

Hard Work: What I Learned Making Leaf Springs for Dodge Trucks

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Gathering Welcoming Centering Kindling Opening

We are here,
on a wet holiday weekend in late summer,
to worship, to turn toward the deeper questions,
remaining attentive to the spirit of loving community
and the demands of justice for all beings on earth. And so

**Grounded in gratitude for the cosmos that is our home, claiming
deepening wisdom as our authority, and daring to engage joy, burden, loss
and insight in a deliberate community of many ways and ages, the flame
summons us to *awaken*: to listen with our whole lives, to open, to serve.**

Story: *The Tall Tale of John Henry*

Sequence

"There can be no great accomplishment without great risk," the late astronaut Neil Armstrong said.

Which, my heart tells me, can be said this way too:

There can be no life without the newborn risking taking a breath outside the womb.

No trip to the store without risking the first step.

No hope without risking an open mind.

No song without risking the act of singing.

No joy without risking the fact of inevitable loss.

No education without risking listening deeply.

No unity without first risking naming difference.

No spoken word without first risking entering silence.

silence

There can be no great accomplishment without great risk: risk of loving, risk of friendship, risk of family-making, risk of relationship. And so in honor of the great risks we have taken to live deep lives, we risk remembering the names and faces of those whom we love, those who love us, those we find hard to love, those we miss, those for whom we grieve....

naming

To risk singing a courageous and luminous Hallelujah, in a world diminished by name-calling,

innuendo and disrespect, is the very reason I remain faithful to my religious principles of reason, honesty, reverence, caring and awe. Hallelujah and Amen.

Readings

The First Reading comes from Alice Koller's *The Stations of Solitude*, written in 1980.

Work is a world apart from jobs. Work is a way you occupy your mind and hand and eye and whole body when they're informed by your imagination and wit, by your keenest perceptions, by your most profound reflections on everything you've seen and heard and been a part of. You may or may not be paid to do your work.

The Second Reading is from a letter written by Benjamin Franklin to Benjamin Vaughn on July 26, 1784.

It has been computed by some political mathematician that, if every man and woman would work for four hours each day on something useful, that labor would produce sufficiently to procure all the necessities and comforts of life, want and misery would be banished out of our world, and the rest of the 24 hours might be leisure and pleasure.

Homily (notes for an extempore talk)

1. Labor Day antique sound
telecommuting, NY DC. web design from home,

labor used to mean hard physical labor.
factories, farm work, railroads and road work,
mining, fishing muscles

John Henry signed beginning of end of human physical labor.
I did physical labor Factory, Fenestra, Chuck Rzepka, describe, 6 days a week, 10 hour a day, over time demanded. union 327 and a half.
heat stroke. broke a machine. scarred. dirty. burn clothes. oil pit. John Henry muscle guy.
great burn....

Folks have often thought of working less
thought about Ben Franklins 4 day work life
several utopian communities in 19th century and 20th century America tried such rational approaches.
little by little in many places 37 hour work week.

Spiritual Lessons

1. Difference between job and work. Job was to make leaf springs. Work was to make sure their kids never did same thing; saved for college; saw life as transitional; sacrificial for higher purpose.

2. Learned that the interdependence of all thing is not a simple religious affirmation in our principles, but the hard fact of reality...in factories. we either worked together or everything shut down.

3. Learned that focus on a common endeavor allows for diversity; racial, age. Everyone cooperated; gave purpose to life.

4. Learned to be grateful for what I have received; hard work, done by robots now; the story of John Henry is still happening, we'll see more in our life time.

Offering (extempore)

End of Summer Prayer

Light of Life,
shining through the transparency of every
woman and man and child who risks loving,
who risks kindness, who risks imagining a unity deeper than our real differences and risks
singing Hallelujah in the midst of brokenness,
shine for a moment like the summer sun,
like the blue moon of August,
like the candles on the table
and eyes of children at play,
like the sweat on the arms of women and men
at work in the garden,
and illumine us for a time
with a sense of the interdependence of all things:
the inner and the outer,
the yes and the no
life and death,
dark and light.