Clarion Review

Poetry

Life Passion: Words to Inspire Our Desire
Mark Gregory Washer
Trafford
978-1-4269-6616-3
Three Stars (out of Five)

Brimming with short essays and poems, *Life Passion* does not ask for perfection from the faithful. Redemption is everywhere, humans are human. This work encourages readers to give thanks for what they have and to embrace a life filled with morality, mercy, and love. The raw emotion evident in the earnest poems and essays speaks of God's existence in everything—even the smallest detail—and the work cannot help but spark humility on the part of the reader.

The short essays are the strongest pieces in the collection. Washer has a gift for making even the smallest moments seem epic, be they part of a project that has been planned or encounters that seem to happen by chance. The writing sheds light not only on the writer's character but also on the meaning of humanity and faith. Washer ends each piece with the refrain, "It never ends." This repeated line is the anchor of the collection. Humanity is beautiful yet flawed. And because of God's grace toward us, our lives goes on despite our mistakes, and we can continue to pursue a complete and fulfilled life.

The power of *Life Passion* is in its imagery and metaphor showcasing faith and love as universal entities. One of the most powerful pieces, "Shaking in Time," is part children's story and part essay. It recounts a world where people praise God but fight over how to do it—do they pray while shaking the leg to the right or left, front or back? Washer teaches that, inevitably, it is the celebration of God that is important, not the method or even the words.

Though the poems in this collection exhibit passion of a sort, they are not as focused and memorable as the essays. This is partly because they fall victim to cliché, and in doing so fall short of Washer's other work. In "Apology," Washer opens with: "I took a chance to find romance / All I got was pain / I rolled the dice not thinking twice / All efforts were in vain." While the themes of the poems are in some way related to the author's overall message, they just do not have the same impact.

Washer calls for a world where people honor one another. Reading this collection is like sitting down to coffee with a family member. Indeed, Washer is intimately blunt and honest about his past mistakes and his hopes for the future. His candor helps readers see that the matter of faith is not complicated. As he so plainly writes, "All roads lead to God."

Lisa Bower