

## **Reflections for Autumn, on the Passing of Time**

*So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart. -- Psalm 90.12*

Our spirit shall vanish in the soft air.

And our name shall be forgotten in time<sup>1</sup>, *The sun hurries swiftly towards the place on the far horizon where it will soon disappear. I stare at it in amazement and disbelief. It seems the day just started. And already, it is almost over. The shadows stretch across the face of this moment in the late afternoon. And the fading sunlight glistens in the still, soft air.*

and no man shall have our works in remembrance, *From the fields and prairies to the east, the night hurries in. The darkness sweeps along its determined course, moving swiftly but silently. It creeps along as if on cats' feet, moving with a force and quality that is both compelling and irresistible -- like Calvin's reckoning of grace.*

and our life shall pass away as the trace of a cloud, *The day that is now almost gone has been glorious; I would describe it as an archetype of this time, this moment, this season along the border between Summer and Autumn. The trees and bushes bear witness to the glory of the moment; their leaves are ablaze with crimson and gold. The colors are made even more stunning set against a perfectly clear sapphire sky.*

and shall be dispersed as a mist, *The green grass and the red flowers (which came back from the dead after a frost) add to the bold palette of colors that nature uses to paint this time of year. It is all so beautiful. And so fragile. The wind stirs the air. It is cool but not cold. And I think to myself, another few weeks and all these colors will be gone, their beauty swept away.*

that is driven away with the beams of the sun, and overcome with the heat thereof. *By now, the daylight is pretty much purged from the sky; the only hint that it ever was is a fast fading ribbon of turquoise and gold on the far horizon. Soon even that will disappear. And the night's presence will be ubiquitous. Already, now, I can see some stars above me. Their gentle light pierces the sable canvas of night and compliments the soft glow of a crescent moon.*

For our time is a very shadow that passeth away; *A sound interrupts my thoughts. I listen, and it comes again. From the gentle edge of night, the geese call out to each other*

*as they pass not very far above my head. Their call echoes across the sky, as they hurry along their pilgrim way. I watch them until they disappear into the darkness, into the night.*

and after our end there is no returning: *For a little while, everything is still. The quiet of this moment is both profound and compelling. And I think of time, of time and how swiftly and relentlessly it goes by. The day itself has gone so quickly from my sight. But it is more than the passing of a single day which commands my attention.*

for it is fast sealed, so that no man cometh again. *No -- it isn't the passing of the day or the season or even the year but the time -- the time that is entrusted to me that I think about and ponder. It is gone; it is so soon gone -- this brief ration of days and weeks, months and years that is entrusted to us. And once it is lost, it can never be found again. There is no returning. The time we are given -- the time we are called to be in this brief space that is ours for such a short and fleeting while: it swiftly flies away.*

*I would hold this moment if I could, if I only could. And I would stay for just a little while longer in this place and time of such beauty and such wonder -- happily lost in the moment and my thoughts.*

*The geese, though, interrupt the stillness with their call -- each seeming to urge on the others to hurry through the darkness toward the place where they might find rest from their labors and strength to face the challenges of tomorrow's new day.*

*I listen. And it is as if they are calling out to me too. They seem to invite me and urge me to hurry along with them through the soft sable night -- to hurry towards some unseen waypoint along this pilgrim way. And I know that is what I must do before these shadows pass into oblivion and the time that I have is sealed fast away.*

*Like the day and the season and this fleeting moment in time, I feel the sweeping transience of my mortal being. In the stillness, I learn to count my days in order to gain a heart of wisdom. And I find grace in the promise of the Lord whose words echo across the sky: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

*And in that promise, there is grace.*

*Tim Lanham, Pastor*

<sup>1</sup> These words come from the deuterocanonical book, Wisdom of Solomon, 2.3b-4