

Peace in the Maddening Maze of Life

The end of December is always a good time to reminisce and take stock of our lives. This seems especially appropriate as many of us have come through yet another difficult year—rising prices, vaccine mandates, and increased Orwellian censorship to name just a few problems—and don't have a lot of hope that things will improve.

When we find ourselves in such a situation, where do we go? How do we deal with the pain, the suffering, and the wrong that surrounds us continually?

I found an answer to that question in a little poem which a friend sent to me earlier this year. Written in the 19th century by John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Eternal Goodness* wrestles with the age-old question of why God allows suffering if He is good. I recommend reading the [whole poem](#), but I'd like to highlight several stanzas as particularly appropriate for a time in which hope is hard to find. The first selected highlight begins thus:

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

We plan and plot about how to stop COVID or how to get political policies to go our way, but in the end, such schemes are only poor devices that often go awry. Instead of getting angry and worried when our plans don't work out, remembering that God is in control and accepting His plans and purposes will go a long way toward bringing us peace.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;

I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.
Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

""
The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above,
I know not of His hate,—I know
His goodness and His love.

A “maddening maze” is a perfect description of today’s culture, and that maze is maddening precisely because the world is filled with so much wrong and injustice. Yet it is those times of injustice which lead people through fire, burning away their flaws and refining their character if they respond to the problems in the right way. And the way to respond rightly? Knowing and acknowledging that God is good, even when life seems to be a mess.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

Perhaps some of us have lost loved ones this last year, either through death, or broken relationships, or even disagreements and misunderstandings. Once again, Whittier implies that the best way to deal with such losses is to recognize that God is using even difficult times for good and crafting an amazing story that will one day make sense.

Finally, in this age of uncertainty when we never know if the day will bring us some life-changing decree from our leaders, or a sudden death or terminal diagnosis, or a natural disaster that upends our life, Whittier reminds us that those who put themselves in God’s hands will be just fine:

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

We live in a world of uncertainty, fear, and anger which seems to grow more intense with each passing day. Each of us likely have firsthand experience with the misery that results when we allow ourselves to give in to one or all of these three main societal problems. And the reason I share Whittier's poem is because the only way to break free from uncertainty, fear, and anger is to follow his advice and recognize that God is in control, turning ourselves and our futures over to Him.

It was that simple in Whittier's day and it's that simple in ours. The question is, will we humble ourselves enough to take such simple advice in the increasingly maddening maze of life?

—

Pixabay