind me of Matthew 9:36. These are only a few of the many scriptures using this analogy.

Zephaniah prophesied of Israel's—and by extension all God's children's—ultimate restoration. As Walter Brueggmann summarized, "It is the same "warrior" who makes a future for Israel who had terminated Israel's present." ["An Introduction to the Old Testament," 2012. p 279]

1:14-16

The great day of the LORD is near—
Near and quickly drawing nigh.
Destruction, loss and bitter tears
For the Mighty Warrior's battle cry.

1:15

A day of wrath and not too soon
a day of trials, a day of doom.
a day of trouble, of waste and ruin.
a day of darkness, a day of gloom:
Blackest nights, a day of clouds
A darkened darkness that enshrouds

1:16

The trumpet warns with battle roar
The corner towers will be no more.

3:10

But beyond the rivers suppliants sing
A scattered people with offerings.

3:13

No violence rages in their eyes
And no deceit upon their tongue
No more guile and no more lies.
A song of praise and worship sung.
Like precious lambs in pastures graze
Which lie contented all their days
No longer will they be dismayed
In safety they are unafraid.

3:17

The LORD your God is ever near,
The Mighty One, what shall they fear?
He takes delight in all His sheep
With joyous song He'll safely keep
While they lie down in peaceful sleep

3:19-20a

His flock, all gathered, now at rest
A time to heal all those oppressed
And to the glory of His name
He sent His word to heal the lame
And all who ever suffered shame.

3:20

His word fulfilled for all who roam
To gather them and bring them home.

3:20b

All peoples, let us praise our Lord
For freedom now has been restored.

Romance

...your love is more delightful than wine.

Song of Solomon 1:2

I Ache to Hold Her Close

Grandma and I are now old and seem comfortable sitting alone in favorite chairs but that wasn't how it all began.

I ache to hold her close to me.
I ache for things that used to be—
Strobed flashes of a memory
That lingers, lingers on.

My story now seems more and more
Of pains I never had before
While I indulge the joyous lore
Of playful times now gone.

Does old age come to claim its prize?
My body lives a thousand lies!
Yet she unchanged within my eyes
Still sings the siren's song.

I Blame Her

To understand this poem you may need to hear from my brother.

I blame her smile for all the while
she spoke the time stood still;
I don't recall her words at all
And yet I always will.

Years later, though, I finally know
My life was altered when
Such discourse sweet and I would meet
between us two back then.

Of such design no warning sign
No thought that I might care.
The human soul—we just don't know!
What matters: when or where!

I'm not the same and she's to blame
And talking had to mean
There's much to share when she was there
But this was not foreseen.

In homemade verse we would converse

Like children then at play.
My soul revived, my passions thrived
On every word she'd say!

Now time has past, and I alas,
In lone soliloquy
Live my regret I never met
Another quite as she.

For romance, love and God above
and fellowship, all along,
With all the saints without restraints
Depend upon her song!

Unspoken thoughts in silence rots
Like poison to the soul.
A moonlit walk while lovers talk
Will surely make them whole.

Once we have strolled the streets of gold
In the Land of Endless Peace
Once God's accord has been restored
And every discord cease

No hand upraised through endless days
To silence sweet exchange
And there will be transparency
And no one think it strange

Fifty Years Have Come and Gone

June 22, 2018 is our 50th wedding anniversary. Fifty years together through the good and the bad. "Happy Anniversary, Hon"

Fifty Years have come and gone
But somehow, I must say,
Romantic love is ever young—
A child's heart at play.

Fifty Years have come and gone
Yet life is, for my part,
A honeymoon that lingers on,
In matters of the heart.

Fifty years have come and gone.
My fondest memories thrive.
In many ways, my heart beats strong
With romance still alive.

No one denies now and again
Some maddening consequence
Would try with devilish craft to end
Such untrained innocence.

When words become a sharpened knife,

Leave feelings left to bleed,
Leave tears a major part of life
And love in desperate need.

But fifty years have come and gone
And still the romance lives
For we have found despite the wrong
That love always forgives.

Fifty years have come and gone
Now life is near complete.
But I remain forever young,
And she still just as sweet.

We'd stroll along a flowered trail
Or through a sunlit glen
Or along some railroad track and rail.
And do it all again.

We'd kiss behind some unseen tree
Or near the ocean's roar,
Waves singing out excitedly,
God's great attending choir.

I cherished lighter moments when
Pure silliness allowed
To see her smile erupt and then
We'd laugh and laugh out loud.

Some little thing or briefest touch,

Poems & Things

Now treasured memories,
When ours eyes met, her smile and such...
(Not public, if you please!)

And there were times we took a chance
And boldly took life on
Challenge is a strange romance
The strangest sort of fun.

And yes, at times, life was endured.
But God was always there,
We lived back then, be most assured,
On many a whispered prayer.

Fifty years have come and gone
And we, still hand in glove,
Have journeyed all this way along
And we are still in love.

Love's beauty blossoms unsurpassed,
In faithful perennial bloom
With fragrance that will ever last
Divinity's "nom de plume."

The Magic In A Loving Kiss

"A kiss....

..... is just a kiss....

Until it's all you reminisce.

(Then the memory becomes your most treasured possession.)"

— Ranata Suzuki

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth! For your love is better than wine;" — Solomon

If I live a hundred years or more
As a child in a candy store
Still sweeter far than all of this
Is the magic in a loving kiss.

From slobbered cheeks and drizzling drool
Of an infant's charm and out-of-school
To experiments in youthful yen...
The kiss, sweet Eden's gift to men!

There's magic when two lips caress.
That allurements in a lover's kiss,
Their touch, their breath, most worthy of
An ardent proof of ageless love.

* * *

Poems & Things

A world of hurt must disappear.
It bids adieu the lingering tear.
This healing touch! This soul's embrace!
This wonder of a mortal grace!

(A kiss forgives a thousand woes;
Amongst the thorns there thrives the rose).

