



Desiderata

12 February 2015

What a difference a day can make! Yesterday was calm and clear with nothing falling. Today is stormy and windy with so much snow that it is now called a blizzard on the Avalon Peninsula (although it is nothing compared to the storm they had in Labrador!). Most everything is cancelled and I called the two people I was scheduled to meet to tell them to stay off the road. We can always reschedule to a safer day.

I have just come in from clearing snow. Despite having a snowblower it still took me most of two hours. I rather enjoyed the work as I crave physical labor outdoors for the balance it provides to most of the rest of my life spent indoors. A storm like this also reminds me of the power of nature.

The natural world can teach us much if we pay attention. In this storm that has brought most things to a halt there is an important lesson: namely, that in life, as in nature, there will be storms along the way. Sometimes they will be great and last for days. Sometimes they will blow themselves out overnight, leaving our world fresh and renewed in the morning.

Life brings many kinds of storms: sickness and death, loss and change, are all storms in their own way. Such events can blow into our lives with the fury of a blizzard, rearranging the landscape of our lives and leaving everything cold and unfamiliar. These unwelcome storms can leave us confused and powerless in the face of the unexpected and unwanted.

As I have grown older I have learned a few lessons about life that give me courage. One of those lessons is that no storm lasts forever. Every storm, no matter how furious and unwanted at the time, will eventually blow itself out. Sometimes in the face of change and uncertainty a little stillness and serenity can go a long way. A long time ago when I was a teenager I memorized the words of Desiderata attributed to Max Ehrmann (see below). It has influenced my life for nearly 40 years now. I cannot count the number of times I have counseled people facing storms in life to read it. Part of it encourages us to nurture strength of spirit to shield us in sudden misfortune. Because when sudden misfortune and unexpected change comes it is that very strength of spirit that can see us through.

For me, that strength of spirit is nurtured in my relationship with God. I have learned to thank God for all of my weaknesses, fears and shortcomings for in them I am reminded of my need for Him.

God tells me to be gentle with myself at those times and wait for the storm to pass.

I am not alone.

He has promised to be with me always.

Blessings,
+Geoff

Desiderata

*Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.
As far as possible without surrender
be on good terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;
and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant;
they too have their story.*

*Avoid loud and aggressive persons,
they are vexations to the spirit.
If you compare yourself with others,
you may become vain and bitter;
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.*

*Keep interested in your own career, however humble;
it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.
Exercise caution in your business affairs;
for the world is full of trickery.
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals;
and everywhere life is full of heroism.*

*Be yourself.
Especially, do not feign affection.
Neither be cynical about love;
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment
it is as perennial as the grass.*

*Take kindly the counsel of the years,
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.
Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.*

*You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees and the stars;*

*you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*

*Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive Him to be,
and whatever your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.*

*With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.
Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.*