

Wild Geese | Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

AND NOW THIS

Mary Oliver for Corona Times

(Thoughts after the poem Wild Geese) by Adrie Kusserow

You do not have to become totally zen,
You do not have to use this isolation to make your marriage better,
your body slimmer, your children more creative.
You do not have to “maximize its benefits”
By using this time to work even more,
write the bestselling Corona Diaries,
Or preach the gospel of ZOOM.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body unlearn
everything capitalism has taught you,
(That you are nothing if not productive,
That consumption equals happiness,
That the most important unit is the single self,
That you are at your best when you resemble an efficient machine).
Tell me about your fictions, the ones you’ve been sold,
the ones you sheepishly sell others,
and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world as we know it is crumbling.
Meanwhile the virus is moving over the hills,
suburbs, cities, farms and trailer parks.

Meanwhile The News barks at you, harsh and addicting,

Until the push of the remote leaves a dead quiet behind,
a loneliness that hums as the heart anchors.
Meanwhile a new paradigm is composing itself in our minds,
Could birth at any moment if we clear some space
From the same tired hegemonies.
Remember, you are allowed to be still as the white birch,
Stunned by what you see,
Uselessly shedding your coils of paper skins
Because it gives you something to do.
Meanwhile, on top of everything else you are facing,
Do not let capitalism coopt this moment,
laying its whistles and train tracks across your weary heart.
Even if your life looks nothing like the Sabbath,
Your stress boa-constricting your chest.
Know that your ancy kids, your terror, your shifting moods,
Your need for a drink have every right to be here,
And are no less sacred than a yoga class.
Whoever you are, no matter how broken,
the world still has a place for you, calls to you over and over
announcing your place as legit, as forgiven,
even if you fail and fail and fail again.
remind yourself over and over,
all the swells and storms that run through your long tired body
all have their place here, now in this world.
It is your birthright to be held
deeply, warmly in the family of things,
not one cell left in the cold.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Oliver