

Ecclesiastes 11:1

We must *cast our bread*
Upon the waters, as the
Ancient preacher said,
Trusting that it may
Amplify be restored to us
After many a day.
That old metaphor,
Drawn from rice farming on the
River's flooded shore,
Helps us to believe
That it's no great sin to give,
Hoping to receive.
Therefore I shall throw
Broken bread, this sullen day,
Out across the snow,
Betting crust and crumb
That birds will gather, and that
One more spring will come.
Richard Wilbur

Why I Wake Early

Hello, sun in my face.
Hello, you who made the morning
and spread it over the fields
and into the faces of the tulips
and the nodding morning glories,
and into the windows of, even, the
miserable and the crotchety –

best preacher that ever was,
dear star, that just happens
to be where you are in the universe
to keep us from ever-darkness,
to ease us with warm touching,
to hold us in the great hands of light –
good morning, good morning, good morning.

Watch, now, how I start the day
in happiness, in kindness.
– *Mary Oliver*

A Mark of Resistance

Stone by stone I pile
this cairn of my intention
with the noon's weight on my back,
exposed and vulnerable
across the slanting fields
which I love but cannot save
from floods that are to come;
can only fasten down
with this work of my hands,
these painfully assembled
stones, in the shape of nothing
that has ever existed before.
A pile of stones: an assertion
that this piece of country matters
for large and simple reasons.
A mark of resistance, a sign.

--Adrienne Rich

Here

I came here to count the bells
that live upon the surface of the sea,
that sound over the sea,
within the sea.
So, here I live.

If each day falls
inside each night,
There exists a well
where clarity is imprisoned.

We need to sit on the rim
of the well of darkness
and fish for fallen light
with patience.

--Pablo Neruda, translated by William O'Daly,
The Sea and the Bells, Copper Canyon Press, 1988

For The Future

Planting trees early in spring,
we make a place for birds to sing
in time to come. How do we know?
They are singing here now.
There is no other guarantee
that singing will ever be.

--Wendell Berry

A Prayer for the World

Let the rain come and wash away
the ancient grudges, the bitter hatreds
held and nurtured over generations.
Let the rain wash away the memory
of the hurt, the neglect.
Then let the sun come out and
fill the sky with rainbows.
Let the warmth of the Sun heal us
wherever we are broken.
Let it burn away the fog so that
we can see beyond labels,
beyond accents, gender, or skin color.
Let the warmth and brightness
of the Sun melt our selfishness.
So that we can share the joys and
feel the sorrows of our neighbors.
And let the light of the Sun
be so strong that we will see all
people as our neighbors.
Let the Earth, nourished by rain,
bring forth flowers
to surround us with beauty.
And let the mountains teach our hearts
to reach upward to heaven.

—Rabbi Harold S. Kushner in *EarthLight Magazine*,

The bird-song is the echo of the morning light back from the
earth.

Rabindranath Tagore, in *Stray Birds*

Fueled

Fueled
by a million
man-made
wings of fire--
the rocket tore a tunnel
through the sky--
and everybody cheered.
Fueled
only by a thought from God--
the seedling
urged its way
through the thickness of black--
and as it pierced
the heavy ceiling of the soil--
and launched itself
up into outer space--
no
one
even
clapped.

-Marcie Hans (in that great old 1966 book,
Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle)

A house with daffodils in it
is a house lit up,
whether or not
the sun be shining outside.
Daffodils in a green bowl--
and let it snow if it will

--A.A. Milne

Once the World Was Perfect

Once the world was perfect, and we were happy in that world.
Then we took it for granted.
Discontent began a small rumble in the earthly mind.
Then Doubt pushed through with its spiked head.
And once Doubt ruptured the web,
All manner of demon thoughts
Jumped through—
We destroyed the world we had been given
For inspiration, for life—
Each stone of jealousy, each stone
Of fear, greed, envy, and hatred, put out the light.
No one was without a stone in his or her hand.
There we were,
Right back where we had started.
We were bumping into each other
In the dark.
And now we had no place to live, since we didn't know
How to live with each other.
Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another
And shared a blanket.
A spark of kindness made a light.
The light made an opening in the darkness.
Everyone worked together to make a ladder.
A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world,
And then the other clans, the children of those clans, their
children,
And their children, all the way through time—
To now, into this morning light to you.

--Joy Harjo

Spring Thunder

Listen, The wind is still,
And far away in the night --
See! The uplands fill
With a running light.

