

The Rhythm of Life

*Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow,
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife.
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow
That dawns upon eternal love and life.*

O Perfect Love

Early in the musical *Annie*, the lead character Annie sings the poignant song “Maybe”, reflecting on the difficulties she’s experienced and yet the hope she has as an orphan. While very few of us grew up in an orphanage, we can certainly identify with the feelings she expresses in this song struggling between hope, determination, and despondency. Several of the plucky Annie’s songs in the show (including the now iconic “Tomorrow”) remind us that whatever trouble might be happening in our lives, it will not last. Often, it seems, our perspective and our choices can make all the difference.

There is a natural rhythm to life. As in music, there are major and minor passages. There are loud, cacophonous voices that shock and confuse us, often followed by the relief of soothing and pleasant experiences. Have you ever been amazed when it seems that life is moving so fast you feel dizzy? On the other hand, we have all endured days that move at the pace of a sloth. Slowly and silently we drag through the hours, wait for nightfall and then, with hope, long for the light. It would appear that life’s adventures would be mind numbing and monotonous if it were not for the natural ebb and flow. To live and dwell in the joy of the Lord we must embrace them all.

Each morning the dawn reminds us of God’s faithful plan of fresh starts. When Annie finally sings “Tomorrow”, we hear a rousing message of truth. No matter what, we can count on the sun coming up and bringing with it the unique colors of that day. No two days will ever look exactly alike. Ever wonder why that is? Our Heavenly Father is the source of boundless creativity. As recipients of this gift we can only imagine the miracle of creation. What we do know is that a promise made is revealed to us with each new day and with it God provides a threshold for a new beginning. In His compassion, He brings us a day full of grace from His hand and introduces us into His divine presence if we are willing to grasp His expressions of unfailing love and faithfulness.

*“Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting you.
Show me where to walk, for I give myself to you.”*

Psalms 143:8 NLT

Grace Notes

- **Tune My Heart**

Psalm 121:1-8

- **Renew My Mind**

Psalm 5:3

- **Discipline My Thoughts**

Isaiah 43:18-19

- **Engage My Will**

Hosea 6:3

- **Deepen My Understanding**

Psalm 30:5

A Benediction of Peace

*Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,
Over all victorious in its bright increase;
Perfect, yet it floweth fuller every day;
Perfect, yet it groweth deeper all the way.
Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blessed;
Finding as He promised, perfect peace and rest.*

Like a River Glorious

Even in the middle of difficult circumstances, we find that we are able to abide in God's presence and find His peace. Everyone is different, but for me the search for peace usually begins with choices. I choose to get absolutely quiet. While dangerous waves look to swallow me up, in my mind I stop thrashing about in the deep water of my condition and just float, looking upward. Next, I listen for the peaceful voices of the heavenly choir. For a musician, that's a relatively easy step. We hear music in our heads all the time. By this time, I find that I'm singing or at least humming along. Sometimes I hear something familiar, but more often I hear a new song. While this pattern for discovering peace doesn't magically resolve the situation, I find that it opens my heart to what God wants to do in my life at that moment and aligns my will with His.

When we are empty, God fills us with the peace that only He can give. It may look easier and more appealing to fill the emptiness with noise or other distractions, but, like a raucous game of musical chairs, when the music stops there's a good chance, we'll end up on the floor, having made no progress at all in our struggle, feeling a little more bruised and exhausted.

I laugh out loud every time I read the words in the New Living Translation of Amos 4:1: "Listen to me, you fat cows." Reading on, however, the rest of this chapter has a repetitive, sobering refrain. "But you still would not return to Me". I counted at least five times that God said that through the warnings of the shepherd turned prophet. I don't know about you, but I'd pay close attention to what God says when He makes the effort to repeat it five times. While this chapter focuses on a stern message of judgment for the stiff-necked people of Israel, the application is the same in most situations we find ourselves in as Christians. Returning to the Lord, resting in His life-giving presence and trusting His guidance every waking moment brings about the peace we all crave. After we've chosen to be still and to listen, He sustains us, He blesses us, and He sings over us, sending us on in our journey with a beautiful benediction of peace.

"I am leaving you with a gift-peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

John 14:27 NLT

Grace Notes

- **Tune My Heart**

II Thessalonians 3:16

- **Renew My Mind**

Psalms 29:11

- **Discipline My Thoughts**

Isaiah 26:3

- **Engage My Will**

Matthew 11:28-29

- **Deepen My Understanding**

Isaiah 9:6

Look What Love Can Do

*Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in Thee I find.
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint, heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy in Thy name, I am all unrighteousness.
False and full of sin I am; Thou art full of truth and peace.*

Jesus, Lover of My Soul

When I think of the ministry of Christ on earth, I can't help but be drawn to the Biblical accounts of the miracles He performed. It delights and amazes me today as it did when I first heard these stories as a child. As I reflect on these, I've often thought about His disciples. You would think that even spending a second with Jesus would be so life-changing that they would never have a single doubt about His capabilities as their Messiah. However, even after personally witnessing His gentle touch of healing, the act of raising of Lazarus from the grave, the calling out of evil and the restorative power of sight along with many other miracles He demonstrated over and over, they still questioned His abilities at times. Sometimes, they even attempted to tell Him what to do! (Matthew 14:15)

Jesus, full of compassion, knew the hearts of His followers and didn't expect perfection. He knew they would each fail as they wrestled with exhaustion, with doubts and with fears. He gave them grace and, in doing so, He showed them what His love could do. The love of Jesus provided salvation to a world that was in bondage. His love was so powerful that it calmed even the fiercest storms. His love fed thousands with only five loaves of bread and two fish and in doing all this and much more, God showed that He had not forgotten the suffering of His people. The same is true today.

The miracle of His eternal, abiding presence in our lives reminds us of the Father's deep love for us. As we struggle with the uncertainties and heartaches of this world, we can choose to remember that He has not left us to figure out and solve our problems by ourselves. We may move away from the Lord and go it alone, but what we will find is that He never moves away from us. With every challenge, we learn, (however slowly and painfully at times), that we can trust Him with every aspect of our lives. When the skies finally clear, when our sight has been restored, or when a pressing or depressing dilemma has been resolved, His faithfulness will serve as a reminder to remain hopeful and expectant in Him. Our responsibility is to stay alert, keep our eyes open and just look what love can do!

"O Sovereign Lord! You made the heavens and earth by your strong Hand and powerful arm. Nothing is too hard for you!"

Jeremiah 32:17 NLT

Grace Notes

- **Tune My Heart**

I Corinthians 2:9-12

- **Renew My Mind**

Psalms 37:4-5

- **Discipline My Thoughts**

Psalms 31:19-21

- **Engage My Will**

Jeremiah 9:24

- **Deepen My Understanding**

Matthew 14:27
