

Though I Am Small

Poetry and Photography by Craig Sabin

"The Simple Poet's Pen"

I'm just a simple poet, And well that I should know it, Lest, deceived, my head should swell Supposing that I write so well.

Never published, never cared, Relieved to not have been compared To those whose pens are more refined, Who plumb the recondite sublime.

My pen is meant for simpler things, To simply give my thoughts their wings. Perhaps they will return to me, Or perch in someone else's tree,

And maybe do a little good, At least, I surely wish they would. If only just a little smile, Or shorten someone's weary mile,



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Or maybe by the Maker's grace, They'll draw someone to His embrace. A simple poet's all I am, And glad to be a simple man.



"Anchor of my Soul"

Salty spray upon my lip, as to the mast I cling, Mounting billows rock the ship, and in my eyes they sting.

Heaving deck beneath my feet, my heart within me heaves, Shipwreck fears are now replete, as frightened mind perceives

Waves that show a hidden reef;
My stomach is a knot.
But much to my profound relief,
Hope's anchor chain is taut.

Fathoms down, where eye can't see,
Below the swells that veil,
Christ my anchor's holding me;
My Jesus will not fail.



Anchor photo by Robert Cheaib on Pixabay

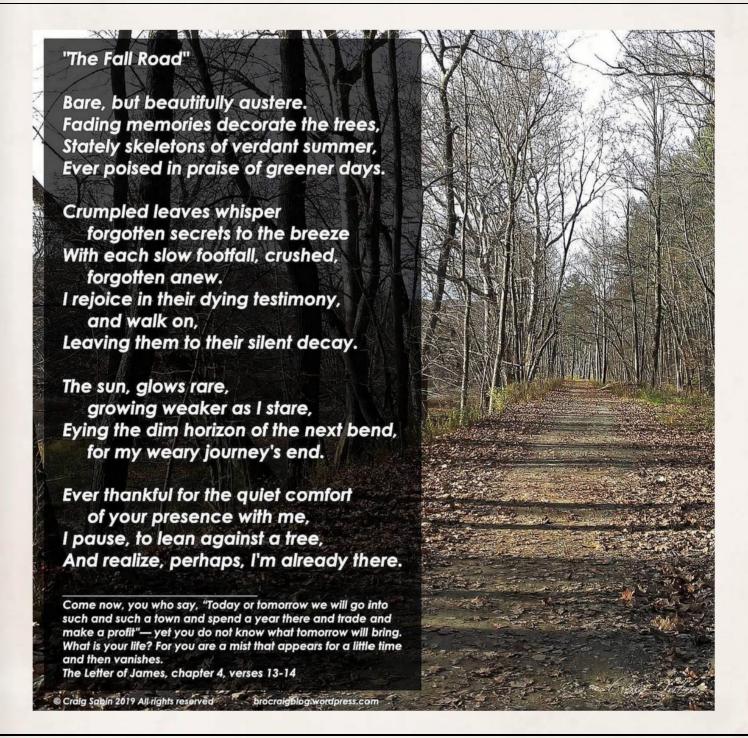
"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

Hebrews 6:19-20











"Autumn's Tears"

Green leaves die as raindrops fall, Cloudy sky, a dusky pall.

Each leaf a fading memory,
That softly falls without a sound,
And glides in somber reverie
Until it rests upon the ground.

All things we see must fade away,
Sure as evening follows day.
Be careful where your treasure lies,
Down below or in the skies.

The earth reclaims its rightful due, And soon she'll be reclaiming you. So walk in daylight, while you can, While trusting in the Son of Man.

Although the day must yield to night, What dies in faith is raised to sight.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (ESV)

Craig Sabir







"Dust Bowl Heart"

Well is empty, spring's run dry, Clouds have no more tears to cry. Earth is parched, the crops all fail, Too depressed to weep or wail.

The weary wind lets out a sigh,
And then resumes his thankless chore.
The dust and grit assail my eye,
As gusts get spent against the door.

The birds have gone, I know not where.
The echoes of their silent songs,
Accompany my dull despair,
For greener days my soul still longs,
My dust bowl heart lifts up a prayer.

O Lord, my God, I know you care, And in my trials you are there. You've given your own life to me, And promise of eternity.

So I don't ask you to explain, Your purpose is not mine to know. But when, at last, you send the rain, I pray that something good will grow.