To My Valentine

[After 50 years of marriage I have finally discovered what romance was meant to become with time. This poem refers to some of the more delightful moments when we met: our first date at the Thanksgiving banquet at the school; when I first drove her 1964 Chevy Nova rather recklessly; stealing a kiss in the office of the dean of women because the dean left the door open in her absence; the steak dinner I bought Joyce when I couldn't afford one for me, too. (I ate chili); driving around seeking a place where she and I could be alone. On an early pocket photo she gave me, on the back she referred to me as "a nut." "...thy love is better than wine." Song of Solomon 1:2]

A wise man sang a song of old
In sacred verse he would opine.
That love, once found—so we are told—
Is better than the sweetest wine.

Your favorite "nut" cannot forget
But cherish as the best of times
Those early days when first we met:
The mischief and some campus crimes.

Those memories of romantic bliss,
The banquet cast as our first date,
The country rides, a stolen kiss,
Expensive steak I never ate.

My boyish moves surprising you,

Poems & Things

Astonished and caught unaware.
In love and free and all so new,
A college kid without a care.

The awkward laughs, the furtive glance,
The fluttered thrill and yearning sigh,
The heartbeat of a young romance,
The puppy love in days gone by!

Our eyes betrayed a playful smile
My heart did throb excitedly
Just being near you; all the while,
Your voice so sweet delighted me.

So slowly through the many years
Life's challenges consumed my day,
Awash with untold countless fears.
The romance? Had it slipped away?

A part of life too soon it seems,
Was somehow lost, or left behind
For bigger hopes and bigger dreams?
(Of truth they say that love is blind!)

A creeping age now claims its prize;
An old man's strength is all but spent.
And must I sadly now surmise
Romantic love has come and went!?

A diminished manhood comes with time.

The athlete's skill is for the youth.
My prowess no longer in its prime;
I miss those days ... and that's the truth.

Yet trapped within this old man's soul,
Romantic love is still alive.
Outward, indeed, life takes its toll.
Within my love in secret thrives!

Too old for second hand emotions;
Too old for fantasies and frills;
Not hip to all the current notions
Of casual pleasure and all its thrills.

Perhaps it is the fifty years;
Perhaps the life we, two, have shared;
Perhaps the music of the spheres;
Perhaps, some answer to a prayer.

But love is like a gentle wine
Matured with age if given time
Like poetic verse wrote line by line
Our lives became a sacred rhyme.

The mellow tones of love have now
Replaced the drumbeat of earlier days
The message of the marriage vow
Rings truer now in lasting ways.

I pray the young might note this truth:

Poems & Things

Romance much like a polished gem
Uncut at first while in our youth
In time bejewels the diadem.

Ode to Innocence

Written in remembrance of a young lady, Helen, I met in my college days and whom I still admire for her inner beauty.

To her who knew the way to bring a smile
Upon my face or bring to rapturous bliss
A mother's dreams and quietly all the while
She stood beside in silent grace; Yet this:
Though nothing said, I heard in her unforgotten style,
All that was ever said of love.
I reminisce.

written 2013

On Missing Her

An early poem of an absent romance.

I've never seen the Canyon's depth; the Rockies soaring height;
The sunrise on the Northern shores; the Nile gay and blithe;
The jungle of the Amazon; the majesty of Rome.
Within the confines of my soul, I never left my home.
Why miss those distant northern lights or islands of the sea,
The beauty of the valley's span—its colored majesties?
In silence on the midnight hour they lose their gloried hue.
I miss them not yet in my heart I find I'm missing you.

written 1967

On Saying Goodbye

I asked Pat to marry me. She said "No." ...twice! In reality, I was a bit less polite about the breakup but I now think her quite wise for her young age (18).

Dear Patty, let this solely be
My answer to thy company.
For never will you cease to be
Engraved in my memory.
So Patty, this I only say:
For thy eternal bliss I pray
'Til heaven hears my lonely sigh
And answers me for thee... Goodbye.

written 1967

A Woman's Smile

Written after (I blame the Covid lockdown) a melancholia overtook my memories as I rehearsed 50 plus years of hard times. I told my wife, "Maybe, we should not have married." to which she replied (with a smile and thus a poem) "Too late now."

When God made Eve, the Master plan
Was to have her be as a help for man
So His genius in one master stroke
Formed her thus. When she awoke
She found her Adam sitting there
In breathless wonder with but a stare
Upon his face; her sinless guile
threw him a kiss and broke a smile.

Perhaps, he dreamt the siren's lure
So true of all men everywhere.
The loudest praise, the fondest prose,
Was God's creation while Adam dosed!
The finishing touch to His masterpiece—
Will breathless sighing never cease!—
Discovered in her gentle style;
Displaying a coquettish smile.

Be not deceived: That fateful day

When serpents had too much to say
When summer fruit bedecked the tree
Where Adam had no right to be—
Forbidden pleasures he should resist.
But did his lovely Eve insist?
She took a bite; and thought the while
She'd shared it ...only, with a smile!

No wealth, no jewels, no luxuries,
Not Eden's treasured discoveries,
No opulence, no bed of ease
Is long able to assuage or please.
What tempts a man? It's not in things
Not palaces of the richest kings.
For nothing else is worth the while
It's only in a woman's smile.

What makes a man to lose his way
To lose resolve, become her prey,
To acquiesce or compromise?
The subtle truth is in disguise!
From whence a woman's power to charm,
To heal as much as it can harm,
To stir the heart—a woman's wile?
God kindly hid it in her smile.

Memories

I will remember the deeds of the LORD;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

Psalm 77:11

I Miss the Good Old Days

Written August 14, 2018 reminiscing of my teen years and the early years of my faith. The summer of 1960 was a special time when I as one of a number of teenagers and pre-teens spent considerable time seeking the Lord. It is more than a memory. It was life changing. Many of us would continue finding an altar rail a place of great blessings.

I really miss the good old days
When innocence was king
Before the academic haze
Questioned my pondering.

Before I thought my search for God
Might be a fabled quest
Before they said: such truth is flawed;
I'm self-aware at best.

I really miss the good old days.
My faith is not a fraud!
My soul reached out in simple praise
To touch the heart of God.

When youthful hearts at altar rails
Beat strong in simple praise,
Not harrowed with presumed details
Of science—now the rage.

