



# Munch with the Punches

## Musings from above the Equator



Have you ever had enough of “it”? What is “it”? This world. Have you ever wanted to just give up? To at least sit down and stare for days on end? To lie down where you are and never move a muscle until so many ants crawl on you that you have to itch? Or maybe to accomplish one more act upon this planet, namely, casting yourself with profoundly disturbing style from a bridge? The one in San Francisco works nicely for such events—so they say.

I watched a documentary recently called “The Bridge,” in which a filmmaker trained several cameras upon the Golden Gate bridge for one year. The cameras captured 23 people free-falling to death. The last scene of the film shows a young man with long black flowing hair, black pants, and a black leather jacket, pacing the bridge. He paces for an hour. Footage of his pacing is interspersed with interviews of his friends and loved ones. His name was Gene. In the last segment of the film, the cameras capture Gene climbing out onto the railing, his back to the bay. He finds his balance, strands straight as a soldier, then simply falls backward. The camera follows him to the water. It’s terrible. It’s graspable.

If God nudges you to watch it, click here. Gene is the last jumper in this moving five-minute montage:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZxom4hzu0o>

### SUMMER IN OHIO

I am currently in the U.S. for an extended visit due to visa issues and iron-clad laws. Changes, for me, are difficult. Since 2009, I have felt like an expatriate upon the planet. This is truly what I am, but I don’t have to like it. In many ways, yes, I am happy to be back in my home country. In other ways I feel like a rag doll on the end of a string swung by a Very Large Hand. It’s dizzying. My sister Kelly has made a wonderful room for me at her home here in Canton, Ohio. I was born and raised in this city. Though the temperature is not up to my bak-



ing standards, there is a familiarity to the feel of this season. The smell of fresh blacktop and cut grass returns me in soul to the warm solstices of my childhood, when life was a peach. The chimes of St. Joseph's Catholic Church slide me back to a time when my parents were alive and when love was pure, simple, dependable.

### CLAPTON AND CHRIST

I watched an interview of Eric Clapton yesterday. He is a modern-day Solomon, this guy. He said that at the age of twenty-three he already had everything most people associate with success: he was a millionaire, had amassed stuff, was surrounded by beautiful women, sat atop the universe of popular music, and looked through the scope of a star-bright future. In the midst of this "success," he said that not a day went by when he did not contemplate suicide. Multiply this by a thousand, and you have Solomon. The great king, awash in every worldly want, reached an identical conclusion. What is the answer? Christ, of course. As far as I know, the Savior of the world has not yet introduced Himself formally to the guitar-god Eric Clapton, but the man has enough God-given wisdom to say, "The simple life is

the best life." God, yes. Good, Eric. We take a clue from you, I hope. Trim your needs and hold everything loosely, friends, because we brought nothing into the world and it is evident that we shall take nothing out of it.

### DUMPSTER DIVER OF UNDIVERSITY

As I sit on the front porch here to smell Americana and watch cavorting squirrels, I wonder where the contentment is. (I'm not speaking of the squirrels now, but of myself; the squirrels seem *quite* content.) When will I simply relax into life's inevitable changes? I still resist. I suppose this is why I will wear the same clothes for two weeks. (There. I said it.) When left to my own, I create cozy little ruts. Isn't there enough change in the world? Must I change my shirt as well? I will happily eat the same foods every day. (I believe I am rebelling against change in general.) In my book, variety is overrated. I *want* ruts. I try to wriggle my way into comfortable grooves, but God wrecks them. Oh, does He ever. If He didn't, I'd fall backward always into familiar habits and habitats. Since God is such a killjoy in this department, I dig trenches when He isn't looking. I scrounge for troughs of comfort. I am the Dumpster diver of undiversity.

### THE REVELATION SERIES

I pre-recorded an extra week of the Revelation series in Brazil. The Revelation series you watch this coming week was the last week of shows I made in São Paulo before needing to leave Brazil for this extended visit. I watched the entire week of shows yesterday. I needed them. I think it is the best week I have yet recorded. That guy in the video ministered to me. Sometimes the stresses of life make one's life work the sole repository of sense. One produces good work because of the stresses. Other times the stresses are so great that all production ceases. Satan orchestrates these particular things. Anything derailing the work of heralding the evangel smacks of Satanic touch.

These stresses cannot be overcome by mere humans. Unfortunately, I am a mere human. God has to lift the darkness, otherwise the darkness lays like a wet baby elephant. I get into these wet-elephant places in life, and never get used to them. As I said, I try to overcome them, but can't. God lifts the heaviness according to His own schedule, which is not my schedule.

