

Minnesota Thanksgiving

For that free Grace bringing us past great risks
& thro' great griefs surviving to this feast
sober and still, with the children unborn and born,
among brave friends, Lord, we stand again in debt
and find ourselves in the glad position: Gratitude.

We praise our ancestors who delivered us here
within warm walls all safe, aware of music,
likely toward ample & attractive meat
with whatever accompaniment
Kate in her kind ingenuity has seen fit to devise,

and we hope - across the most strange year to come -
continually to do them and You not sufficient honour
but such as we become able to devise
out of decent or joyful conscience & thanksgiving.
Yippee!

Bless then, as Thou wilt, this wilderness board.

--by John Berryman, from *Collected Poems 1937 – 1971*

The Messenger

My work is loving the world.
Here the sunflowers, there the hummingbird — equal seekers of sweetness.
Here the quickening yeast; there the blue plums.
Here the clam deep in the speckled sand.
Are my boots old? Is my coat torn?
Am I no longer young, and still not half-perfect?
Let me keep my mind on what matters, which is my work,
which is mostly standing still and learning to be astonished.
The phoebe, the delphinium. The sheep in the pasture, and the pasture.
Which is mostly rejoicing, since all ingredients are here,
which is gratitude, to be given a mind and a heart
and these body-clothes, a mouth with which to give shouts of joy to the moth
and the wren, to the sleepy dug-up clam, telling them all,
over and over, how it is that we live forever.

by Mary Oliver

A Winter Blessing

In the shadowed quiet of winter's light
earth speaks softly
of her longing.
Because the wild places are in tears.

Come, she cries to us.
Kneel down here
on the frosty grass,
and feel the prayer buried in the ground.

Bend your ear to my heart
and listen hard.

Love this world, she whispers.
Distill peace from the snow
and water the cities
with mercy.

Weave wonder from the forest
and clothe grief
with beauty.

Rest in the rhythm of the turning year,
Trace the bending arc
Rounding the curve toward justice.
And vow anew to do no harm.

The winter trees stand watch
haloed in the last gleams of the slanting sun.
Glory sings here.
Heaven echoes the call:
Repeat the sounding joy.

Make your life an answer:
Bow.
Praise.
Rise.

- Rebecca Parker

Perhaps the World Ends Here

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

--Joy Harjo

AUTUMN

The leaves are falling, falling as if from far up,
as if orchards were dying high in space.
each leaf falls as if it were motioning "no."

And tonight the heavy earth is falling
away from all the stars in the loneliness.

We're all falling. This hand here is falling.
And look at the other one....It's in them all.

And yet there is Someone, whose hands
infinitely calm, hold up all this falling.

Rainer Maria Rilke
translated Robert Bly

It was beginning winter

It was beginning winter,
An in-between time,
The landscape still partly brown:
The bones of weeds kept swinging in the wind,
Above the blue snow.

It was beginning winter,
The light moved slowly over the frozen field,
Over the dry seed-crowns,
The beautiful surviving bones
Swinging in the wind.

Light traveled over the wide field;
Stayed.
The weeds stopped swinging.
The mind moved, not alone,
Through the clear air, in the silence.

Was it light?
Was it light within?
Was it light within light?
Stillness becoming alive,
Yet still?
A lively understandable spirit
Once entertained you.
It will come again.
Be still.
Wait.

Theodore Roethke (Part V of *The Lost Son*)

Garden Meditation

Let us give thanks for a bounty of people.

For children who are our second planting, and though they grow like weeds and the wind too soon blows them away, may they forgive us our cultivation and fondly remember where their roots are.

Let us give thanks;

For generous friends, with hearts as big as hubbards and smiles as bright as their blossoms;

For feisty friends, as tart as apples;

For continuous friends, who, like scallions and cucumbers, keep reminding us that we've had them;

For crotchety friends, sour as rhubarb and as indestructible;

For handsome friends, who are as gorgeous as eggplants and as elegant as a row of corn, and the others, as plain as potatoes and so good for you;

For funny friends, who are as silly as Brussels sprouts and as amusing as Jerusalem artichokes;

And serious friends as unpretentious as cabbages, as subtle as summer squash, as persistent as parsley, as delightful as dill, as endless as zucchini and who, like parsnips, can be counted on to see you through the winter;

For old friends, nodding like sunflowers in the evening-time, and young friends coming on as fast as radishes;

For loving friends, who wind around us like tendrils and hold us, despite our blights, wilts and witherings;

And finally, for those friends now gone, like gardens past that have been harvested, but who fed us in their times that we might have life thereafter.

For all these we give thanks.

by Rev. Max Coots

The final one, below, she added in, saying “it’s one of the most powerful of the lot...but oh, so much dark mixed in....”

Thank You

Listen

with the night falling we are saying thank you
we are stopping on the bridge to bow from the railings
we are running out of the glass rooms
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky
and say thank you
we are standing by the water looking out
in different directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging
after funerals we are saying thank you
after the news of the dead
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you
in a culture up to its chin in shame
living in the stench it has chosen we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators
remembering wars and the police at the back door
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you
in the banks that use us we are saying thank you
with the crooks in office with the rich and fashionable
unchanged we go on saying thank you thank you
with the animals dying around us
our lost feelings we are saying thank you

with the forests falling faster and faster than the minutes
of our lives we are saying thank you
with the words going out like cells of a brain
with the cities growing over us like the earth
we are saying thank you faster and faster
with nobody listening we are saying thank you
we are saying thank you and waving
dark though it is

W.S. Merwin