

17 Poems

by Brian Coatney

Go to Zero and Wait

Go to Zero and wait.
Nothing is so demanding or can crowd
the mind that refuses to be late—
dismisses consent to everything loud.

Always, endless more take the place
of the urgencies, good or ill.
Always, you can run a madman's frustrated race,
never make your time stand still.

Joshua wasn't the only one—
the sun stood still for him to fight.
One exalted over him has done
the work of endless day by night.

BC/2-6-05

Pressing Through

Your drops of dew surround
those who give up the fiery fight.
Your golden rays penetrate
those who see through dark night.

Your grace opens up my heart
like petals toward the morning sun,
in full color, fragrant in scent.
How easily your work is done.

Always I see enough,
as my eyes look, open now,
hesitating at times, but certain
of completion, though only You know how.

BC/4-14-05

What Kind of Race?

What kind of race do I wish?
one enticing by its glory,
vision of purity,
magnificent– with breadth and depth,
through generations,
modestly, in crescendo,
steady, perfect flame of faith,
instilled, ending where it began,
in eternity of heart,

What kind of race do I wish?
one easy at first,
early optimistic in cadence,
confident of keeping,
not yet stretched taut– bent slightly,
not drawn to agonized measure
til the perfect time.

What kind of race do I wish?
panting, burnt in muscle,
wishing to draw back, unable to, kept still,
perseverance continuing,
dead to quit but won' t–
crying out, not doubting.

What kind of race do I wish?
the line comes into sight,
overwhelming gratitude brings tears,
a calling met, new ease of walk,
fresh certainty, fruit known before seen,
home already, heavenly wept over.

What kind of race do I wish?
this very one, even if over and over
again when pressed to run.

Sweetness in the Cross

The sweetness in the Cross is extra sweet,
for all the bitterness one has to eat.
Wreaths and garlands of all kinds,
appeal in sympathy or victory
to various minds;
but nothing makes the Cross as much a friend,
as scornful wrath when we are at our end.

BC/12-31-05

When a Body Dies

When a body dies— is pronounced dead,
it no longer works to get ahead.
This old world' s pulls fade away;
I don' t mean they disappear,
but they lose their former sway.

When a body no longer fights or tries,
sees all that as a pack of lies,
that' s when you understand what it means
that a body dies.
You hang out in the nothing for a while,
a place where nothing' s going on it seems,
but all' s a possibility to fit your style.

Your closet' s full of shoes, any might do,
but none works just as well until you' ve seen through;
then you know just the right pair—
reach perfectly to pull them out,
without tearing out your hair.

Yes, it' s great when a body dies;
though the whole world in jealousy screams and cries,
you' ve found where even God' s at rest,
not flustered about if He did His best:
Yes, it' s really great when a body dies.

BC/2-19-06

A Thorn Removed

A thorn landed on my heart.
It started tearing.
Once, I would have worked to
remove it, making matters worse.

Quiet, I waited instead,
beside myself,
but the resting state is best.

Calculations cease,
a pause brings silence.
Into spirit I look,
where flesh cannot abide.

Without noise, the One will
speaks clearly,
a settlement I don' t contest-
don' t understand, but accept.

Words and deeds follow
like the blowing of one white lily,
adorned more than
Solomon' s gold.

In this I revel,
as the cloud of sweetness
surrounds the breath of ease.

The Great Surprise

I lived much of life with the fear,
that to embrace the Cross,
meant sadly that I would disappear.

Where would be me,
the self that I knew, if like a cuckoo,
I flew away no more to be?

If only God were there,
what about uniqueness, you know, the special
me; how is that fair?

To disappear, how humbling, think of the fear,
think of actually dying,
wondering if you really will reappear?

The resurrection' s a chance, a dare,
a horrible death one never wants,
it' s gasping for air,

as down, down, down you go,
into nothing– quiet in the Cross,
wondering if that' s the end of all you know.

Perhaps it' sbetter to partially die,
only take some wounds, bandage them up,
present that self as if from on high.

Even worldings know the farce of that,
recognizing one not dead as still alive,
a rabbit cleverly pulled from a hat.

No– only real death will do,
where without doubt the mourner wears black,
and burial is the follow through.

Then in the cold grave, if your faith held fast,
all the way into nothing and death,
you find yourself at last,

the newborn spirit, high– where the eagle flies,
through heavenly regions, once impossible, aloft now,
where despite all hell, one never dies!

Marriage

We marry by faith,
for who knows what life together will be like?
And so we walk, not by sight,
but by the unseen, especially in marriage.

Expectations enter in, the chance for disappointment,
or, if we are ready, new certainty
that what we die to, God quickens.

Increasingly, we find a third person in our marriage,
growing larger, as the person,
both in me and in the other.
We marry that person so we can stay married.

Marriage is a miracle in each moment,
one after another, eventually made spontaneous,
each miracle joined to the next,
indistinguishable like a river.

Unruly thorns will appear,
drawing to a cold heart.
Quietly, without ado, use this for laughter—
Going on with fervor and warmth as ever.

Most importantly, mate in what you do—
a holy partnership seeing new souls
brought to life, for which
you will receive great reward.

Remember, marriage is never what we thought at first,
but always greater in the end that it's not.
Those who persevere find great honor,
both in the Lord and with each other.

BC/6-1-06
Written for Rachel and Andy

Trophies of the Insane

I' m among the trophies of the insane.
First, my sins made me insane,
then, trying to be like the One who saved me.

Now I' m just insane over God,
shameless that I laid down the trying–
crazy enough to quit the fakery
and let the Begetter beget
laughter, anguish, tears, or longing
as He wishes to spend them
in this wildly abandoned body.

