

## HONING LONELINESS

March 17, 2020

I have practiced loneliness.

It's a fine skill to own  
in a time

of social distance.

Fear stalks the news,  
lurking among the pages  
of social media.

Churches shut their doors.  
Schools closed and locked.  
Shops, restaurants, even  
the library--online only.

It's a brave new world,  
and brave we must be,  
to forbear.

A wise poet once said:

"We will grieve not,  
rather find  
strength in what remains behind."

But grieve we must.

Not for ruptured routine,  
nor our upturned lives.  
Not for our dinners out,  
and drinks with friends,  
not for lost retail therapy  
nor for our shops, salons, and gyms.

But we grieve  
for those who mourn.  
for those who fear,  
and for those who are ill,  
and in pain.

We grieve for the homeless,  
the displaced,  
the jobless  
the hungry,  
the abused,  
or the elderly,  
with no one to care.

We grieve for the loss  
of truth and virtue  
in leaders,  
whose own self-interests  
exacerbate a crisis.  
Yet the poet promised  
a glimpse of “strength  
in what remains behind.”  
And what remains?  
you may ask.  
Love remains.  
Friendship remains.  
Hope remains.  
I hear birds singing,  
celebrating the green in blades of grass..  
We can greet our neighbors  
from six feet away.  
We can remember-“From those to whom much is given,  
much is required.”  
And so we give, as we are able,  
to the helpers, steady at jobs  
against heightened odds,  
and we find strength In these helpers,  
and gratitude for them.  
We find strength in the love of family,  
and in the loyalty of friends,  
and in the warmth of a pet  
on our lap.  
These things remain.  
This, too, shall pass.  
And if this spring of our discontent,  
(temporary at best)  
recalls for us the constant pain  
borne by so many,  
then our well-honed loneliness  
will not have been a scourge,  
but a lesson  
in humility.

Citations from William Wordsworth, “Ode on Intimations of Immortality”(completed 1804)  
and from Luke, 12:48