

Weekly Wisdom
~Stephen Sarchet

I woke up much too early. When I laid down the night before, I had decided I was going to let myself sleep in a little and set my alarm for half an hour later than usual. But as it goes, I spent a restless night and woke well before my alarm. Getting out of bed as quietly as I could, I dressed in the dark, slipped out being careful not to wake my wife, and drove through a light drizzle of rain to a coffee shop to read before work. Having woken so early, I was tired and feeling a worn down before my day had even started.

I sat in the coffee shop reading the news hoping to feel better before I had to go to work. I skimmed the usual headlines about the Middle East and North Korea, skipped past articles about weight loss, and read a couple of the sports updates. Then I found myself looking for short, motivational stories to help get myself going. There were one or two I liked, but nothing that really struck home with me. They were the usual mix of believe in yourself, life is short, and the kindness of strangers medleys that always come up. Not that there's anything wrong with them, but none of them were pearls either. And so I kept searching and reading, more or less idling away the time and putting off having to go to work for just a little longer.

Feeling the pull of the clock, it was time to go to work. I packed up my laptop and as I stood up from the table, I looked out the windows and something unexpected happened. The sky was filled with gray clouds promising more rain, but the light seemed to lift my spirits. I felt lighter, less weary. I walked up to the counter for a refill to take with me and by the time I walked out the door the clouds had broken a bit and there was a hint of blue sky. As I walked to my car, the birds sang to me, a cool breeze brushed my face, and in those few moments I found myself lifting my face to the sky and whispering a little prayer of thanks.

Most of the stories I'd read that morning were just different versions of the same idea. How we see and feel about the life that happens around us is really up to us, and that maybe the emotions that creep in can teach us something if we're paying attention. I remember the story of the little boy who went to the soda shop to buy some ice cream, but he only had 54 cents. When he asked the waiters how much a sundae was, he rudely responded to the little boy saying it was 50 cents. The little boy asked how much plain ice cream was, and again he gave him a curt reply saying it was 35 cents. He ordered the plain ice cream, enjoyed his treat, and paid before he left. When the waiter went to pick the dish he found a nickel, a dime and four pennies in a neat row that the boy had left for him. The story implies he saw the tip and understood the boy had given her everything he had in spite of how he'd spoken to him, and so we're reminded to be generous and accepting of others like the little boy. Or maybe we're reminded not to be inconsiderate of others like the waiter or to recognize the sacrifices others make for us. For some, the story won't mean anything at all; it's just a silly story about a boy who should have gotten his sundae instead of settling for less.

*I don't ask for the
meaning of the song of
a bird or the rising of
the sun on a misty
morning. There they
are, and they are
beautiful.
~Pete Hamill*

Either way, it comes down to perspective. But for me, on that rainy, gray morning I was thankful enough to hear the chorus of the birds and to feel the hopeful breeze of dawn.