



The Sound of Rain

Supporting the work of Emily Carson

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Fear of Dying Retreat

Transcribed from a sitting with Emily Carson, Sunday, July 18, 2010

Dying means almost nothing. It is an event in memory and in myth, and so, though what it represents is great, what it *is* is not. Dying is a transference of images and information into a new matrix. It is what is old being overlaid on new form. When new form is animated, it is, in a very real sense, no different from the form that died. It has certain superficial differences but its substance, its individuality, its essence, are all virtually unchanged. Dying represents, in reality, little more than this exchange of information, but what it represents to us in our minds is great indeed. To us it means, "I have gone; the world has abandoned me, my body has abandoned me, and my ideas have betrayed me." That we die says to each of us, in our own minds, "You are nothing, a temporary speck of dust, discardable, disappearing." The fact of dying represents to us our own insignificance, our blessings taken, our lives stolen, our liberty fundamentally compromised. The fact of dying is an insult, an affront to our notions of our own worth, an illusion-shatterer when we believe, very deeply, that we need those illusions. And death becomes the bogeyman in the closet; it is everything we cannot see but know we fear—every shadow, every darkness, every hidden thing. Death represents to us the failings we are secretly certain we harbor and the traumas we are convinced we cannot bear. Death is a thing empty in itself but upon which we pin all of our misgivings, all our terror, all our betrayals. Void of meaning itself, we pour meaning into it, and we curse it as the thing which keeps us from ever being happy. Death is the great scapegoat; we are miserable because we will die, frightened because we will die, betrayed because we will die. What if death could not touch you? What cloud would suddenly be lifted from your mind? What misgivings clarified? What sunlight would then penetrate? Whatever happiness you find, imagining yourself to be out of death's grasp, that is the happiness of reality. Death does nothing to us, takes nothing from us. If anything, it is a great giver. You get a new shiny machine to fill with all your old ideas in exchange for the tired and failing one. And you get a brand

new chance, new circumstances, new air in your lungs, new potential, a new outlook. Death gives you all that; you are not robbed, not betrayed, not let down by the fact of your dying. We are all outside the grasp of that death we believe in, that dying which is only illusion, that scapegoat, that shadow. Living is perpetual, and until you wish it to be over, it never will be. If that fills you with gladness, then glad you should be. We are alive—that is what is real and that is what will remain.