

As the days and weeks pass by on our journey, one thing I have been noticing is the group-wide excitement and anticipation of seeing the sky and earth at different points of the day.

Our mornings often start like this, usually accompanied with a hot breakfast and talking about the day ahead:



And our days tend to end like this, with laughter and the delicious smells of dinner cooking on our stove top surrounding us:



It has been a great joy watching these calming scenes of Creation together, usually in awe and silence as we reflect on our gratitude within these landscapes.

One thing our group has discussed many times is how easy it is to escape into nature and how difficult it may be when returning to, for many of us, large towns or cities, where pretty sunsets or misty mornings are less common. As we continue to discuss and think about the future, enjoying the present is almost enough to cure the anxiety of what lies ahead. When I think about nature, I think about Creation and gratitude, and how we as people can protect what God has given us. Many of our classes discuss environmental issues and how we can help contribute to their solutions, which makes us appreciate and reflect on these scenes all the more.

The kind of passion I notice among the group reminds me of the poem that our professor Joe Underhill read during our Chapel Blessing before our launch. This is the poem:

Sea-Fever

By

John Masefield

*I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.*

*I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.*

*I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.*

What I love about this poem is its descriptions of the world around us and the appreciation of how much contentment it can provide. It's easy sometimes to forget or ignore the beauty that has been given to us, but a poem like this one grounds me again to remember that it's the simple beauties that can fill my life.

This poem was published in 1902. When I think about that, I think of how much has changed since then. The amount of pollution, industrialization, and production has increased so much, and the freedom that comes with the appreciation of nature is harder to find in our busy days. Our uncertainty of our near future extends into our far future, and the overwhelming task of ensuring "Sea-Fever" for future generations sinks in. However, while looking at nature, it's difficult to believe that people will abandon it. It fills me with hope, and as our professor said, the Earth and river smile at us, telling us they have been here long before us and will be here long after us. Although it may be difficult to find these moments, opportunities like camp and the river semester give me hope that when sought out, nature will always create a path for us.

I like to think of this poem as a promise and a prayer. A promise to always "go down" to whatever part of nature moves us, to never neglect it and to protect it. It is also a prayer in the repetitive statements Masefield writes of "And all I ask". They remind me to simplify my asks and appreciate my haves. Sometimes all I need to pray for is a gentle reminder to trust the beautiful world that surrounds us everyday, and that nature and Creation are enough to fulfill us if we let it.

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Link to the Augsburg Ministries River Blessing Service:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqKS1QzfwTo>

- Sarah Egertson 9/25/21