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Made up. I have heard it a many a time. And others like it, like this:

“I don’t know what’s the matter with me, but something is. I think I’m afraid, but what am I afraid of? Growing old? Getting ill? Losing out? Starving to death? The mish-mash the world is in? What am I afraid of? Oh, I don’t really know. Maybe it’s what I’m tired of. Tired of putting on, keeping up, trying to get ahead or stay ahead- oh, I don’t know, or just plain tired and jumpy.

We could go on with confessions like these forever. We all hear something like this almost every day from almost anyone. Such confessions of tensions and misery is actually quite fashionable nowadays. So in this confessional age, where we don’t believe in going to confession. None the less, most of us do make every next door neighbor our father Confessor and bend the ear of every chance acquaintance with our woes – whether they want to hear it or not.

It behooves us to take seriously our restlessness for we are so often restless, dissatisfied, our irritability – and moody and mean in our- well at least it is an old- malady. And old, old malady. “Why are thou cast down, o my soul?” Who said that? A depressed man you sat with at lunch? Your wife? You yourself? Or me? At low tide? “And why art thou disquieted within me?” what tense, jumpy, aggravated soul said that? A banker, a plumber, a professor, a housewife on some street --- all stretched taunt as fiddle strings ready to snap in your eye? Disquieted some haunted professor frothing, or exam scared-term-paper-terrified student, some tense little southern bell person? Surely could be any of these. No, any of us: Singing that ancient Psalm Jake read us only to a modern tune. Same ole Psalm and dance though. Facing ideally the same little daily hells, men and women have always faced and tuning up in fear and self-pity- the double root of our restlessness and meanness too.

You see whether you are driving a mule or a RR terrors of the soul never change- from age t age the same like the God who made it. Space shots don’t change a vital thins – a sling, an arrow, a sword, a bullet, a rocket—what difference? They all pierce the heart and only short prayer pierces the heaven. And as for looking back to a better day—don’t. Don’t look back to the “good old days.” If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you many times, they never were any good old days. You know that. They are but sweet myth to allay fears falsely. It’s always been now or never. Do you know who said the following: “ I shudder when I think of the calamities of our time. For 50 years....blood....has been shed daily.... The world sinks into ruin.....who could believe it?” Saint Jerome said that. When? 4th century AD the beck of Rome!

Faulkner (Wm) – speaking over his Nobel Prize said; “In discussing the state of the world with 12 year olds recently, one asked “When will I be blown up?” No one can answer that for the day the world was created someone has been predicting its end.” “as to the question, What kind of protection can we expect? The answer is not much.” So we give each other the best advice we can: everything from “vote right in the next elections” to “get a physical checkup,”

“to take more exercise,” “to eat right,” “to get your rest,” “adjust to your situation,” “go to work” or become more conscientious or less contriving as the case may be. “-

No---When the soul is crying there is need for a deeper therapy. And a more simple one too indeed, there is the need for a whole new—for some of us totally new- life of simplicity. But maybe what we xtions need is “the simplified life.”

A life of simplicity let us call it. This is what the Quakers called it. “The Practice of Holy Calm.” It’s the Psalmist talking to himself, “Soul, hope thou is God.” It is the “practice of the presence of God.” And that’s what Xby basically is all about: not theory, not dogma, not sermons, thanks the Lord. Church committees—it is practicing the presence of God—at all times, in all places. Presbyterians, of course, would rather do anything but that--will sing, pray, talk, serve on committees- even contribute real bill money, anything to keep from practicing the presence of the Living God, do everything except the one thing required to lift the “cash down” soul, to calm the disquieted soul.” Namely just to think, to whisper, and to feel “thou art with me,” “thou art near, oh Lord.” “It is good for me to draw near to God,” or to hear “the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,” To hear him say “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Here is holy calm. “I will hold thee by thy right hand.” The calm that comes from God, that is God—God himself.