Oddly, I never read Scripture during these times. I can't. I figure I have enough of God's Word making its home in me richly that I can feed for long periods apart



from the literal page. Part of it, I think, is being miffed at God. I get over it quickly. I thank God that I recorded that week of shows ahead of time. I spent an hour yesterday watching myself. I ministered to myself. I don't know who that guy was, but I liked him. Today, I don't feel like that guy. I'm glad that guy did what he did, though. What a trooper. I'm glad that guy was inspired then because I benefit today from the relatively good place that guy then occupied. I benefit today, when there is presently nothing in the tank. So I withdraw from a spiritual savings account. (But then this writing showed up.)

#### BIBLE TROUBLE

Do you ever feel like you really don't want to read the Bible? Like you really don't want to study? Like you don't really care? Like God can just do His thing without you? Like you want God to carry on without you? This is a joke because how dare any of us ever think that we're an irreplaceable part of God's plans. And yet we are. We really are. He decides to need us, and He would lose something without us.

I feel that I sometimes miss God when I am so busy teaching about Him. The remedy for this is to stop teaching about Him for a while. The remedy is to sit back and enjoy the simple but profound fact that I am a member of the body of Christ. I am doing that now. I always try to pour my forlorn state into writing because I think I can help other people who are going through similar things. Notice that I'm not really writing about God here, but rather about my experiences and what I am feeling in my

everyday life as a member of the body of Christ. I am trapped, with you, in a mortal body. Maybe this will help someone. If I write truly about true things, then people will be helped because real helps real. As I help you with such honesty, I help myself.

#### MARY AND MARTHA

I envy Mary, sitting numbly but with nimble ears attuned to the Lord's voice, at His feet. In some ways, I am a Martha. I have to do a show, I have to write an article, I have to typeset fourteen new books. If I don't do these things I feel worthless. I am competing for a prize. I know that sounds selfish, so I'll put it this way: I am doing the work I was born to do and woe to me if I do not do it. But there comes a time when a person needs to yank off the Martha hat and sit down and shut up. We are in the body of Christ, all of us. Can you believe that? There is an associate of mine who feels like a loser, and even calls herself a big loser. "Nothing ever goes right for me," she says. I have to remind her that the biggest thing that could ever go right for a person has gone right for her: She is a member of the body of Christ. Apparently, she never takes the time to sit down and chew on that. I tell her to run it through her stomachs, regurgitate it, chew it again, re-digest it, get new tastes from the life-giving material. Burp and taste it through your nose, I tell her. So now maybe I need to follow my own advice for a few days and not feel guilty about the ruminations.

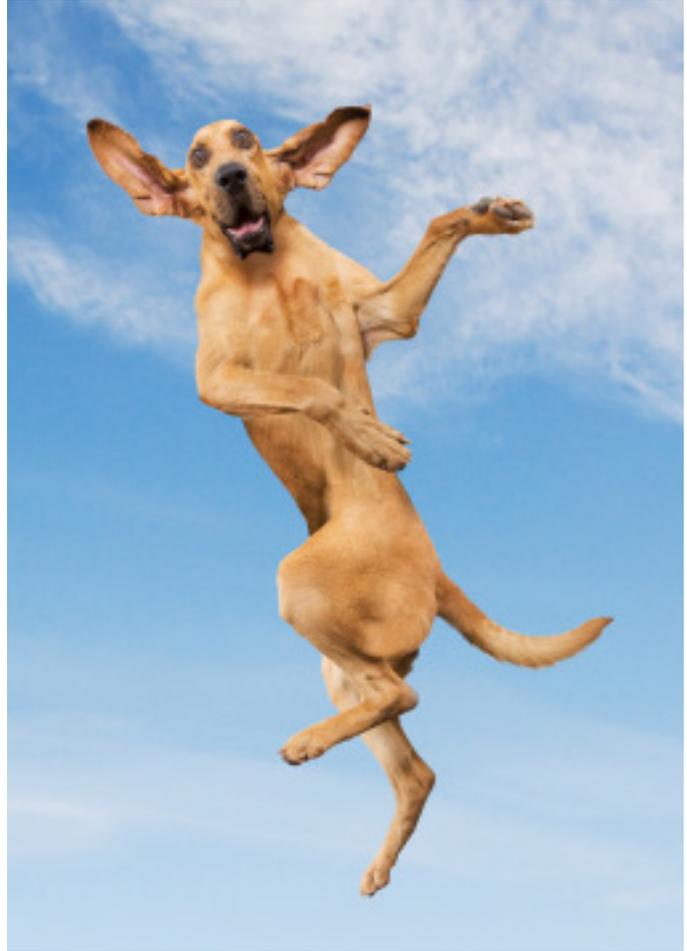
## EMAILS AND BOATS

So there your emails sit. I am behind on my mail. I think you know me by now. You know that I read and imbibe of everything but cannot always answer immediately. Not being able to answer is rarely a time issue, but an emotional one. People write me and they start with, “I know you’re busy, Martin ... ” but what they ought to start with is, “I know you’re depressed, Martin, and mentally neutered ... ”

