

Eat, drink with gladness
clothed in white
with the love of your life.
The head anointed with oil
suited David in the 23rd Psalm.
It can't be all that bad.
Aromatic oil, I guess.
Early aromatherapy.
Somehow the meaningless
life in the sunshine
sounds pretty neat.

One day at a time, God.
Let me live day by day by day.
I'll not worry about tomorrow
or distant tomorrows. That's your job.

- 9.11 I have seen something else under the sun:
The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all.
- 9.12 Moreover, no man knows when his hour will
come:
As fish are caught in a cruel net,
or birds are taken in a snare,
so men are trapped by evil times
that fall unexpectedly upon them.^(NIV)

Grace. A free gift,
undeserved,
unearned,
just a gift.
I need not win the race
nor emerge victorious in battle.
I don't have to strike it rich
or rival Einstein.
I stretch out my hands
and gratefully accept
that which I could never merit.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me.
Thank you,
God of Peace
God of Love
God of Grace.

Wisdom Better Than Folly

9.13-16

I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: ¹⁴There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. ¹⁵Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. ¹⁶So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

9.17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be
 heeded
 than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

9.18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war,
 but one sinner destroys much good.^(NIV)

Poor.

Wise for fifteen minutes of fame,
but poor before and afterwards.

Victorious
but forgotten.

Except by The Teacher.

Except by The Teacher, and you and me.

The powerful king, the small city,
maybe rich, maybe poor, but forgotten.

The wise man poor, forgotten, but
remembered.

God, give me wisdom, please.

If fame comes, too, okay.

But if it's a choice, give me wisdom.

Please.

Chapter Ten

- 10.1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell,
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.
- 10.2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right,
but the heart of the fool to the left.
- 10.3 Even as he walks along the road,
the fool lacks sense
and shows everyone how stupid he is.^(NIV)

Dead flies give perfume a bad smell.

More than I want to know.

Dead flies – do they equate to
a little folly?

How many flies, how many lies,
add up to a greater mass
than wisdom and honor?

What is the measure?

The fool walking down the road
demonstrates his nature.

How? To whom?

Can everybody see
or only the wise, the honorable?

Dead flies, bad smell,
and lies.

We cannot long hide our essence.

Examine my heart.

You know who I am.

Let me be who we both want me to be.

- 10.4 If a ruler's anger rises against you,
do not leave your post;
calmness can lay great errors to rest.
- 10.5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun,
the sort of error that arises from a ruler:
- 10.6 Fools are put in many high positions,
while the rich occupy the low ones.
- 10.7 I have seen slaves on horseback,
while princes go on foot like slaves.^(NIV)

Fools equal the poor?

Rich means wise?

Rulers are fools?

Sometimes.

Certainly not always.

We generalize by the person on our mind,
assuming the example typifies the class.

We have names for that.

Blindness.

Intolerance.

Bigotry.

We have cures for that.

Tolerance.

Perception.

Love.

God, remove my prejudices.

Free me to see people as your children,
my siblings,
even when I'd prefer to be an only child.

- 10.8 Whoever digs a pit may fall into it;
 whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten
 by a snake.
- 10.9 Whoever quarries stones may be injured by
 them;
 whoever splits logs may be endangered by
 them.
- 10.10 If the ax is dull
 and its edge unsharpened,
 more strength is needed
 but skill will bring success.^(NIV)

It's safer to stay home than to get in a car.
Trusting only in myself
refusing to make
friends
prevents friends from hurting me.
I can work decades at a tedious job
or dare to try my dream profession.
The first provides a living;
the second, life.

God, give me the skill to sharpen my ax
and the courage to use it.

- 10.11 If a snake bites before it is charmed,
there is no profit for the charmer.
- 10.12 Words from a wise man's mouth are gracious,
but a fool is consumed by his own lips.
- 10.13 At the beginning his words are folly;
at the end they are wicked madness —
- 10.14 and the fool multiplies words.
No one knows what is coming —
who can tell him what will happen after him?
- 10.15 A fool's work wearies him;
he does not know the way to town.^(NIV)

Words bite.
Give me sticks and stones.
They may break my bones,
but words after words after words
extinguish my anima,
crush my soul.
Why besiege those who matter most
with vile hatred?
Why treat the ones you love as you would
never treat a stranger?

Lord, let the words of my
mouth
and the meditations of my
heart
be
love.

- 10.16 Woe to you, O land whose king was a servant
and whose princes feast in the morning.
- 10.17 Blessed are you, O land whose king is of noble
birth
and whose princes eat at a proper time —
for strength and not for drunkenness.^(NIV)

“Eat at a proper time. For strength.”
I’ve often eaten for weakness —
 stuffing my face —
 to bury pain, anger, humiliation.
I’ve eaten for strength, under God’s strength,
 ignoring the compulsion to eat
 but nourishing my body.
Like an alcoholic, I yield to my compulsion
 unless God sets it aside
 by mending the feelings,
 by giving me joy beyond what
 compulsion
 could ever yield.

God, move us beyond patches to
real cures, to comfort that really comforts.
Thank you for this gift.

- 10.18 If a man is lazy, the rafters sag;
if his hands are idle, the house leaks.
- 10.19 A feast is made for laughter,
and wine makes life merry,
but money is the answer for everything.^(NIV)

Cause, effect.
Lazy, rafters sag.
Idle hands, leaks.
Stupid computer games, blown deadlines.
Mañana mentality, irritability,
restlessness, discontentment.
Feasts are fun,
wine makes merry,
but feasts and wine
come with costs.
Who pays?
How great is the cost in lucre,
in lives?

God, yesterday I can't touch,
tomorrow I can't reach.
Today's ours to change —
to change today,
to fix yesterday,
and to craft tomorrow.
Help me, God.
Use me.

10.20 Do not revile the king even in your thoughts,
or curse the rich in your bedroom,
because a bird of the air may carry your
words,
and a bird on the wing may report what you
say.^(NIV)

Electronic surveillance.
Microphones snatching words from great
distances.
Little birds on the wing.
Gossip.
Tell someone a secret, and soon
five hundred intend to keep it.
Words bite.
Our own words bite us.
But only when we're so
careless as to say something
we shouldn't.

God, make me as virtuous in private
as I want the world to believe me to be.

Chapter Eleven

Bread Upon the Waters

- 11.1 Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it again.^(NIV)