

I have been reading Luci Shaw's remarkable book [Water My Soul](#), which discusses the need to care for the interior life. But it came with a surprise gift: an introduction by Eugene Peterson. Peterson opens by telling a story of John Muir, The famous explorer and conservationist. He writes,

"In the last half of the nineteenth century, John Muir was our most brave & worshipful explorer of North American. For decades, he tramped up and down through our God-created wonders: observing, reporting, praising, and experiencing - entering into whatever he found with childlike delight and mature reverence.

Muir once visited a friend who had a cabin, snug in a valley of the Sierra Mountains—a place from which to venture into the wilderness and then return for a comforting cup of tea. One December day a storm moved in from the Pacific—a fierce storm that bent the junipers, pines, and fir trees as if they were blades of grass. It was for just such times this cabin had been built: cozy protection from the harsh elements.

We easily imagine Muir and his host safe and secure in his tightly caulked cabin, a fire blazing against the cruel assault of the elements, wrapped in sheepskins...But our imaginations, not trained to cope with Muir, betray us.

For Muir, instead of retreating to the coziness of the cabin he strode into the storm, climbed a high ridge, picked a giant Douglas fir as the best perch for experiencing the kaleidoscope of color and the sound, scent and motion, scrambled his way to the top, and rode out the storm, lashed by the wind, holding on for dear life: taking it all in—its rich sensuality, its primal energy.

Peterson concludes: Throughout its many retellings, the story of John Muir,

storm-whipped at the top of the Douglas fir in the Yuba River valley, gradually took shape as a kind of icon of Christian spirituality for our family - as a standing rebuke against becoming a mere spectator to life, preferring creature comforts to Creator confrontations."

At my age, firmly walking through my middle years, the temptation can come to prefer creature comforts to Creator confrontations.

1. I don't want to avoid the storm and retreat to the cozy parts of life. In 2025, I want to climb the tree and face whatever comes.
2. I don't want to retreat into the numbing comforts of YouTube binging when things get hard.
3. I don't want to retreat to a kind of passivity that says things will take care of themselves if I pretend they are not there.
4. I don't want to retreat to small ambition, small faith, a small God.

Instead, I want to climb the tree and courageously face what comes this year with open eyes and a full heart. I want to ride out the storm, lashed by the wind, at the top of the tree.

REFUSE TO BECOME A SPECTATOR!