

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

For most of my life I have been both astonished and troubled by the natural world. I believe the trouble has to do with the awareness in me of what C.S. Lewis calls “the inconsolable secret” in each one of us. The intricate beauty I behold in the natural world around me provokes this longing for something just beyond it, “to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off...” (C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*)

For most of my life, writing poetry kept me in touch with that longing. The practical part of my brain needs to control and understand, do what is needed, tidy things up. When I let my brain wander off from these necessary occupations, I happen upon unexpected images and feelings that are invitations to go deeper into what I cannot explain but which feels like a homesickness. What I experience points to a connection I crave, a deeper understanding of myself and my place in the order of things.

I have spent a season (it started with Covid) wandering off from, but also, as it turns out, into, my life, simply by sitting on my dock with my camera and my notebook. As I learned to sit and watch the restive creek and the wide marsh beyond it, I actually felt summoned simply to pay attention. I saw as if for the first time the complex, sometimes companionable, often violent civilization of the birds on the creek. I gave my looking a name - praying with my eyes wide open.

Just in the short expanse of salt creek that I could see from my perch on the dock, I discovered a universe before me always recreating itself, full of life and death and brokenness and hope. The tide always falling, but then rising, attended to by the birds and their shadow companions. Over time, what caught my attention was the reflections of

those birds. It felt like I was joining God to see what he sees when he beholds his unbelievably beautiful creation, and its diminishing, and loves every drifting, shattered piece of it. The pictures I took, the words that drifted to the surface, joined in me the inconsolable secret of disconnection to a gift, a longing for heaven.

God made us humans in his image: creators. I believe the creative process in me is always about what I believe it is to God: making and restoring connections. And as I put words and pictures together, it seems like one more way God is putting things back together in me. The genre I am attempting is to combine poetry and photography in essays that intimate the spiritual nostalgia (inconsolable secret) that God has placed in us to draw us to himself. Nowadays, every where I look (not just on the creek) I see hints, clues, invitations to wonder about God's good purposes. And it all started on the creek, watching the birds.

I call this photo/poetry essay, **Reflected Glory**. The pictures are reflections of birds rather than the birds themselves. They suggest to me the creation God spoke into existence, then watched dissipate, and purposes to restore in the fullness of time. I would love for the reflections of the birds to create the same wondering in those who see them, of what it means to be created lovely and then frayed, but still lovely.

This creative activity in me is a submission to God's creative purpose: For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
(1 Corinthians 13:12)

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