

“Empty Nests”
Grove Presbyterian Church
August 7, 2011

Scripture Lesson of Job 29 and Reflection: “Empty Nests”

“The End,” by A. A. Milne

When I was one,
I had just begun.
When I was two,
I was nearly new.
When I was three,
I was hardly me.
When I was four,
I was not much more.
When I was five,
I was just alive.
But now I am six,
I'm as clever as clever.
So I think I'll be six
now and forever.

But you know, try as they might, they never do...

Job 29: 1-6

Job again took up his discourse and said: “Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me; when his lamp shone over my head, and by his light I walked through darkness; when I was in my prime, when the friendship of God was upon my tent; when the Almighty was still with me, when my children were around me; when my steps were washed with milk, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil!

Job: talking about the prime of his youth, when he had the world by the tail. When he was important. A leading citizen. Honored and respected. Prosperous. He mattered.

Now? Not so much.

Job's melancholy remembrance of happier days. Now lost. All gone. The old photographs yellowing. The golden debris of our past.

There is here, we see, the touching irony of someone young reading this soliloquy by Job, but give Taylor about thirty years, marriage, a few kids, and it will be more than an assigned passage of Scripture, it will be her song too.

Reminds me of Grizabella the glamour cat when she sings, "Memory."

Memory, all alone in the moonlight
I can smile at the old days
I was beautiful then
I remember the time I knew what happiness was
Let the memory live again

Which were – are -- your happiest days?

Job 29: 7-17

When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square, the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose up and stood; the nobles refrained from talking, and laid their hands on their mouths; the voices of princes were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. When the ear heard, it commended me, and when the eye saw, it approved; because I delivered the poor who cried, and the orphan who had no helper. The blessing of the wretched came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I championed the cause of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made them drop their prey from their teeth.

When we were young. Job reminiscing about the times when he was important.

I wonder how differently a mother might sing this memory of the changes and the losses that come with the changes. Only fragments of eggshells in those empty nests. I know the grief a daddy feels when he misses those days of watching her play soccer.

What memories would a mommy miss? Would she miss those memories of tucking her children in at nighttime?

Little Boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

God bless Mummy. I know that's right.
Wasn't it fun in the bath to-night?
The cold's so cold, and the hot's so hot.
Oh! God bless Daddy - I quite forgot.

If I open my fingers a little bit more,

I can see Nanny's dressing-gown on the door.
It's a beautiful blue, but it hasn't a hood.
Oh! God bless Nanny and make her good.

Mine has a hood, and I lie in bed,
And pull the hood right over my head,
And I shut my eyes, and I curl up small,
And nobody knows that I'm there at all.

Oh! Thank you, God, for a lovely day.
And what was the other I had to say?
I said "Bless Daddy," so what can it be?
Oh! Now I remember it. God bless Me.

Little Boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush! Hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.

Yes, a mommy might have different memories. Different hurts. Different losses.
Different contentments. And it was good. Is good. We raise them to fly on their own.
Let them be safe.

Job 29: 18-25

Then I thought, 'I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days like the phoenix; my roots spread out to the waters, with the dew all night on my branches; my glory was fresh with me, and my bow ever new in my hand.' "They listened to me, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel. After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them like dew. They waited for me as for the rain; they opened their mouths as for the spring rain. I smiled on them when they had no confidence; and the light of my countenance they did not extinguish. I chose their way, and sat as chief, and I lived like a king among his troops, like one who comforts mourners.

Once upon a time, Job laments, they listened to me. Now? It is all so quiet.
All the things that get left behind: stuffed animals, trophies, prom pictures...
All the things and people that get left behind.
It does go quick...
When I was young...
Life passing
We adapt.
Knowing it is difficult to keep moving forward when always looking backwards

The wiser trusting that this sunset augurs a dawning
Today still is the newest day.

We have lived.
Thank God for what has been
We lived.

We still live, though 'tis changed
It all changes
We still can.
Force to draw upon new resources
Losses forcing, birthing different positives.
Cannot really fill the loss.
Can only embrace it

Curiosity is wondering what's next?