Buried machinery in barn lot, USDA Image 00di0971, Public Domain



"The Tale of Half-Tail"

I once met a squirrel with a harrowing tail, Although what curtailed it, he never did say. Some things are so painful that words tend to fail, Or else stoic silence was simply his way.

He kept to himself when the squirrels went to lunch, He'd stand in the corner and quietly chew. The others would tease him, and pulled not a punch, But he gave no notice; that's just what they do.

"You'll never win the hearts of girls,
in such a sorry state,
'Cause girls don't court with deformed squirrels,
you'll never find a mate."
His thoughtful stare was his reply,
with no emotion shown.

Day upon day things continued this way, I thought that his hopes were for naught. Night after night for the squirrel I'd pray, and then came the day that I sought.

but prob'ly was my own.



Outside in the yard I could scarce apprehend, two squirrels, with two more that were small. It seems my old friend persevered to the end, and found his true love after all!

I stared out at him while returning his gaze, still lost in my personal glee.

And deep in his eyes I was shocked and surprised, to see that the squirrel was me.

"Though I Am Small"

asked
if I mattered
because I'm so small, and
after a while I began to recall

I once read that rudders, although they are small, turn the whole ship, when rightly installed by the ship's maker.
I suppose that the rudders don't boast or complain, (notwithstanding incredible strain) but just spend their all, in the service of others.

I once read the widow's mite, although very small, was declared as an offering greater than all, when given, by faith, to the widow's maker.



The praiseworthy widow, as I recall, didn't boast or complain, but just offered her all, all she had to sustain, for the service of others.

I once read a few fish, although they were small, fed four thousand people and satisfied all, when placed in the hands of the fish's maker, who broke them in pieces, and multiplied them in their breaking, miraculously, the crowd's hunger slaking. It's fairly presumed that those few little fish didn't boast or complain, while being consumed, as a dish, in a manner ordained for the nourishment of others.

Lord, I am small, and not fit for a rudder, so let that honor fall to another.
But you are my maker, and so like the rudder, in spite of the strain, let me be used as You will and not boast or complain, just spend all my days in the way You ordain.

Lord, I am small, and lack the faith of the widow who gave up her all. But you are my maker, and so like the widow, take all that I have, and in spite of my pain, let me be used as You will and not boast or complain, just spend all my mite in the way You ordain.

Lord, I am small, and, Lord, I'm broken, too.
So if I had my wish, let me be like the fish (who remind me of you).
Take me in your hands and break me into small pieces and, let me not boast or complain, use my small broken life in the way You ordain,

and in a miracle,
requiring your power,
let it be multiplied,
consumed and devoured
(just like yours)
in the nourishment of others.

Lord Jesus,
even though I am small, you
delight to use small things
that give you their all.
Thank you, Lord, for
making me small,
and thank you
for making
me yours
after
all
I

Postscript: In a dazzlingly expansive galaxy, riding enormous rock plates on a sea of molten lava, while hurtling in orbit around the massive, unconfined nuclear reactor we call the sun, along with billions and billions of other uncountable and unnameable people, it's easy (and quite realistic) to feel very, very small and insignificant, especially for someone like me who is well past my prime, badly disabled, and dependent on others.

Praise God that He knows each of us by name, loves us so much that Christ died for the sins of every ordinary person, like you or I, who receives him by faith, and the degree to which his glory is seen in us is actually enhanced by our nothingness and insignificance, offered to him in faith.



"Winter Raindrops"

Raindrops decorate the barren trees The world hangs, small, in each of these Lifeless, cold, and upside-down Verdant green, now fallow brown

Reflects the landscape of my soul Frozen and no longer whole Leaves long dead except a trace The trace of tears across my face

How much rain must wash the pane Until my heart can mend again How long must Winter's vigil last Til grief for Summer's passing's past

The irony is lost on he
Who clutches with his icy hands
And by his mourning, stubbornly
Delays the Spring from barren lands



Postscript: Grief and mourning have no expiration date, but at some point a new season of life is only possible by letting go of what we've lost and trusting in the goodness and divine providence of Almighty God and holding fast to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Where Hopes Lie (a Lament)"

I never knew, how my hopes grew, so silently they spread.
Like ivy leaves on chimney wall they grew inside my head, until the bitter breezes blew, and left them all for dead.
I felt them shrivel up and fall, and it was then I knew, that down inside my hopes had died, and they were mine no more.

