

“Rhythms of Grace”

Psalm 23 & 118:24, Matthew 6:34, 7:1-5 & 11:28-30, Mark 11:23, Luke 12:22,
John 10:10 & 15:11, Galatians 5:1, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 12:26, &
1 Peter 2:9

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When Leslie and I left for seminary we received a gift, a book, from Pastor Michael. He wrote in the inside cover, “In the days ahead you will have much light reading, such as Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Edwards and Barth. We thought, then, that you might enjoy some heavy reading. Don’t be fooled; Dr. Seuss is quite a theologian, as you will read in *Oh, the Places You’ll Go*. It is a parable of the York’s life ahead and beyond. Always remember our love for you and that God in Jesus Christ is far greater than any Hakken-Kraks howl. The Girolimons”

After the first reading, I thought it was fun and clever. As I live life, this book keeps coming back into my mind and resonates with scripture. Over the last 18 years, I have come to appreciate it as one of the most profound, insightful, inspiring, and scripture-based books I have ever read. Today I will read it to you and share a few insights.

“Congratulations! Today is your day. You're off to Great Places! You're off and away!” The Psalmist sings, **Psalm 118:24 ESV “This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”** Peter wrote, **1 Peter 2:9 MSG “You are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do God’s work and speak out for God, to tell others of the night-and-day difference God made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”**

Each of us is wonderfully created in the image of God. Each day is a gift God gives us to grow in love and deepen joy. Our value, worth, and identity comes from being a beloved child of God.

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go. You'll look up and down streets. Look 'em over with care. About some you will say, "I don't choose to go there." With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet, you're too smart to go down any not-so-good street. And you may not find any you'll want to go down. In that case, of course, you'll head straight out of town. It's opener there in the wide open air. Out there things can happen and frequently do to people as brainy and footsy as you. And when things start to happen, don't worry. Don't stew. Just go right along. You'll start happening too. OH! THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!”

God gives us freedom to choose. God fills our life with an abundance of good options for us to choose. Jesus has set us free from sin, the Holy Spirit guides our conscience, and God gives us wisdom to choose not to go down any not-so-good street. Whenever we make poor choices God forgives us. God gives us a lifetime of fresh starts. God made you creative and has

given you gifts and abilities beyond your grandest dreams. Be bold. Be yourself. Dream of the possibilities, when the choices seem limited, when others try to limit you, when others put God in a box, find the wide open air. Jesus said, **Matthew 6:34 “Don’t worry about tomorrow.”** **Luke 12:22 “Don’t worry about your life.”** The Apostle Paul wrote, **Galatians 5:1 MSG “Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.”** **Romans 12:2 NLT “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”** If you are perplexed over a choice then examine each option for love. Choose the one that is more loving for love is the most excellent way.

“OH! THE PLACES YOU’LL GO! You’ll be on your way up! You’ll be seeing great sights! You’ll join the high fliers who soar to high heights. You won’t lag behind, because you’ll have the speed. You’ll pass the whole gang and you’ll soon take the lead. Wherever you fly, you’ll be best of the best. Wherever you go, you will top all the rest. Except when you don’t. Because, sometimes, you won’t. I’m sorry to say so but, sadly, it’s true that Bang-ups and Hang-ups will happen to you. You can get all hung up in a prickly perch. And your gang will fly on. You’ll be left in a Lurch. You’ll come down from the Lurch with an unpleasant bump. And the chances are, then, that you’ll be in a Slump.”

Ecclesiastes, wisdom, tells us to be aware of seasons of life. When one is best of the best, be humble and supportive of those striving to be their best. When one is in a lurch, accept the assistance of others and know that you will fly high again. Everyone has their lurch seasons. Everyone experiences seasons of slumps. The Apostle Paul explains that we are all a part of the body of Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:26 NLT “If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.”**

“And when you’re in a Slump, you’re not in for much fun. Un-slumping yourself is not easily done. You will come to a place where the streets are not marked. Some windows are lighted. But mostly they’re dark. A place you could sprain both your elbow and chin! Do you dare to stay out? Do you dare to go in? How much can you lose? How much can you win? And IF you go in, should you turn left or right...or right-and-three-quarters? Or, maybe, not quite? Or go around back and sneak in from behind? Simple it’s not, I’m afraid you will find, for a mind-maker-upper to make up their mind. You can get so confused that you’ll start in to race down long wiggled roads at a break-necking pace and grind on for miles cross weirdish wild space, headed, I fear, toward a most useless place. The Waiting Place...for people just waiting. Waiting for a train to go or a bus to come, or a plane to go or the mail to come, or the rain to go or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow or the waiting around for a Yes or No or waiting for their hair to grow. Everyone is just waiting. Waiting for the fish to bite or waiting for the wind to fly a kite or waiting around for Friday night or waiting, perhaps, for their Uncle Jake or a pot to boil, or a Better Break or a string of pearls, or a pair of pants or a wig with curls, or Another

