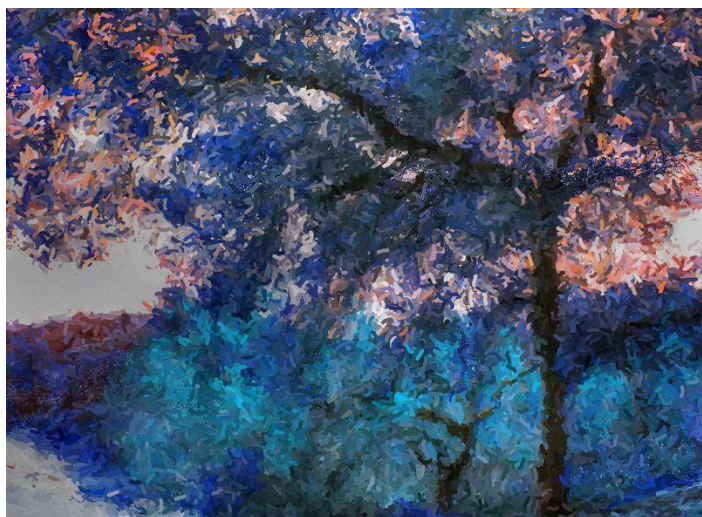


By: Rev. Mark Breese

*Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.*

### **The Gift of Half-Full Summer Evenings**

As I sat outside the other evening, I got caught off guard by the time. It was 8:30 and it was still light. For whatever reason, I just was not keeping track of how long it remained light. The summer solstice, June 20th, has come and gone and with it the long summer days are here. And in thinking that, I sighed contentedly. Even though spring is my favorite time of the year, with all its brilliant green that suddenly bursts out around us (and you get to wear sweaters still... I love sweaters), the long days are what I like best about the season of summer.



I like the way the day lingers in summer. It does help you get a lot done as well—after dinner there is still a solid couple of hours of light to finish up that outdoor task you started on a bit too late. But that couple hours of time before sunset, and the length of the dusk afterward lends itself to slowing down and reflecting—even without knowing you are doing it.

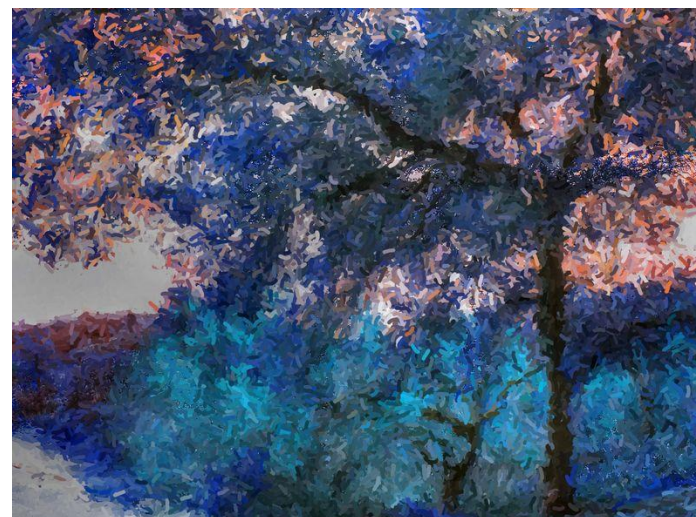
That is what happened to me. I was thinking and reflecting about what it means to serve (that will be for another reflection), when I 1) realized I was actively churning away on this thought 2) that is was getting towards sunset, and 3) that it was almost 9pm and still light!

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That is what happened to me. I was thinking and reflecting about what it means to serve (that will be for another reflection), when I 1) realized I was actively churning away on this thought 2) that is was getting towards sunset, and 3) that it was almost 9pm and still light!

Then I thought, “Oh, right. Summer officially started a bit ago, and now all the days are getting shorter again. What a shame it won’t last.” And that is when I really caught myself! What was I doing, like, looking for something to bummed out about? Why in the world would I do that? So I sat for some time thinking about that, till long after it got dark.

It has been a long road, these past few months. A looming pandemic; toilet paper shortages; the arrival of a pandemic; sickness; fear; death; wide spread and graphic awakening to systemic racism, oppression and injustice in the US and around the world; and righteous protests against that systemic racism, oppression and injustice. And the future and outcome of all this is uncertain, especially if we, each one of us, do not demand action and change, and start that change by examining ourselves and changing what we need to change.

Man, there has just been a lot, and it is hard to not let it make us start seeing the glass as half empty. Even on a glorious summer evening, when the last things we should be thinking is how days are getting shorter, instead of thinking how beautiful it is and what a blessing it is to be sitting in such a wonderful moment. All the... stuff happening right now can make it hard for us to be present in the moments of grace and beauty God’s creation reveals to us.

So, for all that there is just a lot right now, and for all that all this “a lot-ness” demands our commitment to action, change and service to one another (which is tomorrows reflection), the demands of all this “a lot-ness” also demands that we are extra vigilant to notice, to truly see, the moments of beauty and blessing, whatever they may be. We need to fully inhabit those moments, those Holy moments, with the joy of finding that hope always exists. Our glass is always half full, the summer days are always longer, even when they are always getting sorter. It is so important we do not miss the blessing of the moment we are in right now. Those moments are the gift from God that regenerate us, fill us with peace, and bless us with renewed strength to meet all the “a lot” that we are living through today.

Pastor Mark

*Image: Tree At Dusk, by Linnaea Mallette*  
*Impressionistic touch applied to photo of a tree in early evening - blue and purple hues. (<https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=234893&picture=tree-at-dusk>)*

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