



Small Graces, by Kent Neburn

Night is closing in. It is time for sleep.

I have walked a quiet path today. I have done no great good, no great harm. I might have wished for more – some dramatic occurrence, something memorable. But there was no more. This was the day I was given, and I have tried to meet it with a humble heart.

How little it seems. We seek perfection in our days, always wanting more for ourselves and our lives, and striving for goals unattainable. We live between the vast infinities of past and future in the thin shaft of light we call 'today.' And yet today is never enough.

Where does it come from, this strange unquenchable human urge for 'more' that is both our blessing and our curse? It has caused us to lift our eyes to the heavens and thread together pieces of the universe until we can glimpse a shadow of the divine creation. Yet to gain this knowledge, we have sometimes lost the mystery of a cloud, the beauty of a garden, the joy of a single step.

We must learn to value the small as well as the great. [...]

"Confucius told his followers, 'Bring peace to the old, have trust in your friends, and cherish the young.'

"Do we really need much more than this? To honor the dawn. To visit a garden. To talk to a friend. To contemplate a cloud. To cherish a meal. To bow our heads before the mystery of the day. Are these not enough?

The world we shape is the world we touch – with our words, our actions, our dreams.

If we should be so lucky as to touch the lives of many, so be it. But if our lot is no more than the setting of a table, or the tending of a garden, or showing in a child a path in a wood, our lives are no less worthy.

I crawl into my bed, feel the growing warmth of the covers, hear the quiet rhythms of my wife's gentle breathing.

Outside, the wind blows softly, brushing a branch from the birch against the house.

To do justice. To love mercy. To walk humbly with our God.

To bring peace to the old. To have trust in our friends. To cherish the young.

Sometimes, it seems, we ask too much. Sometimes we forget that the small graces are enough.

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