We’re all in the same boat. The boat appears to be sinking, but maybe this is just God playing with us, giving us a little “thrill” before He rescues us. I can live without God’s little thrills. I am not necessarily very happy with Him right now. He’ll get over it, and so will I. We always do. I would rather my boat be sound, thank you. But no. God drills holes in our boats. We’re all in a single boat, yet in another way we are in separate vessels. We feel like we’re sinking so we call out to each other from across the water. The great thing is that we are there for each other! The body of Christ is closer than blood relation.

## DAN AND CLYDE

I talked to Dan Sheridan on the phone yesterday. We had a great conversation. We didn’t talk about God because, as you know, profound disagreements have arisen between us. This has stressed me, but it’s okay. I will make it okay. I’m okay with it today, this minute. We spoke to one another as the friends that we are. We may be getting together soon. I hope we do. If we do, I will post photos. I love the guy, and the feeling is mutual. Same with Clyde. In Clyde’s Goodies, he says that members of the body of Christ will always fellowship with one another in spite of some differences. He is right. None of us agree on everything. I will continue to oppose these men doctrinally if I have to, but I do not have so many friends that I can live without these men. I *can’t* live without them. I don’t want to. I love them.



## STAGE DIVE

While I am in the U.S., I want to travel. After I get over this “Mary” thing, I will get up and “make sandwiches.” Have you seen those rock concerts where the performer dives into the audience? That’s what I feel like doing. I want to dive into fellowship with the body of Christ. I am always telling you that God educates us by experience and not by theory. I think the same thing applies to fellowship. We grow in union when we are with each other. In his day, the apostle Paul risked his neck to visit the saints. He said, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Whenever I gather my wits about me and settle into some semblance of contentment, I’ll top off the tank of my ‘99 Ford Contour and hit the road. I want to see some of you—or all of you—while I am here and while the eon is still intact. Stay tuned for details, and so will I.

I will find a sphere of peace. Part of it comes from inhabiting this room and sitting on the front porch to watch the squirrels. (You should see these crazy squirrels.) Kelly has placed mementos here from the house we grew up in—for example, a coffee table that had been in our old

family home since 1962. She has photos on the wall of our parents, since deceased. There is a photo of our old house. The comforter on my bed is the one my mom laid over me whenever I was sick as a kid. The lamp in this room dates, in my memory, from 1962, although it once belonged to our grandfather.

### THIRD ROCK

The globe is smaller than it once was. As the apostasy has worsened, God has mercifully made the planet easier to negotiate. From my viewpoint, He has done this in the interest of desperately-needed fellowship. (From the end-of-the-eon perspective, He has done it to facilitate a one-world government.) Fellowship has always been a lifeline for me. I can throw myself into it and trust it because we all have the mind of Christ. We are good to one another. I trust that when I jump, I will be caught. I would rather jump into spiritual union with like-minded people than into San Francisco Bay with seals. Your waters are warmer; your spirit wills good things.



### THE EON *WILL* END

Can't you sniff the dying embers of this wicked eon? I can. Many signs in the heavens and on the earth indicate it. One must be divinely blinded, indeed, to *not* sense it. God made the heavens for signs and seasons. Genesis 1:14—

And God said, 'Let luminaries be in the expanse of the heavens, to make a separation between the day and the night, then they have been for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.'

Thus, the end will be known.

### EXPOSURE, REBUKE, ENTREATY

I will be doing more exposing, rebuking and entreating—in that order—as necessary (2 Timothy 4:2). Sorry about that. Well, the evangel keeps being opposed by those who should know better. Kelly appeared in the frame of my door last night and said, "I think you should really take a break from this exposure stuff. I think people are getting tired of it." I got a little irritated with her and said, "I don't care if people are getting tired of it. If I need to do it, I will. I've never taken a popularity poll to see what I should do. I have to do what is on my heart." She said, "All right, good night." I said, "Good night."

