I'm Tracy K. Smith. And this is the slow down.

I'm grateful for my health and my home, for the love and friendship in my life. I'm grateful for free time, and for beauty, all the goodness I can see and claim. But there's far more than goodness and pleasure in my life and in every life. There's struggle. There's hard work. But I'm grateful for that, too. I'm grateful for the failures I've endured, and what they've taught me. I'm grateful to have lost the things that have led me to the life that's now mine. But could I follow that perspective a step further? Am I grateful for this world filled with war, with rage, with waste and greed? It would be a lie to say that I'm not despite all of that, as it would be a lie to believe myself innocent of wrong. Sunday night will drag boxes out to the curb for recycling, evidence of all we consume, and the long and costly routes these essential goods travel before landing for a time in our life. I fly I drive. How can I look out at the trees and birds? How can I look at my own children, knowing that the everyday habits of lives like mine are unsustainable, that they've wrought irreversible havoc upon a not distant future. I can accept my own culpability. But it's hard to bring that acknowledgement into the vocabulary of things. It takes a wise and gifted poet to marry those two disparate perspectives to create a panoramic portrait of life that allows guilt and anger and shame to occupy the very same space as gratitude. I believe the late ws merwin was such a poet reading his poem thanks, takes courage, because it insists upon a fierce
form of moral reckoning.

Thanks. Bye ws merwin. Listen, with a knight falling. We are saying thank you. We are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings. We are running out of the glass rooms with our mouths full of food, to look at the sky and say thank you. We are standing by the water thinking it standing by the windows looking out in our directions. Back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging after funerals. We are saying thank you. After the news of the dead, whether or not we knew them. We are saying thank you. Over telephones, we are saying thank you, in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators, remembering wars and the police at the door and the beatings on stairs, we are saying thank you. In the banks, we are saying thank you in the faces of the officials and the rich and of all who will never change. We go on saying thank you. Thank you. With the animals dying around us. Taking our feelings. We are saying thank you. With the forests falling faster than the minutes of our lives. We are saying thank you, with the words going out like cells of a brain with the cities growing over us. We are saying thank you faster and faster with nobody listening. We are saying thank you. Thank you. We are saying and waving dark, though it is the slow down as a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation. To get a poem delivered to you daily. Go to slow down show.org and sign up for our newsletter.