



On Life, On Longfellow, And On Peace

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Let me begin with one of my favorite Longfellow poems:

And from Longfellow, how inspired...this Psalm of Life... “MY Favorite of All Time.

A Psalm of Life

By Longfellow

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.
Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust thou returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each tomorrow
Find us farther than today.
Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!
Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act, - act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sand of time;
Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

RAIN IN SUMMER

By Longfellow

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,

In the narrow lane,
How beautiful is the rain!

How it clatters along the roofs,
Like the tramp of hoofs
How it gushes and struggles out
From the throat of the overflowing spout!
Across the window-pane
It pours and pours;
And swift and wide,
With a muddy tide,
Like a river down the gutter roars
The rain, the welcome rain!

The sick man from his chamber looks
At the twisted brooks;
He can feel the cool
Breath of each little pool;
His fevered brain
Grows calm again,
And he breathes a blessing on the rain.

From the neighboring school
Come the boys,
With more than their wonted noise
And commotion;
And down the wet streets
Sail their mimic fleets,
Till the treacherous pool
Ingulfs them in its whirling
And turbulent ocean.

In the country, on every side,
Where far and wide,
Like a leopard's tawny and spotted hide,
Stretches the plain,
To the dry grass and the drier grain
How welcome is the rain!

In the furrowed land
The toilsome and patient oxen stand;
Lifting the yoke encumbered head,
With their dilated nostrils spread,
They silently inhale
The clover-scented gale,
And the vapors that arise
From the well-watered and smoking soil.

For this rest in the furrow after toil
Their large and lustrous eyes
Seem to thank the Lord,
More than man's spoken word.

Near at hand,
From under the sheltering trees,
The farmer sees
His pastures, and his fields of grain,
As they bend their tops
To the numberless beating drops
Of the incessant rain.
He counts it as no sin
That he sees therein
Only his own thrift and gain.

These, and far more than these,
The Poet sees!
He can behold
Aquarius old
Walking the fenceless fields of air;
And from each ample fold
Of the clouds about him rolled
Scattering everywhere
The showery rain,
As the farmer scatters his grain.

He can behold
Things manifold
That have not yet been wholly told,--
Have not been wholly sung nor said.

For his thought, that never stops,
Follows the water-drops
Down to the graves of the dead,
Down through chasms and gulfs profound,
To the dreary fountain-head
Of lakes and rivers under ground;
And sees them, when the rain is done,
On the bridge of colors seven
Climbing up once more to heaven,
Opposite the setting sun.

Thus the Seer,
With vision clear,
Sees forms appear and disappear,
In the perpetual round of strange,
Mysterious change
From birth to death, from death to birth,
From earth to heaven, from heaven to earth;
Till glimpses more sublime
Of things, unseen before,
Unto his wondering eyes reveal
The Universe, as an immeasurable wheel
Turning forevermore
In the rapid and rushing river of Time.

Longfellow was gifted with vision and such a powerful use of word and thought. Wouldn't you agree? Guess He was a "POET" and didn't know it? But my vision says he did. And his vision of the cycle. Perpetual.

But then again, there is a vast amount of the Old Testament written in poetry, and God's use of the poet for the recording. Perhaps it was a matter of a poet's heart. Additional examples would be Job, Hosea and Song of Songs.

Aquarius Old– The passing of an "Old Age" and the dawning of a new Age. The Church age to the second Apostolic age. The latter of which includes the "Latter Rain" for the ripening of the harvest. The second great outpouring. It is coming. (Recall James 5:7-8) At the time of this update, the Latter Rain has already begun. See also Joel 2:23-32.

And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. - Luke 21:29-30

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. - James 5:7-8

“Paul Revere’s Ride”

LISTEN, my children, and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.
He said to his friend, ‘If the British march
By land or sea from the town to-night,
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,—
One, if by land, and two, if by sea;
And I on the opposite shore will be,
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm,
For the country folk to be up and to arm.’

Then he said, ‘Good-night!’ and with muffled oar
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,
Just as the moon rose over the bay,
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay
The Somerset, British man-of-war;
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar
Across the moon like a prison bar,
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified
By its own reflection in the tide.

Meanwhile, his friend, through alley and street,
Wanders and watches with eager ears,
Till in the silence around him he hears
The muster of men at the barrack door,
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,
Marching down to their boats on the shore.

Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church,
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,
To the belfry-chamber overhead,
And startled the pigeons from their perch
On the sombre rafters, that round him made
Masses and moving shapes of shade,—
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,
To the highest window in the wall,
Where he paused to listen and look down
A moment on the roofs of the town,
And the moonlight flowing over all.

Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
In their night-encampment on the hill,
Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
The watchful night-wind, as it went
Creeping along from tent to tent,
And seeming to whisper, 'All is well!'
A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
On a shadowy something far away,
Where the river widens to meet the bay,—
A line of black that bends and floats
On the rising tide, like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
Now he patted his horse's side,

Now gazed at the landscape far and near,
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
And turned and tightened his saddle-girth;
But mostly he watched with eager search
The belfry-tower of the Old North Church,
As it rose above the graves on the hill,
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
A second lamp in the belfry burns!

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet;
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.

He has left the village and mounted the steep,
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
And under the alders that skirt its edge,
Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.

It was twelve by the village clock,
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river fog,
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,

And the meeting-house windows, blank and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast At the bloody work they would look
upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadows brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed.
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead, Pierced by a British musket-ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read,
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
From behind each fence and farm-yard wall,
Chasing the red-coats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door
And a word that shall echo forevermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

Such an Awesome use of words that convey the very thought, the
“midnight message”, it truly is the darkest before the dawn.

I wish I could write like Longfellow. He had such an extraordinary gift. Recently I read an article that described him as the “forgotten” poet. To this great inspiration, he perhaps has been displaced by time... but trust, never forgotten. Amen.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust thou returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Such “UnCommon Sense”.

(If you have not done so please read the article located in the archive section of our site).

The Bridge

By Longfellow

I stood on the bridge at midnight,
As the clocks were striking the hour,
And the moon rose o'er the city,
Behind the dark church-tower.

I saw her bright reflection
In the waters under me,
Like a golden goblet falling
And sinking into the sea.

And far in the hazy distance
Of that lovely night in June,
The blaze of the flaming furnace
Gleamed redder than the moon.

Among the long, black rafters

The wavering shadows lay,
And the current that came from the ocean
Seemed to lift and bear them away;

As, sweeping and eddying through them,
Rose the belated tide,
And, streaming into the moonlight,
The seaweed floated wide.

And like those waters rushing
Among the wooden piers,
A flood of thoughts came o'er me
That filled my eyes with tears.

How often, oh, how often,
In the days that had gone by,
I had stood on that bridge at midnight
And gazed on that wave and sky!

How often, oh, how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea;
And only the sorrow of others
Throws its shadow over me.

Yet whenever I cross the river
On its bridge with wooden piers,
Like the odor of brine from the ocean
Comes the thought of other years.

And I think how many thousands

Of care-encumbered men,
Each bearing his burden of sorrow,
Have crossed the bridge since then.

I see the long procession
Still passing to and fro,
The young heart hot and restless,
And the old subdued and slow!

And forever and forever,
As long as the river flows,
As long as the heart has passions,
As long as life has woes;

The moon and its broken reflection
And its shadows shall appear,
As the symbol of love in heaven,
And its wavering image here.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Longfellow's
"Peace On Earth Good Will To Men"

"I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime
A chant sublime

Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

**Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead;
nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!**

Longfellow

I feel quite a kinship with Longfellow.

His writing style and use of "prose", a form of poetry that bears "witness"; often paints such a vivid picture and has proven to be quite a powerful tool to convey the thought.

Being a writer myself, I do feel quite a kinship with Longfellow, for "prose" is one of things that God has me to write. By "having me write", perhaps I can best sum it up best and give credit where credit is most due: Sometimes God will place in the heart, and spirit a concept, a thought: A thought that transcends the mere minds of mortal men, a thought given by and to inspiration by God..

This is the way that "Storm" was completed. Originally published in 1998, with just the first two stanzas, and then shelved for over four years, it was only by his great providence that it was completed.

"STORM"

It is twilight.

And my warming radiance, has succumbed unto itself;
darkness befalls me, and the waning light, eludes my grasp;
yet grasp I do, and grasp with all my might;
and through misty eyes I weep;
at the dying of the light.

I am void.

And it's blackness penetrates, causing this shiver that touches my
soul;
I cling to a mere reflection of radiance, a reflection within my minds
eye;
this reflection so brilliant, so bright;
and then in solemn silence, I bow my head;
and pray for the passing of the night.

I am sustained.

