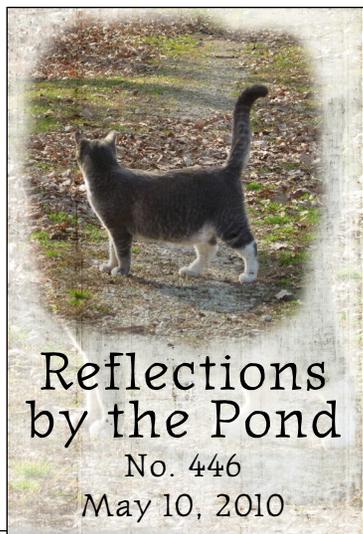


"A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."

John 10:5

Evil Coming Down the Road

Baker is a good boy. Now an adolescent (he just turned one-year-old) and released from the confinement of a long, cold winter, he is eager every morning to get outside and give his widening territory a good sniff.



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And it is a fresh green world that awaits him. After the belabored ice age from which we have recently emerged, new life has quickened in the extreme. Frequent rains, brilliant sunshine, and the clean, crystalline oxygen of the Middle Lands have washed the canvas clean of the gray detritus of winter and repainted everything in brilliant greens and the cheerful pastels of the early flowers.

With each passing day Baker has become more comfortable with his territory. At first he stayed close to the house, but now he ventures forth in ever-widening arcs of discovery and land management. Gradually he is establishing the boundaries and parameters of his domain, setting the rules for who or what will be tolerated—and who shall be run off forthwith.

That said, it must be admitted that Baker—a handsome, strapping specimen of the male feline—is a bit of a Scaredy Cat. He doesn't like loud noises. If he is in the front yard, and a truck rumbles past on the gravel road (a distance of approximately a quarter-mile), he races back to the safety of the house. If I start up the tractor or mower or chain saw, well away from where he is, Baker will dash back to the security of the deck behind the house. And even after all this time, when we pull our Jeep into the garage, he hides in the corner and won't emerge until we shut it off and coax him out.

My brave boy.

SELF-PRESERVATION

Though Baker's less than brave behavior can be embarrassing for his "mom" and "dad" (cats don't have masters), we would rather he be a safe coward than an injured or dead paladin. We are grateful that he runs from traffic, rather than stand fearlessly in the middle of the road. We are glad that when he senses danger, he flees.

We are grateful, as well, for the life-lesson in that.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

2 Timothy 2:20-22

There is no dishonor in fleeing from those things that will cause us harm. Satan, the author of evil, is also the author of deceit, so he can paint his evil in colors and shapes that are pleasing to the eye. That which appears to be a pretty flower can in fact be an agent for poison and death. Its beauty draws us closer, but its stem may hide thorns that cut into our skin. The passing beast looks cute

and cuddly, but when approached rears up with teeth and claws at the ready.



The discerning believer sees beyond the attractive surface to the corruption lying within and, like Baker, flees.

**Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from violent men
Who have purposed to trip up my feet.
The proud have hidden a trap for me, and cords;
They have spread a net by the wayside;
They have set snares for me. Selah.**

Psalms 140:4-5

Built into the weakness of flesh is an inclination to toy with, to dabble in things which we know to be of unholy birth. We read the daily horoscope—"just for fun." We read books or magazines that speak against all things holy—"to keep tabs on the opposition." We watch movies and television programs that preach a worldview diametrically opposed to our faith—"just for entertainment." We pal around with those who despise our Lord, and wink at their blasphemy—"to be a witness to them."

But all the while evil is threading itself into our soul, sapping our faith-strength, and eroding our foothold upon the Solid Rock. That sure Foundation, of course, has not changed, and has never removed itself from

beneath our feet. But whenever we give way to the enticements of evil, our contact with that which has given our faith surety becomes tenuous, thin. Our feet lift away from its surface—not upward, into holiness, but outward, nearer the ensnaring tentacles of those who wish us harm.

When we hear evil coming down the road, when the calamitous yet enticing noise of the world system approaches, we are to take a page from Baker's Manual of Survival.

And flee.



**Do not incline my heart to any evil thing,
To practice deeds of wickedness
With men who do iniquity;
And do not let me eat of their delicacies.
For my eyes are toward You, O God, the Lord;
In You I take refuge; do not leave me defenseless.
Keep me from the jaws of the trap
which they have set for me,
And from the snares of those who do iniquity.
Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
While I pass by safely.**

Psalms 141:4,8-10

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