Chance. Everyone is just waiting. NO! That's not for you! Somehow you'll escape all that waiting and staying You'll find the bright places where Boom Bands are playing.”

Life happens while we are waiting for something. Remember how we started? This day, this moment, God created and gave to you as a gift for you to rejoice and be glad in, whatever the circumstances. Live your life while you are waiting. You are a cherished treasure to God whether you are flying high or are in a slump. Jesus came, and the Holy Spirit works in us today, to get us out of our slumps. Jesus said, **John 10:10 AMP “I came that you may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance.” John 15:11 AMP “...so that my joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy may be made full and complete and overflowing.”**

Albert Einstein said the definition of insanity is doing something over and over again and expecting a different result. God has created you with creativity, intelligence, and perseverance to unslump yourself. God is always with you and working in the world to unslump you and the world.

“With banner flip-flapping, once more you'll ride high! Ready for anything under the sky. Ready because you're that kind of a guy! Oh, the places you'll go! There is fun to be done! There are points to be scored. There are games to be won. And the magical things you can do with that ball will make you the winning-est winner of all. Fame! You'll be as famous as famous can be, with the whole wide world watching you win on TV. Except when they don't. Because, sometimes they won't. I'm afraid that sometimes you'll play lonely games too. Games you can't win 'cause you'll play against you. All Alone! Whether you like it or not, Alone will be something you'll be quite a lot. And when you're alone, there's a very good chance you'll meet things that scare you right out of your pants. There are some, down the road between hither and yon, that can scare you so much you won't want to go on. But on you will go though the weather be foul. On you will go though your enemies prowl. On you will go though the Hakken-Kraks howl. Onward up many a frightening creek, though your arms may get sore and your sneakers may leak. On and on you will hike, And I know you'll hike far and face up to your problems whatever they are.”

The psalmist sings, **Psalm 23 NLT “The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. God lets me rest in green meadows; God leads me beside peaceful streams. God renews my strength. God guides me along right paths, bringing honor to God’s name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.”**

You will enjoy the high flying delight of green meadows. When you are in a slump, waiting, God will renew your strength and guide you to the right paths. When you feel alone, God is with you. When you are afraid in the dark valley with voices howling, God will get you

through. Life is a journey to an eternal life of unfailing love in heaven. Throughout the Bible, over and over again, we are told to not be afraid because God loves us and is with us.

When you face your problems you own it as your problem. The only person you can ever truly change is yourself. When you change, it may cause others to change. Jesus helped people who wanted to change their life. Once your life is changed, then you shine with God's love which may draw others to have God change their life. Jesus said, **Matthew 7:1-5 NLT** **"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye."**

"You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know. You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step. Step with care and great tact and remember that Life's a Great Balancing Act. Just never forget to be dexterous and deft. And never mix up your right foot with your left."

Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Jesus said, **Matthew 11:28-30** **"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."**

The sentence, "Learn the unforced rhythms of grace." keeps recurring in my thoughts for the last nine years. Every day I learn a little more of the unforced rhythms of grace; yet, I sense there is still a vast insight for me to discover. I daily pray a high-low prayer thanking God for my high points during that day and thanking God for being with me, sustaining me through my low point. I am learning to let go, so I can let come God's guidance and blessings. I visualize Jesus helping me with my burdens enabling me to soar. I am growing in my ability to be gracious with myself in my low points and to celebrate the high points. How are you learning the unforced rhythms of grace?

"And will you succeed? Yes! You will, indeed! (98 and 3/4 percent guaranteed.) KID, YOU'LL MOVE MOUNTAINS!"

Jesus said, **Mark 11:23 NLT** **"I tell you the truth, you can say to this mountain, 'May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and it will happen. But you must really believe it will happen and have no doubt in your heart."**

"So...be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray or Mordecai Ali Van Allen O'Shea, You're off the Great Places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting. So...get on your way!" Amen.