Whole fleets of expectations, like hungry merchant ships, had sailed into my harbor heart, and docked among the slips. They'd tied themselves with sailor's art to wait their promised store. And when, with hulls still empty, they were ordered to depart, they rose in bloody mutiny and stormed upon the shore.



Oh how they wailed, and loud their cries for longings unfulfilled, as vacant satisfaction's lies slipped through their hands like desert sands, to lie upon the floor.

Enough.

Deliberately
I turn my eyes
away from where
lament was spent,
and to the place my certain home
lies high above the skies,
where moth and rust do not destroy
and thieves can steal
no more.

The kingdom of the Righteous One, whose lips can form no lies, prepares for me a mansion, grand, and beckons me with outstretched hand up where ev'ry shattered hope becomes a bright kaleidoscope, there stands, for me, an open door.

"See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name." The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Chapter 3, Verse 8 Postscript: I remember the simple joy of having a meal at a restaurant with my wife. It's a pleasure that, in all likelihood, I will never know again this side of eternity. And so many things - walking in a park, visiting loved ones, and countless other little things are now big things, since I have lost them all. And there is so much I had grown to expect, without ever giving the expectations a second thought, because they were so, well, ordinary. Now I must resist the tendency to say to myself, "you will never be able to" and lapse into self-pity - perhaps the deadliest and most prevalent of sins.

It is only right and proper to grieve our losses, and to mourn over that which is no more. We must if we are to continue to truly live, lest we fall into bitterness and our life fall into decay, and our soul fall into ruin. Yet, at some point, we must make the deliberate effort to pivot from our grieving and mourning and begin to look forward to the hopes that yet may be. Thus is born the poetry of "lament." I don't suppose I will ever be "over it," and I know that from time to time I will revisit the harbor of my former hopes, but by the Lord's grace my eye is being refined to look for the eternal, even among the temporal, for it is only the eternal which will endure.

Dear reader, you may have suffered your own losses which are too hard to bear. Please know that there is One who understands better than anyone, and He calls you to come to Him for comfort, forgiveness, hope everlasting, and life eternal. His name is Jesus Christ - "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." He is the Son of God. His kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, where grief and death will have no quarter. Turn to Him.

"O, What a World"

O what a world we live in today, Sometimes I feel like I'm melting away. Good versus evil, the lines have been drawn, What good can I do when I'm only a pawn.

Two kingdoms in conflict, and just one will win, Too much to do, don't know where to begin. So I gird up my loins and I look to my Lord, His Word is my light and my hope and my sword.

I stand in His strength as I trust in His Name, My weapons of warfare are ever the same -Proclaiming His truth in the hearing of all, Praying for others to answer His call,

Loving my neighbor and enemy too, Suffering suffering, as I must do. Battling daily, I look to the Son, Trusting the truth that the victory's won.



"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" The 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 10, verses 3-5







"Although It Looks Bleak"

I saw fur and feather still dining together, As in the beginning was true, And thought,

"Why should it be any different for me Just because I look different from you?"

The world is turning, our cities are burning, The tellers are telling what's told, The liars are lying, and people are dying, The love of the many grows cold.

Our plights ever pleading, our wounded hopes bleeding, And sinful self-seeking abounds, But still I can hear when I lift up my ear That the ringing of truth yet resounds.

The One crucified with a gash in his side, And a cruel crown of thorns on his head, Took my sins to the grave with the life that he gave, On the third day he rose from the dead.

Now those that he's sent cry, "believe and repent" And the ones that will hear still obey.



Then with grace from above, they at last learn to love, And their evil and hatred allay.

And although it looks bleak,
yet I still dare to speak
Because I have learned to believe,
That the Lord has a plan
to redeem fallen man,
And His inheritance he WILL receive.

[&]quot;The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." Revelation 22:17





"Regard me Kindly"

Regard me kindly, if you will, I'm somewhat worse for wear, but still I'm getting by the best I can, And trusting in my Maker's plan.

The circumstances of this life, Including all the pain and strife, Are used as instruments of grace, That we might show His blessed Face.

Our outward beauty's just for show, It disappears before we know, What really counts is what's within -A peaceful heart reflecting Him.

So suffer not the mirror's woes, And worry not for outward shows. Adorn yourself with kindly love, And show forth beauty from above.