Sometimes we feel him here in the church, don’t we? Sometimes? Good hymns, sweet- organ, old familiar symbols that warm the heart, the cross hanging there, gentle scriptures, the white mystic word to sooth the spirit and calm the rebel soul. In the pulpit the preacher man rants and raves, but sometimes I think the good God kinda smiles and says “don’t worry bout him. I’m still here and I love you.” Hence God’s soul to our soul- deep communion without words – and we do feel rested here, restored, refreshed---a place here that passeth understanding”. How do you say it?

Well – said Mister Eckert: “as thou art in church or cell that some frame of mind carry out into the world, into its turmoil and its fitfulness.”

Why not try it? Try taking the calm you find here in the church out into the world with you—keep it around you like a soft garment, like quiet buffer to the day’s turmoil and fitfulness.

I am truly sorry for those who do not find in the church any calm in life and who find no peace of God here, no quiet of soul, no lifting and lightening of the load by the Lord Christ. –who don’t touch the hem of his garment in church-- who only quarrel about the cobwebs in the lanterns, talk or sour notes and see only the mistakes and meanness of the members---this is sad, very sad, that even in church their hurts are bitter and they find not here their shekinah, not lovely light here of the Living Christ, to sweeten the day and simplify the strivings and bring quietly together the scattered forces of the soul. Sometimes we leave the church more hectic that we came in don’t we? More “cast down”, more “disquieted” than ever. Pity, pity---- for why are we here? Except to be led up to God, to the secret place of the Most High—and to take him with us as we depart? “

But if one learns to practice the presence here, one can practice it anywhere. Let me quote from my favorite friend. He speaks of Practicing the Presence of God: "Day and night, winter and summer, sunshine and shadows, the lord God is here in the heart. And we are with Him, held in His tenderness, quickened into quietness and peace, children in Paradise before the fall, walking with Him in the garden in the heat as well as the cool of the day. Here is not ecstasy but serenity, unshakeableness, firmness of life orientation...."

"Such men and women are not found merely among the canonized Saints. They are housewives, laborers, lawyers, and teachers, and in business learned and unlearned, black and white they are, poor and per chance even rich. They exist, and happy in the church that contains them. They may not be known widely, nor serve on boards of trustees, or preach in pulpits. Where pride in one's learning is found, there they are not. For they do not confuse acquaintance with theology and church history with commitment and the life lived in the secret sanctuary." (Thomas Kelley Testament of Devotion pg. 42-43.)

When you and I are constantly aware of God's presence- trust ourselves every day to his providence and rest in Him- we can meet whatever any hour holds—our minds clear and our spirits at ease. No matter who we are or what we have—or have to do, we begin to live the simplified life of faith to him. Prominence? Recognition? How teeny and trifling they become! Our old ambitions? And heroic dreams? What years we have wasted in feeding our insatiable self-pride, when only doing the will of God truly matters! Our wealth and property, security now and in old age—upon what broken weeds we have learned, when God is 'the rock of our heart, and our portion forever!'or is it placed in coveted surroundings we are? Recipients of honors? We count them as **refuse**, as nothing, as utterly nothing. Or placed in the shadows, we are happy to pick up a straw for the love of God. No task is so small as to distress us, no honor to great as to our hands." (Kelley 48-49)

Here- my dear friends- is the simplified life- far beyond church busyness- beyond our crowded agendas, or "much learning"--- it is the simplified life of Gods folk—quiet in the midst of noise- tranquil in tumult- kind and gentle and good though surrounded by bigotry and greed- stable, secure in a deep top of faith- steady as we go strong in any storm.

Did not the X, "My peace I give unto you- not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." To live like this is to walk in Eden as we said but surly to have eternity in time- not to agonize and fret and strain---but to work "near to the heart of God." And die in holy calm "coming for to carry me home."

There is an old Jewish prayer I like very much. It is found at the beginning of the order—let up read it prayerfully together now.

“Now that the daily task is laid aside and we are gathered in the house of God, the hush or solemnity comes over us and we feel refreshing rest in that holy quiet of the sanctuary. Softer than the twilight calm is the peace that comes to us here with healing on its wings. It restores our soul and we are refreshed out of the abundance of God’s grace.”
(Union Prayer book for Jewish worship.)