Poems & Things

* * *

As Hosea pondered still exiled
While in a foreign land,
“When Israel was a little child
God led them by the hand.”

When spiritual things were wondrous new
And Jesus then was awed,
Back then there was one thing to do:
I lived to worship God.

To organ sounds in mellow strains
I worshipped God in hymn
I joyously sang the old refrains.
Time and time and again.

I thought, back then, in heart and mind,
Worship is a part of me!
And when away I'd quickly find
There's nowhere else to be.

The Bible was the preacher's tome
Entranced I claimed my seat,
Nowhere could I be more at home
Than “at the Master's feet.”

Back then the message of God's Word
Was filled with such surprise.
The greatest story ever heard
Would brighten youthful eyes!

* * *

For creation was God's greatest act
And miracles, common place.
I saw God's Word as surest fact:
The story of His grace.

But now we reason passed the past
And logically assume
Change means that nothing ever lasts;
So, why my gripe and gloom?

Well, some things are eternal truth
The same back then and now.
What we once had within our youth
I cannot disavow.

My heart was right when first I found
God's peace a real thing.
There can now be no sweeter sound
Of which I care to sing.

No other truth shall I expound
Than giving God the praise—
But yesteryear's loved sight and sound?
I miss the good old days.

In Love with a Memory

[I have often missed certain parts of my yesteryears. My recollections swell within me a nostalgia of such magnitude that one might call it "love." I "loved" teaching as a pastor. I found cleaning as a janitor in an elementary school very rewarding. I lived the past few years still thinking these might be in my future until full retirement made the goodbye inevitable. Yes, there were a few girls as well, the best with my bride of 50 years. In those early days we had the energy to make such memories. This poem speaks of them all in romantic terms that gave this septuagenarian, in this regard, a new sense of his reality.]
2018

I daydream of yesteryear's romance
With twinkling eyes and sweet smiles
She invited my heart to come slow dance
To her charm and bewitching beguiles

Her voice was so soothing, the calmest
I swooned to the sound of her charming
Her words could inspire the psalmist
Her manners so loving, disarming.

Like the drawing of love's glowing ember
When my troubles laid siege to my mind
To some time or some place I remember
I lovingly went there to find...

I'm in love! But is it the person
The girl of romantic renown
When the anguish of life seems to worsen
When my world seems to turn upside down?

* * *

Or is it a memory stolen
Torn free from a past now so real
A heart sick of love and so swollen?
(I suppress parts I don't want to feel.)

Just recalling some wonderful repast
A banquet of love—as its seems—
Remembering whenever downcast
The romance, some lover in dreams.

I am left with mere longing impressions
Those innocent years are now gone
For life has taught us all lessons
She is now but the words in a song.

As I read in the Good Book, it is written
Old men are sure to dream dreams
With yesteryear's happiness bitten
But nothing is here what it seems.

For the years have undoubtedly altered
Whatever she once was to me
And romance fades, having faltered
I'm in love with her memory!

An Old Man's Despondency

There is a certain discomfort that threatens family cohesion and that sense of belonging when our get-togethers include different beliefs and no belief at all. We cannot talk religion. The Bible has joined politics, evolution, and a list of other subjects no one talks about. "Christians have to come to terms with the brute fact that we live in a culture, one in which our beliefs make increasingly little sense. We speak a language that the world more and more either cannot hear or find offensive to its ears." (Rod Dreher in "Christians in the Age of Outrage," Ed Stetzer. Page 118) But there is a living hope. "We have a God who delights in impossibilities." (Andrew Murray) The impossible is what the grace of God is called to accomplish. Absolute love speaks a language that needs no logic to be understood. We are called to promote a Gospel that transcends culture.

Let me visit the past with its outdated themes;
My memoirs seem sweeter than cultural memes,
A thousand new interests can't lure me away
From pleasanter thoughts of a missed yesterday.

My world is now different—such change as if I'm
Mistakenly, randomly, born out of time.
My words like my thoughts are as ancient as I—
I speak in a language of a time now gone by.

But worse still my passions occasion offense
When I share of myself and nothing makes sense,
When my soul moves in rhythm to when I was young
And it sings out a chorus that is no longer sung.

* * *

And sadly the family seems splintered apart
While small talk replaces the sharing of heart.
The wisdom embodied in passionate thought
In my world, as I know it, has now come to naught.

Enough! Oh my soul, for, your God is not dead!
Why step in the past when the road lies ahead?
Let me live in the present and what is to come,
For hope marches always to a far different drum!

The Old Preacher's Request

Ps. 38:9 NLT You know what I long for, Lord; you hear my every sigh.

Locked within the old man's heart
A thousand unshared sermons lie.
No longer asked to play a part—
How ageless is his sigh!

It seems for near a hundred years
His faith inspired truth;
His loyal search for listening ears,
Enjoying endless youth.

But now his strength is all but spent,
His eyesight growing dim,
His stately form now old and bent
They have no use for him.

The times have changed. The church has too.
The world with hatred filled.
He serves no purpose in their view
The old man's voice is stilled

His thoughts like some forgotten dreams

That may have past him by,
So old, discarded, so it seems—
No-one to hear his sigh.

His pastor's heart throughout his life
Had shared both joys and tears.
In blessings oft or grief ran rife,
For many, many years.

God's Word, the song his soul would sing,
Oft caused his heart to race;
His spirit oft had taken wing
To find a higher place.

Now old, oh how His passions long
To preach the Truth once more.
This is, he knows, where he belongs
What life is really for.

But he retired; he's far too old
To share his heart as then
The bema now, as I am told,
Remains for younger men.

Still he longs to have the chance
To honor God once more,
To view the saints with watchful glance
To feel his spirit soar.

To share God's love and living hope,

Poems & Things

For which the saints do yearn
To don once more the sacred robe
And herald Christ's return.

Reflections

Written 3/7/2019

An old man now; it's all the rage
To finally reach a ripe old age—
The youthful draw from long ago
No longer has my heart in tow.

Theology, now, is not my thing.
The Psalms, yes, have a truer ring;
They speak of life - a clearer truth
Than what I pondered in my youth.

