



Top stories in this newsletter



Efficiency

The Kingdoms of Efficiency



Wendell Berry



Can We Give Away Our National Parks?



C3 Good News

The Kingdoms of Efficiency

"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me."
— Matthew 4:9 (ESV)

Since I wrote the last of these essays, I became a father.

And my productivity has plummeted. My side projects stalled; the inbox won. Whole evenings that once belonged to my wife and me, now belong to James, who cannot hold up his own head, and to whom I now report. So much for rest.



Efficiency

We have been promised rest before. Nearly a century ago the economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that within a hundred years - by roughly now - technology would shrink the work week to fifteen hours. The week did get shorter. It never came near fifteen hours, and the hours we

saved went quietly back to work: more email, more to manage. That rest never quite came.

What happened to me was the opposite. Fatherhood promised nothing and took the hours anyway, and what came back was not leisure (I have never slept less) but something I would not trade.

You have probably met the counter-Gospel: "ten AI tools that will 10x your output." Your problem: you are not productive enough. Your savior: this subscription. The altar call: sign up and be remade.

That offer is older than any app. On a high mountain the devil showed Jesus every kingdom and named his price. Jesus refused - not because the kingdoms were worthless, but because the price was too high. AI has worth, but the price we are tempted to pay - our attention, our discernment, the slow work of thinking our own

thoughts - malforms us from God's image. That is what an idol does.

Scripture's answer to the idol of endless output is older still. It is Sabbath rest - not earned by our production but commanded of everyone, and not only people. God gives the land itself rest, the fields left fallow every seventh year (Leviticus 25). Even the soil is spared the demand to produce without end. The rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that the Sabbath "is not for enhancing work efficiency" but rather "a day for the sake of life."

I am not standing outside this: I use these tools every day, and they are good at what they do. They take drudgery off my desk and hand me the hours back. Which leaves the question I cannot outsource: what will I do with these redeemed hours? Tend what God has made, maybe, or produce and consume more,



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and send the bill to the land. I know which comes easier to me.

Which brings me back to James, who calls me from my screen by day and from a bassinet beside my bed by night. It is a kind of Sabbath. Calling it that is a stretch, since Sabbath is kept, commanded, restful, and this is none of the three. But it does one thing Sabbath does: a limit I did not choose, refusing to let output be the measure. In his most recent encyclical addressing AI, Pope Leo XIV reminds us that humanity flourishes "not despite limitations, but often through them."

I do not yet know whether the collapse in my output has made

me flourish; only God knows what that would look like in me. You have your own version - the interruption you did not schedule, whatever it cost you. I am no longer sure I would want mine optimized away.

Rich Goodier served as a missionary and Baptist pastor for fourteen years before becoming a Data Scientist. He serves as Secretary of the C3 Board and is a new father. Rich co-wrote this essay with AI.



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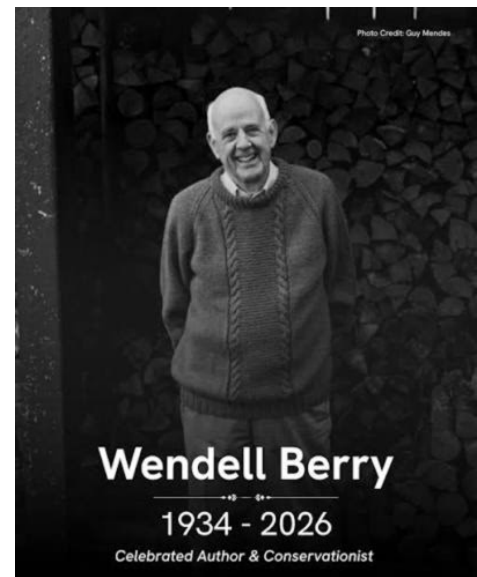
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This newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Wendell Berry, farmer, poet, and the father to many who are advocates for caring for creation.

From his poem "The Peace of Wild Things"

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

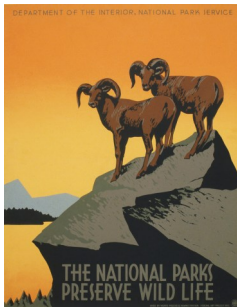
Wendell Berry (Aug. 5, 1934 – Aug. 31, 2026)





Can We Give Away Our National Parks?

Can we give away our national parks? That's a question I would not have considered asking earlier in my life. Unfortunately, it is a question that is seriously being considered in our government today. Let me remind you of the history of these parks in America.



In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act. It was the first national park in the world, created specifically to preserve a large natural landscape for public benefit rather than private development. It was fundamentally a gift to future generations of Americans. Yellowstone's establishment is remarkable because Congress explicitly declared that the land was to be "dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." And, crucially, **the law prohibited private settlement, sale, or occupancy of the land.**

These national parks would be places where the most beautiful vistas of our country would be set aside not for kings and corporations, the wealthy and the well-

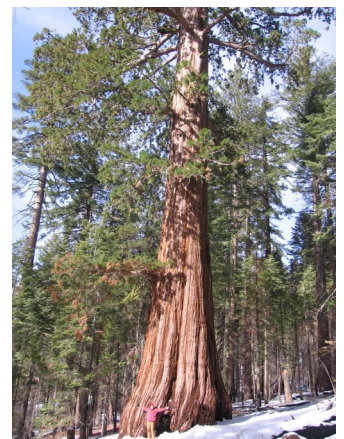
connected - but for the common citizens. The children of the poor and the wealthy could stand equally at the foot of a great sequoia, or hide under a waterfall, gaze down on the vast expanse of a canyon, or watch herds of bison move across a plain. The parks would epitomize our democracy, a government where all people were treated equally and given equal access to America's God-given beauty.

