



MONDAY'S MEAL

SUSTAINABLE NOURISHMENT *for the* LONG DISTANCE RUN

I Didn't Ask To Be Born

by Jonathan Rogers

Monday's Meal is a service of The Oaks Classical and Christian Academy. Each meal is selected specifically to feed and nourish parents for the long distance run. If you found it helpful, consider passing it along.

"...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds..."
Hebrews 10:24

One of the most familiar complaints of the surly teenager also happens to be one of the most fundamental of theological truths: I didn't ask to be born. None of us asked to be born, and yet here we all are, waking up every day in a world we didn't make.

It's Thanksgiving Week here in the United States—a good time to reflect on the givenness of things.

In preparation for Thanksgiving, I've been re-reading Brian Doyle's *One Long River of Song*. The book ends with a "Last Prayer," which Doyle wrote shortly before he died of cancer, at the age of sixty. He prayed,

I could complain a little here about the long years of back pain and the occasional awful heartbreak, but Lord, those things were infinitesimal against the slather of gifts You gave mere me, a muddle of a man, so often selfish and small. But no man was ever more grateful for Your profligate generosity, and here at the very end, here in my last lines, I close my eyes and weep with joy that I was alive, and blessed beyond measure, and might well be headed back to the incomprehensible Love from which I came, mewling, many years ago.

In the foreword of the same book, Doyle's friend David James Duncan writes, "Brian Doyle lived in the pleasure of bearing daily witness to quiet glories hidden in people places, and creatures of little or no size, renown, or commercial value."

I don't suppose there could be a better summation of a life of gratitude: bearing daily witness to quiet glories.
Opening our eyes to be astonished and to be grateful to the Giver of the astonishments. As Richard Wilbur writes,
In the strict sense, of course,
We invent nothing, merely bearing witness
To what each morning brings again to light:
Gold crosses, cornices, astonishment
Of panes, the turbine-vent which natural law
Spins on the grill-end of the diner's roof,
Then grass and grackles or, at the end of town,
In sheen-swept pastureland, the horse's neck
Clothed with its usual thunder, and the stones
Beginning now to tug their shadows in
And track the air with glitter. All these things
Are there before us; there before we look
Or fail to look...

Let's don't fail to look. It's been a tough year in a whole lot of ways. You likely need to grieve and/or lament and/or compose an imprecatory psalm or two. Also, you need to be grateful. I don't mean you ought to be grateful. I mean gratitude is something you need in your life, this year more than ever.

"I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought," wrote G.K. Chesterton, "and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder." Yes and amen.