



Fishing In The Stream of Life

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink, I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. ---Walden (In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World from Henry David Thoreau, Selections & Photographs by Eliot Porter)

Dear Opal,

Time is but a stream I go a-fishing in; a place that affects the flow and tenor of my thoughts, whose depth is determined by the season of life in which I reside. Possessing a youthful mind at journey's start replete with dancing thoughts and fanciful imagination, perhaps my childhood senses are drawn only to what floats on top of its sparkling surface without notice of the sandy floor beneath.

Being caught up in only the present at this juncture on life's journey, the brilliant colorful leaves floating merrily along its surface create imaginings of fast whirling speed boats while those that lazily pass idly by without purpose serve as magical rafts for mischievous woodland fairies to spread their trickery, or on more rambunctious days its currents provide a battleground where rocks become weapons for creating gigantic splashes that soak all unsuspecting creatures that happen to be in the right spot at the wrong time.

Yes, on these wild and carefree days when neither the past nor the future are of import and only the present resides in the brain, the fish caught are those called **Fun, Excitement, and Exhilaration.**

Then, one day while in the summer season of life feeling prompted by a sudden impulse to go a-fishing in the stream of my childhood, without notice, imagine my surprise to find the small saplings along its edge had grown into stately young trees whose leaves seem to drip with a liquid greenness so intense that they cast a reflection on the water resembling that of shimmering emerald jewels.

Curiously peering into its crystal-clear liquid for a better look, the eyes that gazed back were those of a mature adult caught up in thoughts of future plans for creating a brighter tomorrow. Studying the image intently as if searching for answers, the wheels of the mind quickly returned right back to my to do list with the voice of stark reality announcing loudly that there were miles to go before the setting of the sun.

As if on cue, the alarm from the cell phone that lived permanently on my person rudely announced that time was of the essence. My life was not my own! It belonged to the world in which I resided.

Strangely, the fish quickly caught on that day were quite different from those of childhood. Even their names had changed to ***Responsibility, Financial Future, and Family Obligations.***

Then, one day while being fully cognizant of how silently and quickly the hands of time circle the clock, an uncontrollable urge to go a-fishing was so powerful that nothing would suffice but to sort through boxes in the attic for the cast-off old rod and reel.

Searching through dusty remnants of yesterday's memorabilia, there hidden among the treasures of yore was the old bait casting contraption whose handle was worn slick by the sweaty little hands to whom it belonged.

Unable to resist the persistent wanderings that refused to leave the mind in peace, the wonderful gradation and harmony of an old legendary field came into view. Searching for familiar landmarks, it was obvious the reaper's hand had passed leaving behind bleached herbage and the blood red leaves of blackberry vines that abounded along the way.

Now, growing like tall columns on the banks of the old stream in the woods the birches, oaks and hickory nut trees were ablaze in tints of red and yellow that seemed to set the stage for welcoming back an old friend.

Thus, my thoughts like stubble floating in the wind began a frantic journey of wondering and wandering due to the memories that flowed through the mind like gushing water after a downpour.

The crystal-clear water now reflecting the autumnal colors of red and yellow shimmered as if having been transformed into precious rubies and opals, offering a warmth to behold.

Then eagerly peering down into the waters of my old friend, the wrinkled face that stared back seemed to be searching for the harvest that could be found from a life's journey. No longer on a quest for the fountain of youth, 'twas instead a determined effort to examine what I had gleaned from life.

Suddenly feeling desperate, the hard questions began to unfold as if written on a scroll asking if I had looked outside myself and been a suffering servant like Christ? Had I truly loved my neighbor as myself?

In dire straits, I waded out into the stream to get a better look at the reflections that were unidentifiable from shore. Allowing my eyes a better view of the images that surrounded my being, to my surprise, they were the faces of old folks I read to at Glendale Gardens that were smiling sweetly back at me. Children I had tutored at McGregor School were reading books with fluency and joy to their younger peers. What an honor to have known them! Returning their warm greetings, the desire to sit once again at their feet was overwhelming, to the point that their images became blurry from the tears that would not cease. Had I done enough? Did I leave anything undone?

Then waving goodbye to the array of images, I waded once again to shore feeling overwhelmed by the Scripture that reads, "It is more blessed to give than receive." And yet, receive I had, so much that my heart was full to overflowing with blessings. Thank you, Lord, for allowing me to be here at this time on earth for your purpose and pleasure. You are the Potter and I am the clay. How may I be of service at this point in my life? Use the remainder of my days in a way that will glorify your name. Amen!

Methinks the journey home will be filled with ruminations of the lessons learned from those I have served. The fish in the old minnow bucket that I carry along will be named, **Unconditional Love, Blessed, and Cherished.**

Opal, now the winter season is within my view; a time when the old fishing hole will one day take on a totally different meaning and complexion. The large rocks that rest throughout the stream will shine with an icy covering and the crystal-clear running water will be frozen solid. Since the fish will have gone to the bottom where the water is warmer, there will be none left to catch. No matter! At the setting of the sun when a beautiful after glow can be seen in the western sky, a star will be lit and a voice will say, "Come home, dear one, it's supper time."

Some parting thoughts of lessons I have learned are that childhood minds are unencumbered with life's lessons, a condition that leaves them open to new possibilities without fear and that the beauty of having more years behind me than in front means that I don't even know the questions to ask, much less have answers to the puzzles of life. And...even if the Lord shared them with me, as a mere human, I would be unable to understand the depth of their range and

consequences. After all, his thoughts are higher than my thoughts. Praise his name!

Let us end with the old spiritual titled **Goin' Home** whose lyrics were written by **William Arms Fisher**.

Goin' home, goin' home, I'm a goin' home;
Quiet-like, some still day, I'm jes' goin' home.

It's not far, jes' close by,
Through an open door;
Work all done, care laid by,
Goin' to fear no more.
Mother's there 'spectin' me,
Father's waitin' too;
Lots o' folk gather'd there,
All the friends I knew,
All the friends I knew.
Home, I'm goin' home!

Nothin' lost, all's gain,
No more fret nor pain,
No more stumblin' on the way,
No more longin' for the day,
Goin' to roam no more!
Mornin' star lights the way,
Res'less dream all done;
Shadows gone, break o' day,
Real life jes' begun.
There's no break, there's no end,
Jes' a livin' on;
Wide awake, with a smile
Goin' on and on.

Goin' home, goin' home, I'm jes' goin' home,
goin' home, goin' home, goin' home!

*Love,
Colene*