

*Mnemonic*  
*(Meditation on Deuteronomy 8.2-4)*

*Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness,* My thoughts scatter. They scatter, as is their regular wont, and I find myself being pulled along with them in all of these various, sundry, and conflicting directions. All sorts of things need to be done. All sorts of things demand my attention.

My mind flits like a hummingbird, zipping from one blossom to another. Except the things which capture my attention aren't beautiful flowers offering me sweet nectar. Rather these sundry duties and demands consume the attention of my so-called life. There are all these things I need to do. But I wonder if I have the energy to do them.

*in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart,* At this point along the way, I feel tired. Just so very tired. Of course, I'm not making any sort of bid for self-pity; my guess is that you are probably pretty tired too.

As I see it, the problem is largely numerical. For the calculus of life is such that it compresses our mortal existence into an equation where the ledger is always imbalanced. There always seems to be way too many things to do and so very little time to get them all done. I start one task.

Yet the phone rings, and my attention is drawn from one pressing demand to another. I hang up and look at my watch, thinking it shouldn't be as late in the afternoon as it actually is. And I can feel the time (and my life along with it) slip relentlessly and inexorably beyond my grasp.

*whether or not you would keep his commandments.* The sun, though, shines brightly. And in some kind of miracle, it manages to penetrate into the midst of my harried striving. The bright and dazzling light refracts across a perfectly clear cobalt sky. I feel the light's dazzling brilliance and its warmth.

And I wonder. I wonder. I wonder. It must be that my earliest cognitive memories came from this time of year, from a moment like this where the sun hung high in a late Spring sky and dazzled my little, barely opened eyes in such a way to cause me to wonder over May's beauty before I was old enough even to realize what wonder was.

For the first time all day, I pause. Even though I am trying to get ten thousand different things done before nightfall, I cease my weary striving. There is a perfect quiet all around me. I listen to it. And the time seems to stand still.

*He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna,* I take a deep breath. And then another. My attention is drawn away from the hardscrabble duties of my existence. Outside, the lilac blossoms bob in the gentle wind of this late afternoon.

Their scent is strong and sweet and I remember how I have always loved the lilac blossoms. Their deep purple color. Their sweet aroma. Their fleeting beauty (like the bright sunshine) touches a place somewhere, somewhere deep inside me.

I can hear the birds sing, too. In particular, a certain pair (perhaps of robins?) call out to each other in a lyrical dialog. They sing beautiful songs, songs without words. I listen to their medley. And I wonder of this song's beauty -- its beauty and its perfect fit in this instant, this certain and peculiar moment in time.

The wind blows. But it blows gently. I feel how it stirs the soft, sweet air in a way that makes me think of how the divine breath took that lumpy clay figure in Genesis 2 and made it live.

*with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted,* Perhaps in a way something similar is happening to me now. I feel the breath of God. Inside, somewhere inside of me, these memories stir. It is as if they too are made to live in this sudden and most unexpected moment of grace.

The day was like this (although the time was morning, not afternoon) when my mother's call reached me with word of my father's death. I can still hear her voice even though nine years have gone by and she herself has crossed the threshold which separates this world from the next. "Honey, Dad died..." Sadness touches me gently.

But there are happier memories too. Mixed with the birds' song and the sweet scent of lilacs is the remembrance of my wife's mother's laughter. I hear it just as it echoed more than thirty years ago across a late May afternoon. I suggested we go out for ice cream. And Maxine laughed. "Ice cream! Kid, that's a great idea!" And we laughed all the way to the Dairy Queen.

*in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone,* These memories from back in my long ago suddenly are made animate. They focus my attention like the needle of a compass which after moving back and forth suddenly finds and points to north.

And they point me away from the tyranny of my present towards my past, that vast wilderness of seasons and years and decades. A long way separates this moment in time from all of those yesterdays. And as I remember, I see how the Lord my God has led me all this way. All this long way.

*but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.* I don't feel so tired any more. Neither do I feel the heavy, variegated demands of my life pull me in so many and conflicting, contradictory directions. In pondering what was, I imagine what will be.

In the quiet, I can hear the words of the risen Lord and his promise for every weary pilgrim who struggles along the way. "Behold, I make all things new." The past and the future converge in this present moment. And there is grace.

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