He keeps me from sin,
points me to escape in all temptation,
glorifies in suffering,
cradles the lost sheep around me.

In step with Him
is out of step with the crazy world,
but I' ll take His insanity.
I plead guilty with a smile.

BC/6-8-06

Zinnias Above

Up from the greenery rise the deep pink zinnias,
crisp stems alone, leading to crowns above,
as if they ascended to gather, looking up,
above the guise of an ordinary shrub.

They stand, so snip-able,
culled for vases, one here or there,
gathered for a countertop.

They remind me of dandelions made kings,
and coronated with colors in a skyline
over ordinary horizons.

Among their visitors today came
a hummingbird, plus a goldfinch to our surprise,
while the bees continue their route through the ornate domain,
and a butterfly sails in to alight
if one waits.

This is a wedding day,
with elation for some, disappointment for others,
but providing flowers and mystery to any.

When one paradise finally meets another,
we won' t need to forget anymore what' s bittersweet;
and faith is our strong victory now.

BC/7-23-06

Aurora

I could live alone in cold, dark space—
give in to fear and let all the lights go out,
so that no stars twinkle in the dark,
no orb like the sun bask the green leaf.

Yet, when the stars flicker and would go out,
the sun blacken into eternal night,
the would-be stifled slave may choose
an aurora instead.

In the last flicker of an appealing ember,
before the black night of spin,
royal freedom presents itself:
"As many as receive."

Once, the dread of capture ruled;
then the keeping took its place in my desire—
the holy, lit mirror of transformation,
standing unobstructed to the simple.

When darkness impinges,
as it has a right to do, a fact remains of joy,
in all the light of God that we behold,
and loneliness must flee.

BC/9-28-06

You are the Time Genius

You are the time genius,
not rushed but quiet.

What worry and stress,
work and commitment, would take
prideful hours or days to figure out,
You do with one flash
not related to even one second.

The best work is rest,
receiving from Your mind
the stillness that birthed the joy
we call motion.

Grasping the outer catches us
in a wheel of destruction,
looking good at first, with urgent work,
but the end is to faint.

When you want to solve a problem,
don' t even listen to one second.

Forget time, and love the sweet eternal.
Time will serve you then,
not you serve it.

BC/10-23-06

Christmas

I lost my mind, but a new one found me.
It had a star in the East,
a baby in a crib,
a promise of rest.

The old one slaved in a frenzy,
driven by a fierce standard
never met—
the house of demons.

Quiet and protected,
the babe grew,
known in favor,
bountiful in blessing,

not enough, though, for our demands,
until he took us through
the gate of his death,

the coffin of his burial,
and into the beyond—
from whence cometh the glorious mind.

So now when the house shakes,
and the panic strikes,
my mind rests in the new manger.

There, a mind born from above
is life and peace.

BC/12-8-06

Everyman' s Dream

Once upon a time,
I didn' t have much money,
just enough—
and when I looked beside me in the bed,
I didn' t see my honey.

There wasn' t much successthen either,
mostly the contentment hidden
when Christ brings a dead fire back to life
under an ugly mess.

No money, no honey, and a big mess—
staying that way seemingly too long.

But God' s clock ruled in my favor
when I got in an unhurry.
I could see that I had been wrong.

Everything is worth the wait,
the excruciation too,
when your faith sees the glory comin'—
and you know that no good thing
of God is ever late.

BC/1-5-07

I' m a Thirsty Man

I' m a thirsty man, and I would drink,
But not from any ordinary kitchen sink.
That water' s good and lots of it to be sure;
It' s not water, though, when a soul seeks to endure.

We need a heavenly tap, a spigot, better a well–
One refreshing our spirits in a dry and dirty hell.
What? Disillusioned with permanence right here?
As if this life' s not it– another must draw near?

That' s what Jesus said; it points us in,
To a different thirst, the opposite of sin.
We crave heavenly water, His life– through belief,
Instantly finding, to our surprise, relief.

Some make this hard, requiring diligent work
On our part, but in this lie all evils lurk.
Jesus only said, " Hold forth your cup;
Don' t sweat it kid, I' ll gladly fill it up."

BC/2-21-07

Rest

To steal rest from clamor, that we may do,
Though the devil barks as if to bite.
We only seek to see our way through
All this darkness, by the everlasting light.

These, the atrocities, won' t stop for now,
Bank as such; they continue til we die.
Verily the Scripture tells us this, but also how
In faith not to faint, how quietly to discount the lie.

Wisdom' s many faces you won' t find loud,
With weapons conventional to kill one' s sin.
Its spirit slips the knot in an angry crowd,
Finding the holy place to worship in.

These are not the things most usually said
To ease the tortured mind in afflicted states,
To live as if one is already dead,
Is news the carnal mind most surely hates.

But what would we give for the world, our only soul?
Yes, we cling, that' s natural, but then let go,
Repeatedly, yes repeatedly to the end,
And that is where we get our heavenly glow.

BC/3-8-07

Something Irreplaceable

Something irreplaceable must get stolen from inside,
Leaving the sanctuary vacant of its god.
In sweeps depression; dark, it' s hard b hide
From the terror, with its narcissistic rod.

This rod bodes woeful, " Why me? I want to die—
Better the grave than wait, merely endure."
Heaven laughs— provocative in its sigh,
Yet full of sweetness responding, " Are you sure?"

Out of the dervish anguish, we figure not
Mentally again; we' re spent, so with a nod,
We hear, like a little child, like a weaning tot,
" You' ve died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Something irreplaceable stands inside,
In the temple now, a ravishment complete.
Truth and beauty, twin mirrors standing wide
In view, hold us captive in a kingly seat.

BC/3-11-07