Postscript: This blue jay was at the tail end of his molt. You can tell by the absence of his crest, which seems to be the last thing to recover. They always act shy and try to stay out of sight while they are molting (I've observed the same thing about cardinals). I caught this guy off guard perched right outside my window beneath the branches of our dogwood tree. It seemed like he saw me, was a bit ashamed, and gave me a trepidacious look as if to say, "Are you going to think less of me?" No Mr. Blue Jay, my regard for you is one of kindness and understanding. We have much in common, you and I.

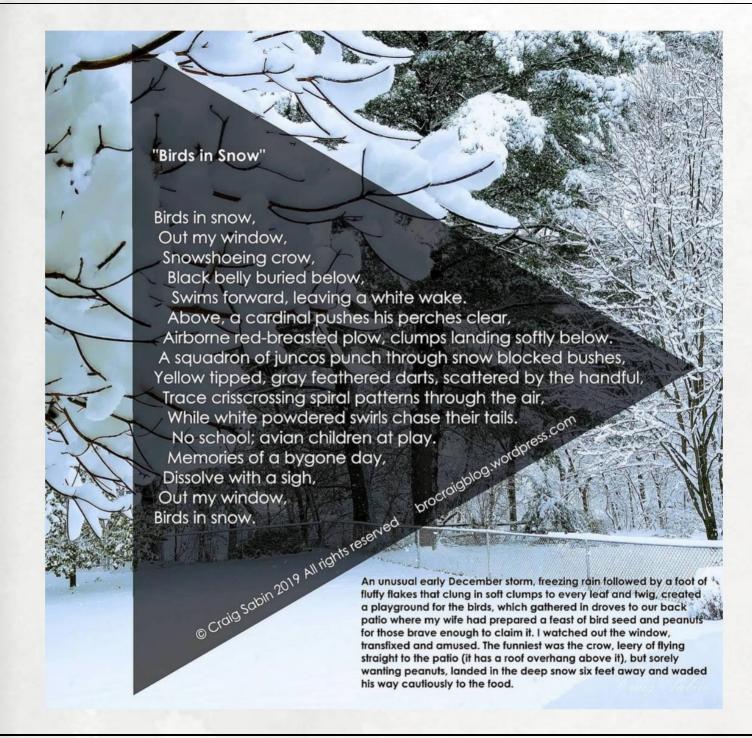
These bodies of ours are like spring flowers that quickly wilt and fade away. The heart is what matters, and what a gracious ministration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and His blessed Spirit that, regardless of our past, when we come to Him in faith He takes our vile, wicked hearts and gives us a new heart, capable of growing into His likeness and reflecting His kindness and beauty.

[&]quot;As water reflects a face, so a mans heart reflects the man." Proverbs, Chapter 27, verse 19

















"White Wedding"

His blanket fell without a sound. With purity, the earth was crowned. He gazed on her with reverence, In powdered lace and beauty gowned.

Then Winter took his frozen bride, The two of them stood side by side, And as they shared their solemn vows All mortal flesh stared starry-eyed.

A fresh fallen blanket of snow in the still, dawn hour transforms the world, erasing all the dirt and decay, and is a powerful visual metaphor for the Lord's divine transformation of all those who answer His call, covering our wretched sinfulness with a garment of holiness befitting the bride of Christ.

Even after these many long decades it yet leaves me wide-eyed with the wonder of a child at the Lord's wisdom, grace and cleansing power.

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow, Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. Isaiah, Chapter 1, verse 18

