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Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh, and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, I am with Thee.

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1855)

THIS MORNING ONCE AGAIN I sat in prayer looking out the east windows in my upstairs sitting room. I love the gray dark before dawn and the first gradual hint of pink or orange in the east. I love the waking birds and the fleeing shadows. And, of course, this is why I've always loved Harriet Beecher Stowe's inspiring poem.

The first time I greeted the morning reciting her lines is as clear to me as if it happened yesterday. My elbows were resting on the splintered weathering of the upstairs' windowsill while I looked past the familiar trees of our farm's front yard and on to the pink edge in the east. It's amazing, isn't it, how natural images and events, large and small, come and go. They clatter along in fast succession, like the movie frames from some rickety projector. And yet, once in a while, some gnat-like thought gently lights in our minds,

framing an experience in eternity. And that's what happened to me that morning decades ago.

Since that inspiring moment as a young girl, the whispers of Stowe's lovely thoughts have followed me throughout my life. With her God-inspired words, the loveliness of the sunrise becomes a metaphor for the effortless and certain dawning of Christ in our heart.

And so this morning, I recited her verses, rejoicing in this gift of God's inspiring, the "sweet consciousness" of Christ's presence. And that presence is "fairer" and "lovelier" than all of the symbols for it that nature might provide. Each day, in the "still" stillness we hear the Lord whispering, "I am with Thee."