

Whatever is foreseen in joy
 Must be lived out from day to day.
 Vision held open in the dark
 By our ten thousand days of work.
 Harvest will fill the barn; for that
 The hand must ache, the face must sweat.

And yet no leaf or grain is filled
 By work of ours; the field is tilled
 And left to grace. That we may reap,
 Great work is done while we're asleep.

When we work well, a Sabbath mood
 Rests on our day, and finds it good.

Wendell Berry

Realizing what we foresee in joy, creating a future worth inhabiting, requires ten thousand days of work and the grace of God.

The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 celebrates a great victory over the Canaanites. The victory is told and retold at the village wells in the characteristic Hebrew form of synonymous parallelism:

*There they repeat the triumphs of the Lord
 the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel (5:11)*

No victory is known without the agency of God **and** the agency of the peasants. It is both/and, not an either/or. Israel characteristically understands that futures are created by human agency, the agency to which God's people are summoned in both the law and the prophets.

We may wonder why some people prefer fate over destiny. *Whatever will be, will be. That is the way things are and have always been. What I do or don't do doesn't matter. My vote doesn't count.*

This sentiment of despair requires nothing of us; it is little more than unwarranted confidence in a world that is settled, secure, stable, does not change, and cannot change.

This surrender of agency, of the capacity to act in order to open new futures for self, for neighbor, and for the world, serves only the interests of those who enjoy the privileges and power of the status quo. This surrender of agency is, in reality, a refusal to love, a refusal to upset the apple cart so that others may also enjoy the pie.

This surrender of agency is a form of idolatry. Psalm 115 declares *Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases.* The God of Israel never surrenders agency.

By contrast, the Psalm lingers with a detailed characterization of idols: they are the work of human hands and those who make them are like them, powerless to act.

Jesus stands in the tradition of the law and the prophets, the agents of the God who does whatever he pleases. Jesus sent his disciples out with a mandate:

*Cure the sick,
raise the dead,
cleanse the lepers,
cast out demons.*

This set of imperatives intends that his disciples should open new futures for those whose present circumstances is skewed toward despair. Clearly the disciples are empowered and expected to exercise agency in generating new social possibilities.

Mary Doria Russell tells of how generous Italians protected Jews in the midst of the Holocaust. *The Holy One has made us His partners, the sages teach. He gives us wheat, we make bread. He gives us grapes, we make wine. He gives us the world. We make of it what we will—all of us together.*

When the preponderance of human beings choose to act with justice and generosity and kindness, then learning and love and decency prevail. When the preponderance of human beings choose power, greed, and indifference to suffering, the world is filled with war, poverty, and cruelty.

Bombs do not drop from God's hand. Triggers are not pulled by God's finger. Each of us chooses, one by one, and God's eye does not turn from those who suffer or from those who inflict suffering. Our choices are weighed. And, thus, the nations judged.

Jesus sees people who are harassed, people who are tormented and oppressed. Jesus sees people who are beaten down, thrown to the ground, depressed. Jesus does not judge, he has compassion. Jesus' ten thousand days of work holds open the vision of the kingdom of God, a realm of commonweal. The potential harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few.

Jesus invites, summons, and empowers the disciples, us, to embrace agency in generating alternative futures. The world is not fixed and closed, but is a creation underway toward newness. There is no cause—and no excuse—for abdication or resignation.

God gives us the world. We make of it what will—all of us together.