

*An Old Preacher's Prayer
on the Eighty-Second Anniversary of His Birth*

October 4, 1939 - October 4, 2021

(thus far and counting)

With reference to

Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17

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Holy Son of the one true God,
seated today as ever
at Her gentle right hand
in a place beyond place,
removed yet listening
to my grandfather clock
as it counts and chimes,
numbering my hours and days,
gathering speed,
one chasing the other,
tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock.

Earthy Son of God,
standing by me here,
present,
as though in a sacrament,
shoulder to shoulder
in my closet study
surrounded by tokens
of the preaching life
gathered mostly
from the days of my youth:

Certificates here, photographs there,
paintings, trinkets, and books everywhere,
plus a whole file of old sermons,
some not half bad,
and others...well, you know.
My sin goes ever before me.

It's my eighty-second birthday,
and I've come aside to pray
as is my custom
in this wee sanctuary.

I like coming here
with just you and me,
where you don't seem bothered
by the clutter of my life or

by the clutter of my study or
by the crusting of my brain.
Son of God and friend of sinners,
listen to this old preacher praying.
The ancient prophet predicted
a day would be coming
when the Spirit of God would be poured out,
and on that glad and fearsome day,
the young would see visions
and the codgers would dream dreams.

Generations later,
with your death and resurrection
in the air of near memory
and the Holy Spirit as predicted
blowing like a stiff summer breeze
and spreading like wild fire
here, there, and everywhere,
Simon preached a sermon,
powerful indeed,
declaring then as now
is the time to see those visions,
and this is the hour
to dream the prophet's dreams,
as tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock
goes my grandfather clock.

Son of God, friend of this sinner,
listen now to this old sixteen-a-day
pill-popping preacher.

I'm finding it very hard,
hard indeed,
to dream a dream
hold up as I am
in this porcelain palace
reserved for the rich,
the old, and the dying:

This once proud nation
of noble and sin-soaked birth
is crumbling

beneath the weight of lies and greed
while the rich get richer
and the poor are left to grovel.

It's hard just now
to dream as of old
of a land with milk and honey flowing
or of manna in the wilderness,

just enough for everyone.
It's harder still in this day and moment
to picture five loaves and two fish
feeding a multitude.

There are wars between clans,
wars in the streets,
all seen as eerie preludes
while militias armed with catapults
are inspired by nothing
In such a deafening din,
to dream of a peaceable kingdom
it's hard for this old preacher man
that looks at all...
even one little bit...
like a lamb and lion
together snuggling in.

The world you and your Mom made good
as by her right hand you stood
is now, by place,
burning or melting
as your star creation
choking or drowning,
does little or nothing.
Do you see why it's hard
for this old preacher of Word
to dream of your kingdom coming,
and harder still to remember if,
as a young preacher
long, long ago,
I held bold visions
like those in images
of justice rolling like water flowing
and of a day of no more pain or crying?
All this rambling
is to pray just this:

On the eighty-second anniversary
of the day of my birth,

give this old codger a new dream or two,
or three or four,
or maybe even more...
pictures of hope unbound
for Martha, Jayne, Patrick, Nichols, and Finn,*
and for my family by birth and family by marriage,
for close friends new and of long standing,
those close by and all the rest...
people of all nations, times, and places
set free by acts of sacrificial grace.

All of this is to pray,

Savior and Friend,
that your Mom grant to this old preaching fool
just enough time and energy left
to see them on the way
to a new world birthing...
birthing

in acts of kindness at the grocery store;
in deeds of welcome at the border walls;
in words of truth reported in the news;
in pure love poured out from government halls, and

in hearing the pain voiced in opposing views.

Now take this long and rambling prayer,
place it at your Mother's holy feet.
Then whisper in Her listening ear
to tell her where she can find it.

So may it be.
So may it be.
Amen.

*Spouse, daughter, son-in-law, daughter, and grandson in that order.