Open the doors. It is warm;
And where the sky was clear--
Look! The head of a storm
That marches here!

Come under the trembling hedge--
Fast, although you fumble...
There! Did you hear the edge
of winter crumble

--Mark van Doren

I Meant To Do My Work Today

I meant to do my work today,
But a brown bird sang in the apple tree,
And a butterfly flitted across the field,
And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,
Tossing the grasses to and fro,
And a rainbow held out its shining hand--
So what could I do but laugh and go.

--Richard Le Gallienne

To the Thawing Wind

Come with rain, O loud Southwester!
Bring the singer, bring the nester;
Give the buried flower a dream;
Make the settled snowbank steam;
Find the brown beneath the white;
But whate'er you do tonight,
Bathe my window, make it flow,
Melt it as the ice will go;
Melt the glass and leave the sticks
Like a hermit's crucifix;
Burst into my narrow stall;
Swing the picture on the wall;
Run the rattling pages o'er;
Scatter poems on the floor;
Turn the poet out of door.

--Robert Frost

Light Poem

Wren-song in trellis: a light ecstasy of butterflies courting,
Nudging and tickling of ants and spiders,
Flutter of wings and seeds quaking,
Little crabs slipping into watery craters -
All that diving and pitching and swooping.

Liquids pursue me, notes and tremors:
I am undone by the gurgle of babies and pitchers,
A dried stalk in a welter of sinuous grasses,
Wanting the quiet of old wood or stone without water.

--Theodore Roethke

Planting Peas

It's not spring yet, but I can't
wait anymore. I get the hoe,
pull back the snow from the old
furrows, expose the rich dark earth.
I bare my hand and dole out shriveled peas,
one by one.

I see my grandmother's hand,
doing just this, dropping peas
into gray gumbo that clings like clay.
This moist earth is rich and dark
as chocolate cake.

Her hands cradle
baby chicks; she finds kittens in the loft
and hands them down to me, safe beside
the ladder leading up to darkness.

I miss
her smile, her blue eyes, her biscuits and gravy,
but mostly her hands.
I push a pea into the earth,
feel her hands pushing me back. She'll come in May,
she says, in long straight rows,
dancing in light green dresses.

--Linda M. Hasselstrom

Quatrain VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly--and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing
Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

Blessing

May the blessing of rain be on you,
the soft sweet rain.
May it fall upon your spirit
so that small flowers may spring up
and shed their sweetness in the air.

May the blessing of the great rains be on you
to beat upon your spirit and wash it clean;
and leave there many a shining pool
where the blue of heaven shines,
and sometimes a star.

May the blessing of the earth be on you,
the great round earth;
may you ever have a kindly greeting for people
as you're going along the roads.

And now may God bless you,
and bless you kindly.

Amen --Celtic Oral Tradition

Planting the Meadow

I leave the formal garden of schedules
where hours hedge me, clip the errant sprigs
of thought, and day after day, a boxwood
topiary hunt chases a green fox
never caught. No voice calls me to order
as I enter a dream of meadow, kneel
to earth and, moving east to west, second
the motion only of the sun. I plant
frail seedlings in the unplowed field, trusting
the wildness hidden in their hearts. Spring light
sprawls across false indigo and hyssop,
daisies, flax. Clouds form, dissolve, withhold
or promise rain. In time, outside of time,
the unkempt afternoons fill up with flowers.

by Mary Makofske

Keeping Quiet

Now we will count to twelve
and we will all keep still.

For once on the face of the earth,
let's not speak in any language;
let's stop for one second,
and not move our arms so much.

It would be an exotic moment
without rush, without engines;
we would all be together
in a sudden strangeness.

Fisherman in the cold sea
would not harm whales
and the man gathering salt
would look at his hurt hands.

Those who prepare green wars,
wars with gas, wars with fire,
victories with no survivors,
would put on clean clothes
and walk about with their brothers
in the shade, doing nothing.

What I want should not be confused
with total inactivity.
Life is what it is about;
I want no truck with death.

If we were not so single-minded
about keeping our lives moving,
and for once could do nothing,
perhaps a huge silence
might interrupt this sadness
of never understanding ourselves
and of threatening ourselves with death.
Perhaps the earth can teach us
as when everything seems dead
and later proves to be alive.

Now I'll count up to twelve
and you keep quiet and I will go.

by Pablo Neruda —from *Extravagaria* (translated by
Alastair Reid, pp. 27-29, 1974)