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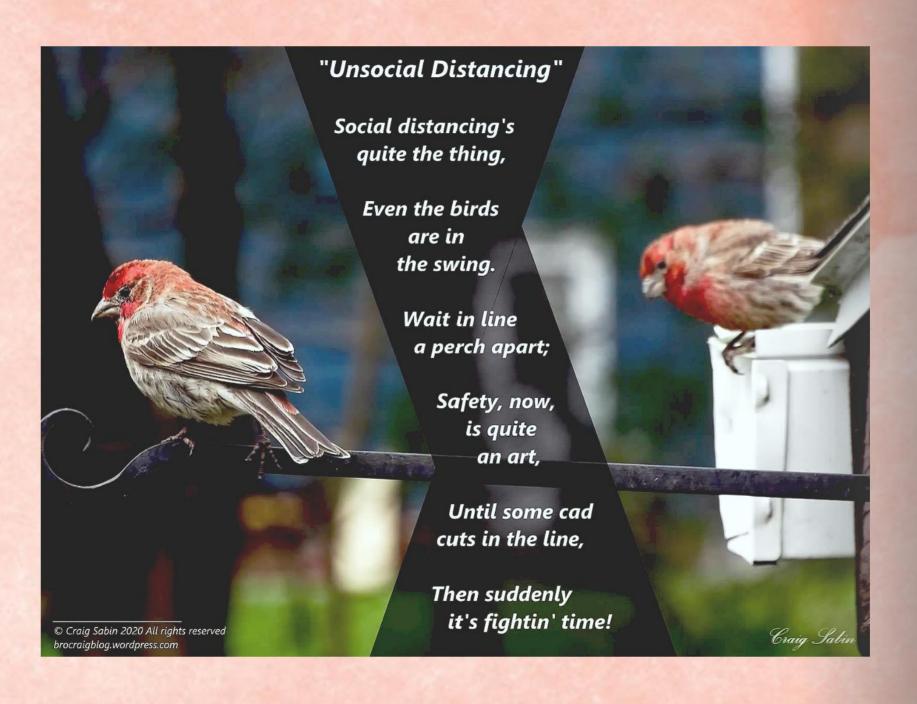
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"Watching The Skies"

Walking down this road of pain Grief and sorrow fall like rain Slowly soak me to the bone Ever yearning for my home

Worldly hopes have passed away Withered in a single day Weary worn, I long for rest Pressing on while being pressed

Rest my thoughts on things above Christ my Savior rules in love Grants me power to endure Cleans my heart to make it pure

While I'm here there's work to do Destined days will soon be through Torn between the now and then Where I'm going, where I've been

Keep my eye upon the sky
Jesus coming from on high
Holy angels, army bright
Pierce the darkness, end the night

Mercy will not tarry long Soon my lips will part in song Joy will dry my ev'ry tear All my fears will disappear Even should I rest in death

Won't have drawn my final breath

In the twinkling of His eye

He will raise me to the sky

"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." Apostle Paul's 1st Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 15, Verses 51-52

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."

Apostle Paul's 1st Letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 4, Verses 16-17

Though all my other hopes have died, yet this most precious hope and solemn promise remains for me (and for all who are in Christ Jesus) - that he himself will one day come and raise me bodily to be with him forever. May he bless you to know this hope as well.

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"Mortal Combat"

They squared off warily with eyes locked tight, Unaware I was witnessing their fearsome fight. It was clear they were masters by the way they flew, Each one practicing their own kung-fu.

As I watched, time and space seem to bend to their will,
Expert practitioners with arcane skill.
I feared one would surely leave the other one dead,
Two fell foes landing blows to the head.

Then, in a flash, it was over and done,
One of them fled and the other one won.
What caused this deadly altercation to start?
A red-headed beauty that had captured their heart!

Postscript: This was a truly memorable and somewhat bizarre scene to witness - two female cardinals locked in all-out combat for several minutes in our back yard. As they squared off, the male cardinal (the red-headed beauty) stood on the ground watching (see photo next page), and at one point a female Baltimore oriole inexplicably came out of nowhere and entered the fray. Someone might say they fought out of instinct, but I say they fought for love.







"Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it."

Song of Songs, Chapter 8, vs 6-7



Passions run hot in matters of love, As down here below, so too up above.

The Bible declares that God is love - but not just some frail, weepy, sentimental Hallmark card kind of love, but rather a love that is also as described in the scripture quote - strong, fierce, and fiery. Nowhere was the Lord's great love demonstrated more clearly than at the cross of Christ where out of passionate love for his covenant bride (his true church, i.e. all who receive him by faith), he took on Adam's bane - sin, death, and the grave - head on.

Fighting a bloody and agonizing spiritual battle, he carried all of her sin into the grave, at the cost of untold suffering and even his very life. Then after three days, having paid her penalty and defeated death, he rose from the grave victorious and now he is calling his bride to join him, to receive deliverance into a new, eternal life and a complete cleansing and forgiveness for sin, paid for by his holy blood - the blood that stained the wood and soaked the soil of the hill of Calvary 2000 years ago outside Jerusalem.

