Peace Is the Work of Attention

Joel Christoph

Peace is the breath before the word,
the count of four that steadies the hand.
It is the nurse who looks up from the chart and
says your name as if it were a small light.

Peace is a queue that moves for everyone,
a clinic with doors that do not ask for passports. It is
soap and clean water,
and the dignity of an unhurried morning.

Peace is the silence a forest keeps
when the chainsaws stay asleep.
It is a river that forgets to carry poison, a
city that remembers to plant shade.

Peace is the neighbor who learns your language,
and you learning theirs, syllable by syllable.
It is the choice to repair the bowl
so the crack becomes the story, not the shame.

Peace is the message we do not forward,
the rumor we do not feed.
It is the algorithm we teach to prefer
truth over the thrill of the spark.

Peace is a classroom where questions are allowed,
a meal that lasts long enough for listening.
It is the practice of widening who counts as us,
again, again, again.

Peace is not a prize for after the war. It
is a shift change, a checklist, a habit.
It is a thousand tiny treaties
you keep with your own impatient heart.

Some days peace is the courage to rest.
On others it is the courage to stand. It
is a vote cast without fear,
a street where every voice finds daylight.

Peace is the work of attention.
What we notice, we can nourish.
What we nourish, we can multiply.
What we multiply, we can share.

And if we share it, we may find
that the future has been practicing with us all along,
waiting for the moment we look up together
and decide that enough is a beginning.