The signposts left along the way
Are markers where I stopped to pray
Enlisting angels in the strife—
A testimonial to my life.

So much has changed along the way
Some good, some not. What can I say!
But there can never be regret,
I've learned to love—forgive, forget.

In times of deep reflection prone

Poems & Things

There are some memories that I own,
Occasions of a gentler touch—
The harder times, not so much.

My sweetheart, too, I saw her change
Nothing scary, nothing strange;
For many years, she called me, "John"
But now I'm known to her as 'Hon.'

The night nurse used to come at three,
And smiling so annoyingly—
Her kindness, now, is cherished time
For I'm no longer in my prime.

But now I move a slower pace.
I have no runner in this race.
I leave to God the world at large,
These things no longer in my charge.

What caught my eye and fantasy
Seems now a distant memory.
One passion left; I'm looking toward
That glorious day I meet my Lord.

Family

I thought, "Surely I will die surrounded by my
family"

Job 29:18 NLT

Five Daughters Grand

Grandma and I have 5 granddaughters, by age: Carrie, 23; Abbie, 21, Kayda, 13; Leah, 3; and Ellie who is 1. Carrie was like a daughter to us being the first. (I needed time to realize she is our granddaughter). She is the adventurer. Abbie is the artist. Kayda is the intellectual. Leah is inexhaustible energy. Ellie is the sensitive one having begun life with a milk allergy which took time to find.

I see myself in all of them. Life has been an adventure. Anyone who knows my history has that much. I like to think of myself as part artist (writer) and part intellectual (the preacher). Over the years we needed to tap a source of endurance that brought us through decades of change. We needed a bit of Leah's energy. And Ellie's empathy is a gift all the merciful should have. I like to think myself one.

April 2020.

This Grandpa's joys, please understand,
Are just five girls, five daughters grand
Five sweethearts in a class alone
On which I dote in boastful tone.

Our Carrie is the first of five
And granddad's glad to be alive
To see her grown. Think of that
Our little girl who I once "sat."

I had to learn: I'm not her dad,
The daughter grandpa never had,
But still involved—and such a fuss;
I'm only glad she's one of us.

* * *

Our Carrie is the traveler
It matters not the time of year
So fearless, brave, and confident
At home in houses, or a tent.

Our Abbie, so deserves some praise—
Artistic in so many ways.
With pen and ink creatively
She blesses us in all we see.

The potential of so much to come
Her talents speak to not just one.
Her interests now in widened scope
Are filled with promise and with hope.

Our Abbie still so young yet smart
Her great achievements just the start.
I shout her praises right out loud
For of our Abbie, I'm so proud!

Our Kayda quietly reads and reads
Of adventurous tales and heroic deeds
Of super kids where dragons fly
And the world unnoticed moves on by.

She sits curled gracefully around a book
While admiringly I chance to look
At sweetness that is unsurpassed
Of innocence that's un-harassed.

When she was four and we at play
With honeyed voice, I heard her say—
Most cherished by this aged fool—
"Grandpa," she whispered, "I love you."

Poems & Things

* * *

Our Leah is pure energy
Which both excites and blesses me
So full of life; so full of fun.
And life for her has just begun.

For learning is a full time task
While I must simply sit and bask
In all that Leah is for me—
Her interest in discovery,

Her overwhelming, endless zeal,
Her innocence, so pure and real,
Her unleashed spontaneity.
Our Leah just a girl of three.

Our Ellie's smile is in her eyes
With Grandpa King they empathize
She reads my heart in quiet glance
And none of this is happenstance.

She'd share her food with me but more
There's something here I can't ignore
A one year old that seems to care
When grandpa needing hugs is there.

The sweetest is when lovingly
For friendship's sake she talks to me
With whispers soft that only I
Will catch when throwing me a "Hi."

This Grandpa's joys, please understand,
Are just five girls, five daughters grand
Five sweethearts in a class alone
On which I dote in boastful tone.

Momma Could You Hold Me Tight

Thinking of Momma on This Mother's Day [with Covid-19 still about.... 2020]

Momma could you hold me tight
Not forever, just tonight!
I can't sleep and I'm so scared
A monster roams about, I heard.
You cannot see it but it's there
At the door and everywhere
And there's no better place to be
When monsters come to frighten me.

Momma could you hold me tight
Not forever, just tonight!
I know daddy loves me too
But momma, daddy, he's not you;
I feel safer from this harm
If I'm cuddled in your arm
Momma, Momma, just tonight
Momma could you hold me tight!?

My Daddy

Daddy, June 6, 1906 - June 21, 1967

How sad, and yet, how pleasantly surprising and meaningful, to find out after many years of passing in the night that someone built a life around you.

My memory of my dad is somewhat droll:

A part of what he was I must supply
By what I think I've found about the role.
The rest, perhaps, is easy to deny.

An ordinary life, a bit clichéd,
So seldom seen and seldom ever heard,
Surviving on the fringe of where I played.
My recollections incomplete and blurred.

How sad and yet how pleasant a surprise,
After many years of passing unobserved,
To find he was not at all what I surmised,
For I had been the center of his world.

On looking back there's nothing that I see
He ever did or ever thought to do
That wasn't done for my siblings and for me,
But this is something, then, I never knew.

* * *

Sometimes the simplest moment is assigned
The greatest, most significant task of all
To help me recollect a past and find
The missing truth that I could not recall.

Random Thoughts

You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.

Psalm 139:2

The Challenge

This poem—to my surprise—was accepted and included in an anthology of college poems.

Had not the wildest dream of mine procured
 Belonging, as the soul and spirit bide,
 In oneness with the whole of nature's life
And could not find in darkness where to hide,
I should have sought with all the strength of mind
To bind the thought and make its capture sure.
 If not, the witness of another day
 Would find its breath a genius and a cure.

written 1965

The Christmas Grinch

Written a few weeks before Christmas, 2021, when many gifts and other supplies were on barges off the coast of California. It looked like Christmas was going to be short-changed this year.

I understand the Grinch is poised
To steal away our Christmas joys—
All the gifts we bought and more
Anchored off the Western shore.

