

1st May 2025

Pleasure

**"Sing like no one is listening.
Love like you've never been hurt.
Dance like nobody's watching,
and live like it's heaven on earth."**

Anonymous (attrib to Mark Twain, Satchel Paige, William Purkey and many others)

In various countries, May 1st is known as Labour Day or International Workers' Day. It's often a day of community celebrations, when people can give themselves to pleasure and hopefulness. In some cultures, a *Maypole*, a permanent structure or raised for the celebrations, can be the centre of dancing and laughter, as people skip round it, wearing floral garlands and holding coloured ribbons attached to the pole. In short, May Day is fun!

The May-Pole of Merry Mount is a short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne, a 19th century American novelist. The plot revolves around a young couple who get betrothed in the midst of Maypole celebrations, and, as a result, face Puritan fury. "We can't have fun and enjoyment in *our* religion ...", kind of thing. Hawthorne based his story on real events in colonial New England history, borrowing from a story of Thomas Morton, whose settlement's new practices opposed the rigid cultural and religious standards of the Plymouth colony Puritans.

Now, I can understand that. As I've said often before, my Granny often exhibited the attitudes of a strict Calvinist. It's not that she couldn't give herself to pleasure (for "May Days" and "Maypoles", read "Hogmanay" and "New Year" gatherings, with my Granny having lots of fun – *and* playing a mean harmonica!). But she saw pleasure as being somewhat dangerous. It could be a gateway to hedonism and the road to perdition, or, as she often said, "we'll have to pay for this someday", as God balances our pleasure with some kind of divine-inflicted punishment.

Granny, I'm sorry, but you were *wrong*! Pleasure for pleasure's sake is fine! No Plymouth Colony of Puritans, or Paisley Granny of Tom Gordon, should limit our innocent celebrations and enjoyment. So, if you have a Maypole to dance around today, go for it! If you don't, why not dance and sing anyway, even if no one is watching or listening! And as you do, you might be creating a bit of "heaven on earth" in *your* moments of pleasure.

A prayer for today

Loving God, you give us a world to enjoy. So in our pleasure, we do what is right for you.

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