Exposure and rebuke is irritating to everyone, even to me. I get the other end of it too, you see. But then I settle down and let it sink in. This morning, I took what Kelly said to heart. I had no idea this morning if I was going to be able to write anything. Now look at what has happened. That I am writing this is a good little miracle. God squeezes me like a tube of toothpaste. At least there is still some minty paste at the end of the tube. This kind of writing is the only thing I can muster right now. I don't want to screw up at the very end of this calling. I am running for the tape, which is the finish of this eon. We are all in the homestretch of the last lap of this infuriating life. On the other hand, any success I have, relatively speaking, is founded upon listening to God and acting upon His gift of instinct. He has trained me to hear His voice and to discount the distractions of other voices. Yet many times these other voices *are* His voice, speaking to me. The wisdom comes in discerning the difference between a voice of distraction and one of wisdom. Sometimes this voice is my own voice.

### CHIPS ON THE SHOULDER

I have told you that endurance is not pretty. Yesterday I could not wriggle or rhyme myself out of the bog of depression. I am trying to get back into the physical shape I expect of myself and have tried to avoid certain foods. Yesterday, however, the only answer to my problem seemed to be a large bag of corn chips. After a vast struggle, I looked at the bag of corn chips and said, "You are the answer, corn chips." I thus addressed the corn chips. This was the sweet point of no return. What a joy to reach into such a bag repeatedly and mindlessly, like a happy robot on autopilot. I was in a corn chip trance. If heaven is this good—then, um, *wow*. The concerns

of the world became strangely dim in the light of stone-ground corn baked into triangles, with olive oil.

What kind of stupid creature am I? Or am I simply a creature without the qualifying and self-condemning adjective? If the answer for the moment is a bag of corn chips, then who am I to argue? If me looking worse today that I looked yesterday is the consequence of a glee-filled crunch-fest, then that's how it is. Maybe today I will do better. Then again, maybe I won't. Maybe it's all part of the teeter-totter and merry-go-round of life. (Who the heck named that thing a *merry-go-round*, anyway? It should have been named a *scary-go-round*.) Part of my humiliation, then, is to be soothed by baked corn. Since this is manifestly so, I will thank God for it and squelch the self-criticism. That's my determination. For others, the soothing may arrive after falling backward off of a bridge linking San Francisco to a metropolis in Marin County. It is not the unpardonable sin. For some, it may be just the ultimate crunch they've been looking for. —MZ



## FROM THE MAIL

Dear brother in Christ. I wrote you a few months ago. My name is R., and I live just outside of (*location withheld —Ed*). My suffering has gotten worse both physically and with the amount of persecution and betrayal I go through daily. I want to give up. But I am so stubborn, so I don't know how to give up. I know it is God Who sustains me. I feel abandoned, alone, weak, stupid, and a failure. If God wouldn't spare His Son I do not expect Him to spare me. The world talks about a better life here on earth. Christianity and its self-righteous garbage makes me sick. I lose a part of me every day. The only thing that keeps me going is the faith God gave me. The more faith, the more persecution, and the more the people I love betray me. I do good things for others and am hated for it. I just don't get it. I know my fate and am prepared. God will give me the words I need when the time comes. He has assured me of this. I know every man and woman God has called is suffering. Some of us suffer more than others. I don't try to understand it anymore. The world calls evil good and good evil. The

betrayal and persecution will get worse and I am ready for it. I am so weak and broken down I have no strength left. And that is when God is strong for me. I have no choice but to rely on him. I have no doubt God chose you to learn His Word and teach it to the few He has chosen. I feel your pain, and that of the body of Christ as well. I may not know any of these fellow members, but I am with them all until the end. I don't like it here. I just want to go home and hug Jesus and thank God. Keep up the good fight, Martin. It is almost over. God bless you on your journey. Sincerely yours, —RS



It's a vast struggle, a vast struggle, I keep repeating this to myself because it's not merely a struggle, but a vast struggle. I'm so weak, so useless. I'm 29 years old. My life is a disaster. I'm no good. That's the boldness of faith by which we are walking, that our Father tells us that we are His glory even now. How is this possible if not by faith? It's so lonely a walk that sometimes I wonder while wandering in my mind: how did our Lord live His life here, how did He feel? Was He also so miserable—even more than us? The apostasy led by Christianity is rampant. My old friend, a hardcore Catholic, sent me a text about gathering 1 million prayer warriors for world peace. Martin, does it has to be this bad? This evil? Thank you for your love, bro. I need every last bit of it! You know what? When you're so desperate that you don't even care anymore, it is then that you focus on what you have to do to survive. I hope to God that we will survive to our Lord's presence. We have to, man. We've run this far, we can't stop now. —BP