I'm told there's nothing we can say
To get them here by Christmas day;
There's nothing any one can do!
We need a few more truckers, too!

The worst thing still of what could be
No presents and no Christmas tree!
It can't be true, but this I fear,
That Christmas may not come this year!

What of the doll for Cindy Lou,
The youngest of the family Who?
"She'll simply have to be content!"
So says our honored President.

* * *

As I recall in '56
Through Christian love, not politics,
The gifts beneath our lighted tree
Were thoughts of others' charity.

Then welfare checks did not exist
But neighbors kept a Christmas list.
Our presents came from here and there
From those who had the heart to share.

There is a grinch, we may surmise,
Whose heart is of the smaller size,
And some might wait for it to grow,
Though all this time, it hasn't; so,

We must rethink what Christmas means
What can't be stole by devilish schemes,
What economic ups and downs
Imposed or not by crowns or clowns
Can never take away from us
And there's no ifs, or ands, or buts.

Christmas is a manger scene
The heavens in a deep serene
The brightness of one evening star
That lite the night both near and far,

That heralded our coming King
Of which, back when, we used to sing;
The day our Savior came to earth;

Poems & Things

The day young Mary gave Him birth.

I guess the thing I want to say
God's gifts cannot be stole away.

A Doleful Tale

It seems the years have taken their toll in terms of a passion for adventure and the emotional strength to follow dreams. Is it simply the effect of old age? [I am all but 75 years along.]

But is it possible there's more to it than that! Now I seem to live with phobias of all sorts that exhibit anxiety and the rare paralysis of stepping out into something potentially exciting or even meaningful [including work]. Aside from the opportunity to share a biblical thought with a friendly listener, life holds nothing for me "out there" in the world of events and people. I am seeking to live out my remaining days with my wife in the comfort of our home where I seek emotional protection. I cherish her rare laughter as a sign that all is well.

At times, sadly, I wonder if I am truly loved or if I even deserve to be. Has too much hurt over half a century left these feelings as scars of a painful past? I cannot pretend these strange feelings do not exist; for, even my private tears speak to these thoughts. God knows!

Faith does not deny any of these feelings. Perhaps, though, faith trusts God to map a way past them.

The heartbeats in the poet's rhyme.
Are words that mark the path of time.
A life transcribed in graceful verse
While chained to the Adamic curse.

The sum of every sorrow felt
The severity the years have dealt.
The crime in every loveless troll,
When hurtful words exact their toll.

* * *

The pensive tone of all regret
Of melancholic thoughts and yet
What should have died a quiet death
Are memories now given breath.

The poet's pen records my days.
Not every deed deserves some praise.
My doleful tale of life's ordeal
If I deny would not be real.

The phobic thoughts I cannot shake;
Anxieties that keep awake
And feelings lost to time expose
Ennobled now in maudlin prose.

And then of love: such haunting doubt;
I dare not guess what that's about
For love fights strongest in the fray
But rests content at close of day.

When love is challenged, love stands strong
Against the dangers of all wrong.
In later years and peace ensued
Love's silence can be misconstrued.

I ponder still the hurtful years
Mourning them with silent tears
And still I question all I've done
What battles lost and battles won.

Some blessings, true, are here and there
Upon the wings of answered prayer.
What God must know is out of scope.
Our lives are built on faith and hope.

* * *

I cling to family; they remain.
I count none else as worthy gain.
To keep their love at very least.
Else hurtful times shall never cease.

I Cannot Sing

After decades of leading songs, I developed polyps on my vocal chords.

I cannot sing like in the good old days
For now trapped inside my soul
Are the hymns I mouth in voiceless praise
And silently extol.

The tune is there but my voice is gone—
That lingering echoed ring
In this old man's heart of an ageless song
That I can no longer sing.

I cannot sing but then again
I only now aspire
To raise anew the old refrain
In heaven's glorious choir.

written 2018

I Love to Write of Many Things.

Written on my dad's birthday. He would have been 112 today. A simple poem my fingers required of me. They were bored.

I love to write of many things.
The welcome song the robin sings,
 An early Spring to celebrate
 A victory over Winter's fate,
Of tiny leaves on waking trees
Kissed gently by a kinder breeze.
Of baby birds discovering wings.
I love to write of many things.

I love to write of many things.
Of lazy days that Summer brings
When school is out and children play
 The entire lazy time away,
Of beaches and of forest trails
For all adventurous guys and gals,
Of playground monkey bars and swings.
I love to write of many things.

I love to write of many things.
More dazzling than the garb of kings,
Of Autumn days when Summer's blast

Poems & Things

Becomes a cooler breeze at last
And blushing trees before they bare
Their brightest evening colors wear
(That time of year when school begins.)
I love to write of many things.

I love to write of many things.
As Winter's snow in silence clings
On lifeless forms and vigil keeps
While peacefully all nature sleeps.
Like kittens stalk with curious eye
A quiet white seeks where to lie
And holidays are happenings.
I love to write of many things.

I love to write of many things
Life's Winter, Summer, Fall, and Spring
Of every thought, of every part
Of all the seasons of the heart,
Of all the things in life's embrace,
Of every trial and every grace,
Of hope that gives our dreams their wings.
I love to write of many things

My Mirror Lies to Me

Written when I practiced teaching using Zoom while watching myself doing it.
[4/14/2022]

My mirror lies to me.
It does not know my heart
The person it cannot see
The music nor the art.

There's a child there entrapped,
And most unhappily,
Who refuses to adapt;
My mirror lies to me!

My mirror tells a tale
And this I must decry
Of a soul who's old and frail
It's a total, total, lie.

My passion has never waned
Inside I'm wild and free
But I'm kept locked up, enchained,
In a body that lies to me.

The elderly have no right
To romance the night away
To do what they wish or might
To pass the time at play

Poems & Things

* * *

These lines upon my face—
I simply can't agree
Old age is all they trace;
My mirror lies to me.

My mirror does not know
We are made for eternity!
The blemishes are all they show!
They are all that mirrors see.

Ode to a Broken Field Tile

I was commissioned with the task of finding a broken field tile that was redirecting rain runoff into our septic tank, making the tank and the system useless. The ground was hard clay and I was put out that I had to do this.

