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*The eagle waddles across the field in
her ungainly gate. Her head bobs and weaves, her body switches
back and forth. The large bird, her attention elsewhere, steps into a softer depression
and finds herself sunk past her claws into the sucking mud. She flaps her long wings and,
for just a moment, is held tightly in the earth's grasp.*

SOARING



When my dad died twenty-five years ago, though I was a Christian I was ill-equipped to deal with the sinking morass of that traumatic moment. His death was, to say the least, untimely and, in my eyes, profoundly unfair. After working hard all his life to support his family, he had been looking forward to retirement. For the first time in their lives, he and Mom would not have to be watching and squeezing every last penny; it would be a pleasant and well-deserved rest from the rigors of his daily labor.

But then he died, and I could see no logic at all in God's timetable. And there was a moment, during the traditional schedule of events associated with a death, when I found myself huddled in Mom and Dad's basement, weeping over the loss, but more angry than sad. Where was the justice in this? Why, with all the loathsome creeps out there in the world—men for whom there seemed to be no purpose behind their sorry lives—why did God have to take a good and decent man from his family?

At that moment I was mired in the sucking muck of the earth. Events transpiring around me were all I could see, and to the extent that eternal things did not jibe with my temporal thought process, they had become inconsequential.

A Pleasant Myopia

We all can recall those moments in which we were mired in the mud and muck of the earth—moments in which the eternal things of God became for us, if not invisible, at least irrelevant. There are times when our horizon draws close in around us; people and events outside our shortsighted vision simply cease to exist.

Not all such moments are necessarily unpleasant, or as traumatic as the death of a loved one. There are good times in life when all our happiness and joy seem to be wrapped up inside the earthly events around us—

- when we see our lovely bride walking down the aisle toward us;
- when we get a raise because of all the

hard work we've put in;

- when we catch a first glimpse of our new child;
- when we admire something built with our own hands.

Even in moments of joy we can still be sinking deeper into the muck of temporal life—we're just feeling good as we go down.

Jesus was once approached by a nice young man who, though seeking something better, was not at all unhappy with the events of his life.

A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth." When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven;

and come, follow Me.” But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

(Luke 18:18-24)

This inquisitive man was thoroughly stuck in the mire, and sinking fast. All he could see were his vast acquisitions, and in his estimation they were more important than life with God Himself. He was willing to exchange eternal life for temporal goods; no wonder he “became very sad.”

To soar, one must first lift one’s feet off the ground. To rise above this shallow temporal plane, one must first reject the notion that this familiar environment is the best there is.

When my church-leader friend railed against the type of worship demonstrated in my worship musical, I imagine there was no small amount of fear being expressed in his strident opinion. Sunday church for him had become something predictable and comfortable. He could look forward to walking into a familiar building, shaking hands with old friends, chatting over common interests and, while they were at it, singing a few familiar old hymns and hearing a little preaching. All that finished off with pot roast and potatoes would, for

him, comprise “worship,” and he could not permit anything outside that pattern to threaten his comfortable traditions.

In varying degrees we’re all like that. Tradition and habit combine to create a predictable pattern that we nurture and protect from any new, external threats. And in our myopia, we come to believe that what has become familiar is the best there is. Our unspoken fear is that by releasing ourselves into something possibly better, we might lose some of what we already have.

For the Christian there should be no argument, for there is nothing of this world superior to God. The fact that Jesus left us here for awhile, to live upon the earth before uniting with Him, should not be taken as His opinion that it is in any way superior. While He wanted us to remain—

“I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.”

—Jesus made our ultimate citizenship clear:

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

(John 17:11,15-16)

Not of This World

We are not of this world, and so long as we cling to it, we will remain unformed, and unhappy. The Christian has God living inside him, and the more his feet remain stuck in the muck of this earth, the more miserable will be his spirit.

Every soul belongs to God and exists by His pleasure. God being who and what He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full Lordship on His part and complete submission on ours. We owe Him every honor that it is in our power to give Him. Our everlasting grief lies in giving Him anything less. The moment we make up our minds that we are going on with this determination to exalt God over all we step out of the world’s parade. We shall find ourselves out of adjustment to the ways of the world, and increasingly so as we make progress in the holy way. We shall acquire a new viewpoint; a new and different psychology will be formed within us; a new power will begin to surprise us by its upsurgings and its outgoings.

(A.W. Tozer)

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,

Sung by flaming tongues above;

Praise His name—I’m fixed upon it—

Name of God’s redeeming love.

Hitherto Thy love has blest me;
Thou hast bro’t me to this place;
And I know Thy hand will bring me
Safely home by Thy good grace.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Bought me with His precious blood.

O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee:
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it;
Seal it for Thy courts above. Amen.

(Robert Robinson)

