

23rd April 2024

Gift

“The only gift is a portion of thyself.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Gifts*

I shared with you yesterday a story about John, a dying man whom I had the privilege of helping care for. John and I became good friends, and even in his personal struggles John was a profound and helpful pastor to me at a time of searching and growing. A teacher and philosopher, John was also an artist. When he died, I had the privilege of sharing in his funeral service, and afterwards I wrote this as a tribute to a special man.

John's Gift

John gave me the picture before he died.
For John was an artist, and a beautiful man,
in his heart, by his faith, and with his artist's hands.
And his beauty, his love with Sara,
his commitment to his God, changed my life.

John gave me the picture before he died.
For he had listened to me as I unfolded my search
for fullness of life, for deepening of faith, and for beauty in me.
He had listened as I told him of my life's journey.
He had listened to me in his dying.

John gave me the picture before he died –
wild geese in flight, seven geese, flying onwards,
painted from what he had seen, and known, and understood
of faith, and life, and the soaring Canada geese –
wild geese in flight, wings outstretched for their journey.

John gave me the picture before he died,
with no words of explanation, for none were needed.
And now I look at the picture and see our geese flying still,
untiring on their journey, ever onwards,
and I see John, and Sara, and God, in all their beauty.

John gave me the picture before he died.
And I love John's gift, for all that it represents of him, and me.
Changed? Indeed. But changing still.
For the love, wisdom and beauty of his gift
still hold me in the Artist's hands.

Adapted from “A Need for Living” by Tom Gordon, www.ionabooks.com

A prayer for today

Today, I give thanks for John, and wild geese in flight, and gifts of life and faith. Amen

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