I swung away at the clay.
Day after day after day after day
And then, why I'll...I had to smile.
The broken terra-cotta field tile!
And what I knew I could never do
And what an inspiring lesson, too.
Now I sing of accomplishing.
And wonder why all the grumbling?

Written 1973

Ode to Musing

An early poem

It's Sunday and as I muse of moments countless folk abuse—
Those moments turned to memories given me of a mind at ease.
Perhaps if I knew that they were past, these moments soon would
cease to last.

Perhaps, it is no good at all; for, every one I can recall.
Perhaps the moments I now use could be these memories—I muse.

written 1967

An Old Man's Story

It was back in 1980 or there about when I sat listening to my host's dad tell his story while they prepared dinner for all of us.

The old man sat in contemplative pose
Collecting thoughts of many years gone by
His ramblings doubtless lacked a certain prose
As memories came to words and there sat I

Just listening what was life in 1910
With passion in his eyes he told his tale,
A story surely told time and again
But now his voice was broken, weak and frail.

There's history trapped within that aged mind
Not sterile summaries of a few events,
But of a purer and unvarnished kind
Impassioned with nostalgic sentiments.

The story that one lives is never told
In spiritless accounts like history;
The books are never written by the old;
The truth remains enshrouded in mystery.

* * *

Poems & Things

So truer hearts who really want to know
The wisdom of our times that's never read,
Passed by in rows of nursing home tableaux,
Will cherish while there's time the hoary head.

A Storm

Master, carest thou not that we perish? – Mark 4:38

The metric is '-''-''-' as in: Oh how' I love' to write' a rhyme'

When Jesus is asleep astern
There's something here for us to learn:
Why trouble Him when He's at peace?
We'll wait. No doubt the storm should cease
But if it won't and if we drown,
The Savior, too, is going down ...
And how is that in Heaven's plan—
Some storm to take the Son of Man?
You see the simple truth be told
In promises embraced of old:
Whenever, then, the Savior's near
A storm is nothing we should fear.

A Wintry Night

I marvel at northerners moving south and leaving behind what should be a most cherished scene. Edith Sitwell wrote "Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home."

Who doesn't like a soft snowfall and moonlight?

I watched the sun in her transcendancy
 Gliding slowly down into the deep
Her yellow glow turned off in gentle sleep
 The mirror of the moon her symmetry.

I noticed then within this wintry scene
A snowflake pass and catch the golden ray;
 It drifted to the ground and there it lay
 Smiling in the moonlight's sacred sheen.

In peace reposed upon a field of white,
It winked and bid me there a fond goodnight.

For Fun

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter...

Job 8:21

The Hug

My brother's 7 yr old granddaughter comes up behind me and gives me a hug much to everyone's surprise. I was reminded of Matthew 19:14 - But Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

When children hug: it is their way
To steal affection, the experts say;
So when they jump and squeal and tug
It simply means they need a hug.

But grownups claim it's selfish need
The wanton claim of childish greed,
An infant's ire at its worst
And we refuse to be coerced.

So let them scream! And when they're grown
They'll learn at last to play alone.
When life is often merciless
When no one cares for your caress.

We will survive, adults have found,
With clinched resolve, we hold our ground.
When finally we think we 're blessed,
At last no need to be caressed.

* * *

And yet our Lord, that day He smiled
With loving welcome to a child
Who spied that sacred hem to tug
And longed to know the Savior's hug

He beckoned little arms to come
Receive a hug, and be at home,
While His disciples, all proper, grown
Continued on to gripe and groan.

"Be like this child," He gently warned,
Here is a lesson to be learned:
To be a recipient of His grace
We must submit to His embrace.

Little Leah's Surprise

Written upon the joyous expectation of daughter number 2 for our son, Josh, and his lovely wife, Cait. How will Leah, their daughter, see this new addition!? Leah's sister—yet to be named—is due in early December (2018).

Little Leah nearly two
With dancing feet and playful eyes,
If only little Leah knew
There's coming soon a big surprise.

Little Leah with thunderous noise
Laughing loud and clapping hands
Surrounded by her favorite toys,
Encircled by admiring fans.

Little Leah none beside,
Grandma's only hug and kiss.
Little Leah, grandpa's pride,
And everybody's little miss.

Little Leah owns her world,
The people of her vast terrain,
But Little Leah has she heard
Another enters her domain!

Another pule, another voice,
Another wanting to be first,

Another child, another choice,
Another in her universe.

Another pair of grasping hands,
Another claim on all her things,
Another list of key demands,
Another for what Santa brings.

Another birthday not her own,
Another queen bee in the hive.
She no longer all alone,
A sister will—and soon—arrive.

A younger sister! They will be
Together—what an escapade
In pranks and all hilarity—
Two cuties on a great crusade!

(Leah not the only one
When there is someone else to shame
Think of the mischievous fun
And little sister takes the blame.)

But all the love the two shall know,
All the happiness, indeed.
All the things that she will show
When older sister takes the lead.

Little Leah nearly two
With dancing feet and playful eyes,
A little sister shortly due—
A marvelous and great surprise.

The Month Before Christmas

[On Black Friday, the Day after Thanksgiving in the U.S.A]

'Twas the month before Christmas and all through the stores
Shoppers pushing and shoving, galumphing the floors
 Racing to claim something all of us need
 Forsaken of reason, and in a stampede.
 Some widget or gadget or other device
 They'll buy it on credit, regardless of price;
Large paneled TV sets, sound systems, and such
 A cabinet, table or sofa or hutch.
 "We'll take it all now and later we'll pay!"
And grunting and groaning they schlep it away.

And everywhere scattered, the girls and the boys
 Excited and wild survey all the toys—
A massive explosion was found on isle four
 With various models all over the floor;
 Yet no one is minding the messes so much
With shoppers all panicked and in a great rush.

My mind tends to wander to yesteryear's scene
When visiting stores was more ordered, serene
 With children corralled and life was on pause

To visit the store then to see Mr. Claus.
We sat in his lap and gave him our list
We waited for Christmas to see what he missed.

