Perseverance, Persistence, and Pastoral Care

**“Every year we have been
witness to it: how the
world descends**

**into a rich mash, in order that
it may resume.
And therefore
who would cry out**

**to the petals on the ground
to stay,
knowing as we must,
how the vivacity of what was is married**

**to the vitality of what will be?
I don’t say
it’s easy, but
what else will do**

**if the love one claims to have for the world
be true?”**

— (An excerpt from) Mary Oliver, *“Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness”*

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:28 (NRSV)

As I write this, we’re anticipating and preparing for rain that has yet to fully arrive. We’ve learned from previous storms, recognized the familiar signs, watched the forecasts, and put plans into motion. My children’s school schedules have already changed, and the rain hasn’t even started.

We’ve done what experience taught us. Yet things seem to be unfolding differently (or perhaps it’s simply difficult to tell how they’re unfolding at all).

And, I’m feeling all of that today.

Anticipating. Preparing. Adjusting. Hoping.

Hope can be exhausting. Even when it’s valid. Even when it’s necessary. Even when we believe something wonderful is on the horizon.

Meanwhile, it feels too early for Thanksgiving, too far away for Advent. In this turn of seasons, I wonder if you’re tired, too.

The adrenaline of the coming celebrations will help. But today, with no particular celebration and still plenty to do, I want to pause and say thank you. And I want to be in prayer together.

I pray in recognition of and gratitude for your perseverance and persistence. And I’m mindful of the subtle difference.

As I’ve been taught, perseverance is often about enduring what is difficult. Persistence is about continuing to pursue what matters. Both are expressions of faithfulness, and both can be exhausting.

And so often, both take the shape of caring for others.

Today, in my prayers, I pray for what you are carrying. For our pastors, tending to their congregations alongside concerns of their own. For each of you caring for neighbors, siblings, parents, children, and friends. Making the call. Keeping company. Conveying presence. Listening when there’s nothing you can readily fix.

We are caring for one another. It’s what we do.

It is blessed and blessing work. And it is intense. The visit ends, but the person stays on our mind. We end meetings and conversations and “go on” with our day, still carrying something of theirs.

For the patience and the presence; for the persistence and the perseverance: thank you.

And I am grateful that God doesn’t always need us at our best.

Scripture reminds me that God provides. When I stop to pause, I’m even more deeply reminded.

God’s love and presence don’t depend on our ability to hold everything together.

Today, that’s a helpful reminder for me.

God of every season, thank you for the love being offered in quiet, ordinary ways. Bless those carrying more than we can see. Help us receive what you provide, remembering that we, too, are held in your care. Amen.

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