



The Shadows of the Evening Hours

For the attentive child of God, each day, in its entirety, belongs to the Lord. Every day is suffused with His presence, so His Spirit becomes the energizing force behind every waking hour.

He attends our work and our play. Idle thoughts and musings in the silent hours drift toward Him.

It is only natural, then, that each day not just begin with our seeking God, but *end* with our seeking Him as well. Just as we rise from our slumber seeking the Lord's face, we enter that humble state with His visage still before us. The true restoration of the evening and nighttime hours begins with thoughts of Him.

*The shadows of the evening hours fall from the darkening sky;
Upon the fragrance of the flowers the dews of evening lie;
Before Thy throne, O Lord of Heav'n, we kneel at close of day;
Look on Thy children from on high, and hear us while we pray.*

Time spent with God in the morning hours looks forward to the day ahead. Time spent with Him at the close of day looks backward to the day just concluded.

It is during our waking hours that we are most vulnerable. In slumber there is not just rest, but innocence. In our waking hours, however, the world with all its charms besets. Here lie enticements to evil, stumbling blocks to piety, grief, disappointments, frustrations, anger and, not least, myriad distractions from God. All these and more are what make of critical importance our preparatory morning time before the throne.

Then in the closing hours of the day we bring before our Lord all the challenges faced and failed. These we gather up into a bundle of confession and place it at His feet, seeking His forgiveness, His mercy.

*The sorrows of Thy servants, Lord, O do not Thou despise,
But let the incense of our prayers before Thy mercy rise.
The brightness of the coming night upon the darkness rolls;
With hopes of future glory, chase the shadows from our souls.*

In the evening hours we seek recovery from the counterfeit aspirations of this temporal plane. The harsh brightness of noon-day can blind us to the world-system of duplicity, arrogance, deceit. As daylight on this world fades, the glories of God painted in the evening sky reorient our priorities, our desires, our dreams. The revealing of God's glory in distant heavens rendered invisible by day, reminds us that our hope lies not in the fragile, desiccated pledges of this fleeting world, but in the eternal, unwavering promises of our heavenly Father.

*Slowly the rays of daylight fade, so fade within our heart
The hopes in earthly love and joy, that one by one depart.
Slowly the bright stars, one by one, within the heavens shine:
Give us, O Lord, fresh hopes in heaven, and trust in things divine.*

Indeed, while following the way of Your judgments, O Lord,
We have waited for You eagerly;
Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls.
At night my soul longs for You,
Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently;

For when the earth experiences Your judgments
The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Isaiah 26:8-9

Even so, night holds terrors of its own, for it represents in miniature that condition of darkness and despair that is a life without God in Christ. Light represents the righteousness and goodness of God; it represents knowledge of Him, and salvation in His Son, the one true Light sent to man. But darkness and night represent the absence of all that is good and bright.

There were those who dwelt in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Prisoners in misery and chains,
Because they had rebelled against the words of God
And spurned the counsel of the Most High.

Psalms 107:10-11

So each night, upon retiring, we reenact our initial, saving faith in God. Each night as we recline our weary bodies and rest our heads, we also rest our lives in the Lord, entrusting ourselves to His care.

*Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen.*

*Let peace, O Lord, Thy peace, O God, upon our souls descend;
From midnight fears and perils, Thou our trembling hearts defend.
Give us a respite from our toil, calm and subdue our woes;
Through the long day we labor, Lord, O give us now repose.*

Adelaide A. Procter

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7