'Twas the season of giving for family and friend
And now I am wondering: when did it all end?
When mother regaled with a seasonal spread
And Santa would find us asleep in our bed.
When that favorite toy that he set near the tree
Meant hours of fun and enjoyment for me—
Or sister her dolly—and we understood
That Santa delivered and Santa did good.

The change that is saddest of all, yet, for some
Is losing the truth that a Savior has come.
The candlelight service, the carols we sung
The message of Christmas I cherished when young.
I agree! But the thrust of my tale of all tales
Is that Christmas meant family not shopping and sales.

On Hormone Therapy

treated for prostate cancer

Ten times in a day, maybe more
The furnace within seems to roar
The sympathies are few
Cause my wife has them, too
So much for a little amor.

On Turning the Clock Back

A Fun Poem

In Spring we turn the clocks ahead.
But that's no stress for me
I usually get myself from bed
Somewhere 'round half past three.

In autumn quite another thing
I linger in repose
The alarm reset so it won't ring,
I gain more time to dose

It's half past four when I arise—
In Fall, that's standard time.
The whole darn thing is no surprise
...and I ran out of rhyme.

November 5, 2017

Wanna Touch It

Written when a friend's young grandson caught his first fish and asked grandpa would he want to touch it. Sometimes the things kids say write the poems. We just fill in the words. Written May 12, 2018

He was only three on his pop pop's knee
When the old man promised the lad
To find a pole and a fishing hole,
If its okay with mom and dad.

And grant his wish to catch a fish
There are many in the brook.
We will find some worms. One always squirms
When it's put upon a hook.

The little boy overcome with joy
Jumped from his pop-pop's knee
"Pop,' he cried with bubbling pride,
"Is going to fish with me!"

Fish eat worms; this pop confirms.
But take care; the hook is sharp!
Oh there's much to see when you're only three!
There's catfish, bass and carp.

So pop made good what he said he would.
(Big worms he found unhurt.)
While a three year old need not be told
To dig in the softened dirt.

* * *

What we learn in time: worms are mostly slime
And perhaps a little goo.
So his grandpa smiled when he asked the child
"Do you wanna touch it, too?"

To a three year old, and this I'm told
Some fish have the silliest names.
A fish that's a cat! Who heard of that!?
Or so his grandpa claims.

And when sheepsheads meet, do they ever bleat
And are they covered in wool?
Imagine before when you were near four
Such thoughts weren't unusual.

He was only three, but his curiosity
Like a wave racing to the sea
Overwhelmed his soul, near past control
But pop said, "Stay with me!"

So with gear in tow they walked so slow
Down to the water's edge
To catch a fish, that was the wish
To put in grandma's fridge.

Then hand in hand, for, your understand
It's always safety first.
The hook was baited and so they waited
With worm and all submersed.

Once the line was cast, it happened fast
As always it had to be;
For the attention span of this little man
Was that of a lad of three.

Poems & Things

* * *

Oh the line did bob and his heart did throb
And grandpa began to roar,
"It's yours alright! Hold to it tight!
And pull it into shore!"

With grandpa's bellow the little fellow
Drew in the fish to land.
All else aside he beamed with pride
With wiggling catch in hand.

Children revere what first they hear
As grandpa always knew.
With a beam in his eye came the child's reply
"Do you wanna touch it, too?"

But things we touch don't mean as much:
Things bring us little pleasure.
Here's truth to get and not forget:
It's the lives we touch we treasure.

Some Sonnets

A poem by King Hezekiah of Judah
after he had been sick and had recovered
from his illness. - Isaiah 38:9

The Hymn of Habakkuk

Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NIV) Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior

The land is parched. There is no bill of fare,
The fig tree without bud, the empty vine,
The branches of the olive trees are bare,
No fruit to eat, no oil and no wine.
The shepherd's watch is on an empty pen,
No cattle lowing, vacant is the stall,
No sacrifice to make for sinful men,
No offerings to give to God at all.
And yet it is of worsen times no sign
For all my hope rests in His promise given
Upon His Word let all the faithful dine.
We'll feast anew someday with Him in heaven.
I'll sing aloud His mercies and applaud
The joy of my Salvation and my God.

The Sonnet of Faith

Written for enjoyment: 2/28/2022

Philosophers have charmed the mind of men
With puzzling bouts of reason now and then;
Some worship academics as divine,
In celebrated verse at logic's shrine.
But pathways to real truth, God's Word contends,
Is knowledge that on *faith* alone depends.
Alas! Great minds should study well the scroll
That shares this: God's design upon the soul.
And, too, the soul is stirred with thoughts of God;
Though some cry out of intellectual fraud!
But you shall play the fool if you maintain
There is no hell to shun or heaven to gain;
Faith, then, is not an option to despise ...
To trust in God, the mindset of the wise.

Bloggable Stuff

Beside my poems, I have enjoyed writing down many thoughts outside of any rhyming scheme. Some are short stories based on dreams and analogies; some are biographical sketches and other blogged interests.

In Memory of Daisy

On the last day of July 2014 Daisy went into the hospital for an operation to treat a kidney stone. When she returned to her hospital room she glowed with a gentle and resigned peace as she told Lisa, her daughter who had been taking care of her since mid month: I met Jesus down there [in the operating room] and He told me it was time to come home. But Daisy needed all four of her girls there and the youngest, Tammy, had been married living in Arkansas. Tammy took a flight to West Virginia to see her mom. She arrived at the hospital around 11 and by 2 o'clock Daisy was with her Lord. (We found out only days before Christmas when my wife sent her a Christmas card and her daughter mailed us the news.)

This was a journey for Daisy through four marriages that eventually brought her to our little church in Western Pennsylvania, one summer afternoon. I didn't realize then that this young woman who walked into our lives would never leave even though the miles and years between took us into separate futures. This for her was a first when she sidled into the sanctuary of that empty church (except for myself who was in prayer). I don't know what she expected not to find. Mary Ellen, who remains a close friend, had given up on inviting Daisy to our humble fellowship after countless attempts at persuasion. On her own, Daisy came while the church was not in service. (I am so grateful that in those days we didn't lock doors.) I struggle to find the words, how to tell the story of a miracle of God that I cannot shake, that I cannot explain away. No matter how many arguments claim to show how distant God appears, no matter how unfair life becomes, I will forever be guided by having known Daisy whose life became to me a love story from God.

