**The Peace of Wild Things**

By Wendell Berry

When despair grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting for their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

**A Timbered Choir**

By Wendell Berry

Even while I dreamed I prayed that what I saw was only fear and no foretelling,

for I saw the last known landscape destroyed for the sake

of the objective, the soil bludgeoned, the rock blasted.

Those who had wanted to go home would never get there now.

I visited the offices where for the sake of the objective the planners planned

at blank desks set in rows. I visited the loud factories

where the machines were made that would drive ever forward

toward the objective. I saw the forest reduced to stumps and gullies; I saw

the poisoned river, the mountain cast into the valley;

I came to the city that nobody recognized because it looked like every other city.

I saw the passages worn by the unnumbered

footfalls of those whose eyes were fixed upon the objective.

Their passing had obliterated the graves and the monuments

of those who had died in pursuit of the objective

and who had long ago forever been forgotten, according

to the inevitable rule that those who have forgotten forget

that they have forgotten. Men, women, and children now pursued the objective

as if nobody ever had pursued it before.

The races and the sexes now intermingled perfectly in pursuit of the objective.

the once-enslaved, the once-oppressed were now free

to sell themselves to the highest bidder

and to enter the best paying prisons

in pursuit of the objective, which was the destruction of all enemies,

which was the destruction of all obstacles, which was the destruction of all objects,

which was to clear the way to victory, which was to clear the way to promotion, to salvation, to progress, to the completed sale, to the signature

on the contract, which was to clear the way

to self-realization, to self-creation, from which nobody who ever wanted to go home

would ever get there now, for every remembered place

had been displaced; the signposts had been bent to the ground and covered over.

Every place had been displaced, every love

unloved, every vow unsworn, every word unmeant

to make way for the passage of the crowd

of the individuated, the autonomous, the self-actuated, the homeless

with their many eyes opened toward the objective

which they did not yet perceive in the far distance,

having never known where they were going,

having never known where they came from.

**The Hidden Singer**

**By Wendell Berry**

The gods are less for their love of praise.

Above and below them all is a spirit that needs nothing

but its own wholeness, its health and ours.

It has made all things by dividing itself.

It will be whole again.

To its joy we come together --

the seer and the seen, the eater and the eaten,

the lover and the loved.

In our joining it knows itself. It is with us then,

not as the gods whose names crest in unearthly fire,

but as a little bird hidden in the leaves

who sings quietly and waits, and sings.

**Sabbath Poem IV On Being**

By Wendell Berry

The bell calls in the town

Where forebears cleared the shaded land

And brought high daylight down

To shine on field and trodden road.

I hear, but understand

Contrarily, and walk into the woods.

I leave labor and load,

Take up a different story.

I keep an inventory

Of wonders and of uncommercial goods.

I climb up through the field

That my long labor has kept clear.

Projects, plans unfulfilled

Waylay and snatch at me like briars,

For there is no rest here

Where ceaseless effort seems to be required,

Yet fails, and spirit tires

With flesh, because failure

And weariness are sure

In all that mortal wishing has inspired.

I go in pilgrimage

Across an old fenced boundary

To wildness without age

Where, in their long dominion,

The trees have been left free.

They call the soil here “Eden”; slants and steeps

Hard to stand straight upon

Even without a burden.

No more a perfect garden,

There’s an immortal memory that it keeps.

I leave work’s daily rule

And come here to this restful place

Where music stirs the pool

And from high stations of the air

Fall notes of wordless grace,

Strewn remnants of the primal Sabbath’s hymn.

And I remember here

A tale of evil twined

With good, serpent and vine

And innocence of evil’s stratagem.

I let that go a while,

For it is hopeless to correct

By generations’ toil,

And I let go my hopes and plans

That no toil can perfect.

There is no vision here but what is seen:

White bloom nothing explains.

But a mute blessedness

Exceeding all distress,

The fresh light stained a hundred shades of green.

Uproar of wheel and fire

That has contained us like a cell

Opens and lets us hear

A stillness longer than all time

Where leaf and song fulfill

The passing light, pass with the light, return,

Renewed, as in rhyme.

This is no human vision

Subject to our revision;

God’s eye holds every leaf as light is worn.

Ruin is in place here:

The dead leaves rotting on the ground,

The live leaves in the air

Are gathered in a single dance

That turns them round and round.

The fox cub trots his almost pathless path

As silent as his absence.

These passings resurrect

A joy without defect,

The life that steps and sings in ways of death.

**Manifesto**

By Wendell Berry

Love the quick profit, the annual raise,  
vacation with pay. Want more  
of everything ready-made. Be afraid  
to know your neighbors and to die.  
  
And you will have a window in your head.  
Not even your future will be a mystery  
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card  
and shut away in a little drawer.  
  
When they want you to buy something  
they will call you. When they want you  
to die for profit they will let you know.  
So, friends, every day do something  
that won't compute. Love the Lord.  
Love the world. Work for nothing.  
Take all that you have and be poor.  
Love someone who does not deserve it.  
  
Denounce the government and embrace  
the flag. Hope to live in that free  
republic for which it stands.  
Give your approval to all you cannot  
understand. Praise ignorance, for what man  
has not encountered he has not destroyed.  
  
Ask the questions that have no answers.  
Invest in the millenium. Plant sequoias.  
Say that your main crop is the forest  
that you did not plant,  
that you will not live to harvest.  
  
Say that the leaves are harvested  
when they have rotted into the mold.  
Call that profit. Prophesy such returns.  
Put your faith in the two inches of humus  
that will build under the trees  
every thousand years.  
  
Listen to carrion -- put your ear  
close, and hear the faint chattering  
of the songs that are to come.  
Expect the end of the world. Laugh.  
Laughter is immeasurable. Be joyful  
though you have considered all the facts.  
So long as women do not go cheap  
for power, please women more than men.  
  
Ask yourself: Will this satisfy  
a woman satisfied to bear a child?  
Will this disturb the sleep  
of a woman near to giving birth?  
  
Go with your love to the fields.  
Lie down in the shade. Rest your head  
in her lap. Swear allegiance  
to what is nighest your thoughts.  
  
As soon as the generals and the politicos  
can predict the motions of your mind,  
lose it. Leave it as a sign  
to mark the false trail, the way  
you didn't go.  
  
Be like the fox  
who makes more tracks than necessary,  
some in the wrong direction.  
Practice resurrection.

**Before Dark**

By Wendell Berry

From the porch at dusk I watched

a kingfisher wild in flight

he could only have made for joy.

He came down the river, splashing

against the water’s dimming face

like a skipped rock, passing

on down out of sight. And still

I could hear the splashes

farther and farther away

as it grew darker. He came back

the same way, dusky as his shadow,

sudden beyond the willows.

The splashes went on out of hearing.

It was dark then. Somewhere

the night had accommodated him

—at the place he was headed for

or where, led by his delight,

he came.