Dear reader, do you know his love? Have you answered his call upon your life? His grace will cover every sin when you repent and turn to him in faith. But life, like the hourglass of time itself, grows short; the sands are spent, and the hour of decision draws nigh. There is no greater love than the love of Christ, and to spurn such a gracious love is the greatest possible insult against the divine majesty of Almighty God, whose justice is ripe and heavy on the vine. He has demonstrated his love. What response will you demonstrate?

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans, Chapter 5, verse 8 "The Littlest Goldfinch"

The littlest goldfinch sat on a prong, In a world so much larger than she. She was not big or strong, but with heart full of song, She knew that her song should be free.

She might have been scared, and a bit unprepared, Far away from her family tree, But she let out her song and it didn't take long, For her song to start singing in me.

Now in depths of despair, or when sun's shining fair, I can still hear her sweet melody.

And although she won't know how it blesses me so, I'm so grateful she sang it for me.



Postscript: The songs that resonate with me and nourish my heart and soul are those that are full of truth, full of love, full of goodness, and most especially those that are full of hope. The best song that I ever heard is still singing deep within me. It is the one that changed me from the inside out, and brought the light of hope and love to the dark, dead chambers of my soul - the song of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Have you heard it?

How he left his throne in glory, came to earth with truth and grace, refuted and rebuked those whose desire was to keep people in bondage to human systems of behavior that lacked the power to save. How he taught, healed, loved, wept, and how he layed down his life, suffering a cruel death as a willing substitute, with the sins of his bride laid upon him. How he defeated death and rose again on the third day, according to the scriptures. How he now rules and reigns and is calling one and all to lay down our arms, cease our rebellion, and receive him by faith as our rightful, sovereign, loving Lord. How he will not turn away a single person who comes to him in faith, regardless of our past. How he forgives completely, how he blesses abundantly, how he heals so generously. And how soon he will return to claim his bride, end the age, restore the earth, and render judgment upon the wicked.

If His song is singing within you, don't be afraid to open your mouth and sing. You may be the blessed instrument of bestowing that love and hope into another's heart - a heart that may right now be aching and longing for that ineffable something that it knows not what.



"Mighty Gatekeeper"

Meet my mighty gate keeper, the keeper of my gate. Don't you dare think him diminutive or underestimate His legendary exploits, and grand repute belies the apparent contradiction to his unimpressive size.

Don't think that he's a pushover because he's rather small,
That's just what all the others thought that led them to their fall.
So now you have my warning and are left without defence.
If you should try to breech my gate his wrath he will dispense!

Postscript: I've a soft spot for these little guys and have seen too many of them fall easy prey to neighborhood cats, so I like to imagine them as mighty creatures in disguise, and fell foes of those who suppose them otherwise.



Of course, there was once a time when meekness concealed true might, and that was when Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, came as a babe, lived as a child, and suffered and died as a truly righteous man (the only one ever) at the hands of sinful men, in order to pay sin's penalty for everyone who will come to Him in faith and receive Him as Lord.

Jesus spoke about gates - a narrow gate and a wide gate, each the beginning of a different "way." He said that all people are going through one or the other of these gates and traveling one or the other of these ways.

He stands as the gatekeeper of the narrow gate, and none may pass through without His admittance, but His loving grace will open readily for the very vilest and the worst of the wretched who will simply trust in Him alone for their righteousness. He opened to me.

Which is your gate and which way are you on?

"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Christ Jesus, quoted in Matthew, Chapter 7, verses 13-14



"I'm Just Fine"

I'm just fine, you wait and see, What God above will do for me.

I may look bleak, or so they speak-"His feathers gone, his beak is weak."

But wait a while, it won't be long,
I'll be transformed, with beak that's strong.

My hope is fixed on Him alone, I'll know Him just as I am known.

And clothed at last in feathers bright, What now is faith will then be sight.

That day of glory soon shall be, Yes, I'm just fine, you wait and see.

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

1st Letter of John, Chapter 3, verses 2 & 3



Dear Believer, do not be discouraged by your situation or your suffering but rather fix all of your hope on Jesus Christ, who promises by the Word of His Spirit (and He cannot lie) that you will soon be raised and transformed to be like Him, as you (for the first time) are privileged to behold Him just as He is, in all His glorious beauty and majestic splendor (a beauty which will then also be reflected in you, a precious and essential member of His beloved bride)!











"Beauty in the Breaking"

Light.
In a thousand pieces torn.
Hung among the clouds of gray,
a colorful and bright display.
A rainbow is reborn.

