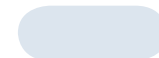




Quietude

THERE IS NO REPLACEMENT FOR THE EARLY-MORNING STILLNESS in which I begin most days. The house is quiet and serene, silent but for the comforting white noise of the furnace doing its best to take the night chill off the rooms. Outside my window, once the night has been eased aside by the grayish dawn, the white of winter makes the scene look colder still. Though cold, it is a scene of peace and gentle quietude that calms the night stirrings that have awakened me.



On the other side of the glass the snow birds, chickadees and nuthatches, up before dawn, are busy filling themselves with a breakfast of seeds and cracked corn—their nervous hopping and pecking made all the more obvious in contrast to the rest of the scene. They have awakened early to set about the day's business—*every day's* business of survival.

And there, further down the slope that leads away from the house toward the pond, a lone buck steps out of the woods, rounds the pond, treading softly across the snow-carpeted dike. He lowers his head to lick from the block of salt set there for his benefit, then proceeds up toward the house to breakfast on the ears of field corn we have scattered across the carpet of snow.

**“Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”**

Psalms 46:10

The birds and the deer rise every morning with only one thought on their mind: survival. In the winter, especially, the need to fill their belly and be sustained is critical. Most every waking moment will be consumed with the search for food.

But I have no preoccupation with survival. Oh, I like my belly to be full too, but, being human, I am able to satisfy that need in a less frantic, more systematized way. Like the well-organized squirrel, I have set

aside my stores at an earlier time. I need not rise and immediately set to finding my first meal of the day.

“Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith! And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.”

Luke 12:27-32

Then too, there is another component that sets me apart from my wilder brethren. I know the one who created all that makes up their world. Even if I may not be physically bowed in prayer, invariably my first thoughts of the day are of Him, of His provident care, of His mercy, grace, and extravagant love. Not just my surroundings, but my very *heart* is quiet, because it knows and lives in the peace that comes down from above.