Weak and weary, an illumination fulfills me;
breathing yet new life, into this once tortured soul;
blackness rebounds, cast out, by this oasis from the blackest of night;
and through misty eyes I weep, as I grasp and cling;
to **my refuge, my illumination, and true haven from darkness;**
The Son of Man Named Christ.

"the Phoenix"

Aka Jeffrey Jackson

Longfellow, there is a man I would have liked to meet. A great man. A man of vision, a man of passion, a man of heart.

Before I dive fully into this article I would like to quote from my most favorite Longfellow poem of all, and one that graces the walls of my home:

“The holiest of all holidays,
are kept by ourselves in silence and apart;
The secret anniversaries of the Heart”.

Longfellow

I often find this last prose by Longfellow so intimate and quite “special” due not only to it’s very subject and nature, but it is one based upon Love. The very nature of God Himself. For that is what it is all about dear reader, “Heart”.

I must admit, when I first began this page, or pages, if you are reading these words in the PDF, Portable document version, this is a page I so looked forward to writing.

For it dealt with a subject that I hold so dear... not only of the subject of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the subject of Love. And Peace. And of course Heart.

As to the Longfellow prose on “Peace on Earth Goodwill To Men”, penned during the Civil War, it makes an outstanding statement about how “Then Pealed the Bells more Loud and Deep, God is Not Dead Nor Does He Sleep”.

The sound of the “Bells of Peace” and “of God”, where stronger than that of the cannon fire. And yes... the hatred of our fellow men. This great truth and yet one more revealed in the next lines, or the closing lines actually, “The Wrong shall Fail and the right “Prevail”.

I really often wish that I could write, or had the gift of writing such as Longfellow.

As to “Peace”, Christ told us in the “Beatitudes”, that blessed are the Peacemakers:

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. - Matthew 5:9

And that is true, as Christians we are to pursue Peace. For Christ was just that the “Prince of Peace”. Peace in oneself. But we also must take all of scripture into account. All of scripture. In fact does not scripture also state, that Christ came not bring Peace, but a sword...?

I am often taken aback somewhat when I hear someone say that they “Pray for World Peace”. We should always pray within God’s will, not only for our lives, but for all of humanity. True, it is within God’s will for Peace, however He will not violate man’s free will. Man’s will for war.

Scripture also clearly states that there will be no true "World Peace" until after the Anti-Christ rules. In that light I find it quite shall say "unprofitable" to pray for something that only will exist when after the Devil's Spawn is in power, and upon the return of Jesus Christ. Anything less is a false peace.

And what then of World Peace?

Until the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we fight each fight for peace, each battle individually, even if we cannot win the war.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. - Matthew 5:9

Trust and put your full weight of your faith in God, and Our Lord Jesus Christ. And He will grant you peace.

**Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead;
nor doth he sleep!"**

"the Phoenix"

And "UnCommon Ground" - Dedicated to the "survivors" of incest and sexual abuse and the "UnCommon Ground" they share. My heart goes out to you all. The full story behind the writing of "UnCommon Ground" is located in the archive section of our site, under the page that bears it's title.

"Uncommon Ground"

An Innocence lost.

Oh how tremors, of injustice quake;
this ill tempest, of storm and of fate;
Cast about, a mournful cry,
A wail of darkness, and faded shadow;
of an innocence lost,
and forsaken days gone by.

This astir of echo's cast,
it's cry of constant sound;
this tempest, of wretched unholy sound;
the sound of relentless raging battle,

unyielding, anchored, and forever set;
upon this "Uncommon Ground".

Despair and faded shadow,
their echo placed upon a solemn scale;
the solemn scales of Justice,
ravaged, laid waste, found;
with balance broken, and overshadowed;
overpowered, by this forsaken "Uncommon Ground".

Justice restored,
and the balance returned;
its construction guided by an unseen hand;
The Cross of hope,
balanced by the light of Love,
resting upon the shoulders of the Son of Man.

As to the Oasis, of comfort;
refuge from darkness,
and haven from storm;
you will find as you enter in,
The Lamb of God:

Followed by the Light of Love,
and golden rays of hope;
gently warming,
forever transforming,
the cold dark desolation;
of this unholy, "Uncommon Ground".

"The Phoenix"
aka. Jeffrey Jackson

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Email us.
Not unlike salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ,

And the Gift of Grace,
The Best things in life are free.

**Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead;
nor doth he sleep!"**

Amen.