I shall never forget her first words as she found a pew bench to rest herself, "I don't know what I'm doing here!"

She began by telling me how this was so unlike her, she had no

explanation. She thought maybe I did. Fumbling at my words, I stood in the next row facing her. Most preachers would be jumping on the inside with the excitement of leading someone in prayer for the first time but that thought was not my first. I encouraged Daisy to remain open to the possibilities that only God provides. I maintained that this is just like the providence of God, to direct a person in such a way, to move them beyond their own reasoning, because He was beginning something beautiful in her life worth her full attention. I went into church mode throwing phrases her way that probably lacked impact: God is knocking, don't turn away. Answer the door! I instructed her: Whatever you do, don't let the meaning of this moment become a lost opportunity. God is choosing you. The following week while I was vacationing, our guest speaker led Daisy in prayer for her salvation.

Our town for her had to be a history of disappointment and hurt. Our town was one mile across and boasted eleven liquor licenses, a couple brothels, drug trade "and the feds even executed a sting operation against elements of the mafia somewhere on our main street! Much of life in our world isolated in the hills of Western PA. was replete with temptation and the painful memories that follow. (It was too much work for our two police officers to handle.) Daisy had been widowed twice, divorced also more than once. So, I gave her some sound pastoral advice which she didn't heed anyways "a man is not the answer. You are married to Jesus now."

Daisy eventually moved to Arkansas and married a christian man with whom she shared many happy years. Upon his death she returned to the tristate area living near her other three girls in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia. Daisy remains a witness to me of God's greatest work on the human heart. Her life remains an inspiring message: the story of God's love is not the fabled or imagined hopes of the religious but the undeniable record of how real His promises.

What were my wife and I doing there, anyways, in the backwaters of a society frozen in time, where careers go to die, a place where churches don't grow (three of six were closed) and the local creek ran through with a sulfuric stench (that might have had contributions from other sources). Even the grammar school left town. They bussed our children to a nearby town. Why would God want us there? Notwithstanding such a glaring portrayal of everything wrong

chronicling, it seems, our town's contribution to all things bad, I miss being there. I miss the fellowship of a community that approached life with an innocence that displayed more love than political ingenuity. But I think I know the primary blessing we knew being there: *Daisy*. It was my joy to have met her and started a lifelong friendship with a woman of God whose story was never told except in the memoirs of those of us who will miss her. She was a stop on my route through life when I needed to rest awhile and learn more about faith. While I was living there, I was sick in bed one winter with the flu and watching for the first time the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." I am reminded of the comment of Violet Bick, played by Gloria Grahame "and I apply it here:

I'm glad I knew you, Daisy!

The Dream

She was beautiful standing there in silk while a gentle breeze waved at me in the soft folds of enticement that encircled her. [I think I bought her that dress but I can't be sure.] I stared at her objectifying away everything else about her--my eyes tempting me with an uncontrolled desire. Did she notice me? She stood there continuing to talk to who knows who--I think her mom. They talked about her taking the car somewhere. She was leaving.

We were standing in two separate worlds to be sure: she and I. And, to be sure, that was nothing new. I saw her that evening--maybe for the first time--staring at her through the mist of my negligence. I had lost sight of her over the years, but now, here she stood, the indescribable image of the woman I fell in love with back when we found each other on a college campus. [A friend assured me no one "falls" in love. Love is a growth thing.] All I know is that I never saw her this way before. I don't think.

But, as I said, this was nothing unusual. My story was not hers. My life was full of professional dreams and career challenges. Hers was diapers, baby bottles and all things maternal. But now and then our paths crossed as if the fates sought to re-introduced us to each other. Was this one of those times!?

She busied herself with the mundane. Her world was a silent world of a thousand thoughtful acts gone unnoticed. She busied herself in the shadows away from the peering eyes and minds of a culture in search of an identity, of neighborly neighbors, whom she would never meet. Nothing in her personality shouted "Look at me!" Nothing about her gave one the sense that she wanted to be noticed. But in this moment,

with the breezes awakening my senses to her beauty, I may have seen her for the first time.

But she was leaving and I could not get her attention. She seemed not to care that I was trying to wave her off this excursion. But she did smile at me--at least that--effortlessly in my direction, and then, with an absent-minded change of thought turned away again while my feeling of wanting to hold her caused by that look set fire to my soul flashing within me--like fire to straw--consuming all interest in everything else.

"The fire of love stops at nothing--it sweeps everything before it," King Solomon cautions. [MSG Song of Solomon 8:7]

I watched her walk to the car. I watched her leave. I watched her car turn the corner out of sight. I watched her mom make her exit back indoors, probably, to continue cooking something for later--I surmise. I watched until it was just me alone with my thoughts. I was alone with the breeze that brushed against my cheek to remind me that this moment really happened. I had no place to go and no one else I wanted to see, I was momentarily lost among the trees whispering the hopeful refrain: she will be back.

I lost myself in that vision that night when I seemed to see her for the first time although we had been married for decades--that night when all else was out of focus, emotionally fogged over by the blinding glow of an angelic form. Maybe for the first time--I haven't been keeping score--she seemed to glow while my memories raced to keep up: image after image in recollection of the many times she was always there in my life, always around, always busy, always behind the scene making sure the lights that shine on center stage caught my image in their glare. How important all these years we were to each other...and the arguments, the moments away, the times I flew solo, lied to me.

I awoke. It was all a dream, but not one I wanted to ever forget.

* * *

I began to realize that I had just played out in timeless recollection the story of my adulthood--all in a rem sleep moment. Nothing is as real as reliving in night visions unresolved feelings or discovering in dreams those lost memories denied in the daylight. I lay there feeling the ache of her absence.

It was around three in the morning. She lay silently sleeping beside me unaware of where I had just been.

I rolled over in her direction and draping my arm gently over her motionless form, fell peacefully back to sleep.