Today we are in the middle of a struggle which isn't new, but clearly one that is moving us away from the original intent of our 19th century ancestors. While reading this past Sunday's edition of the New York Times (Aug. 30), it was reported that the Trump administration is considering trading away a small parcel of land within Yosemite to a real-estate developer in exchange for land outside the park. The deal has caught park officials off guard who contend that our national parks should not be given away to real estate developers, so that we might maintain their pristine environment. The developer, Kingsbarn Realty Capital, would gain access to the land inside Yosemite National Park and seek to build upscale cabins, homes and commercial properties. Not surprisingly, the chief executive officer of the development company was a contributor to President Trump's 2024 presidential campaign.

Cindy Muldoon, Superintendent of Yosemite from 2020 until

2025, said any land changes in the national parks were meant to benefit the parks, not the interests of real estate developers. For example, you could swap land if another adjacent property enhances wildlife habitats. Muldoon said she saw no benefit to Yosemite in this exchange. She offered this warning in setting a precedent for the 400 other parks in the National Park system: "Yosemite is kind of a bell weather for the national parks. If this happens in Yosemite, it can really happen anywhere in the national park system."

I thought about this possibility after visiting Yellowstone National Park in June of this year. Overwhelmed with the natural beauty of the park, I yearned for the preservation of these parks. I wrote, "Conserving nature, protecting the animals, and keeping 200-year-old trees from being cut down is always an act of resistance of the weak against the strong. The power of a corporation's lure of profits for a few stakeholders



versus thousands of voices for ordinary citizens and vulnerable species always favors the corporations. Those of us who want to

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conserve the natural beauty of the earth and all its creatures are perennial minorities.”

As a Christian, I don’t expect my government to require loyalty to my faith tradition or elevate it above any other faith or non-faith tradition. But, I do hope it acts in the interest of the common good, the ordinary citizens, and the preservation of land already set aside for future generations to enjoy. And I hope that we, as citizens of the Christian faith, choose to pave the way for the poor and struggling classes to have access to the beauty of this land that God has formed for his glory and the enjoyment of all.



Don Gordon
CEO and Founder of C3

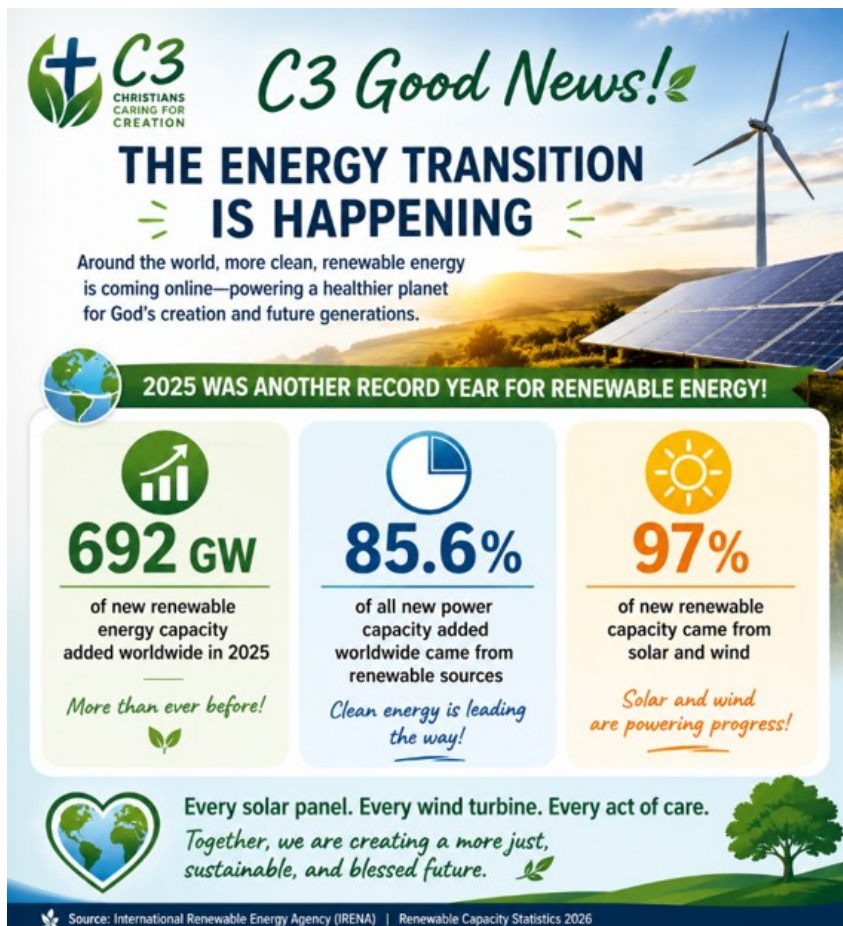
Quotes to Consider

“Christians will want to be in the vanguard in favoring ways of life that decisively break with the exhausting and joyless frenzy of consumerism.”

Pope John Paul II, speech at Yankee Stadium

“To drive to extinction something He has created is wrong. He has a purpose for everything... We Christians have a responsibility to take the lead in caring for the earth.”

Billy Graham, Detroit Free Press



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