




"A Song in Our Heart!"

Advent Devotional 2020

Covenant Presbyterian Church



Dear Covenant Family,

The theme of our Advent Devotional this year is “A Song in Our Heart,” which increasingly feels appropriate as this no-good, miserable, terrible day of a year marches on. After all, “A Song on Our Lips” is hard to pull off when you’re wearing a mask, and from a public health perspective, just isn’t a good idea right now anyway. So I really like the idea of keeping the songs of our lives incubating in our hearts.

That location also gives us permission to really sing what we feel – which on many days may not be songs of joy and thanksgiving. But guess what? Those conflicted feelings, those honest expressions of our experience of navigating this COVID-19 wilderness, not to mention the vitriol of an endless election season and the eruption of too-long-suppressed racial injustices, all this puts us in the really wonderful company of God’s people in all times and places. There’s no doubt that God’s people have always been singing people. Ever since Miriam and Moses sang out the first freedom song after Pharaoh’s army “got drowned-ed,” we’ve been a community of composers and choristers. What we haven’t been are people who sing only one kind of song. Instead, and with the faith that God is with us through all things, we have been people unafraid to lift up laments and protests, as well as shouts of joy and hope. In circumstances good and bad, we lift our voices – even when the sounds must remain within.

Let me thank all who have contributed to this year’s Advent devotional songbook, especially those who have gifted us with incredible and creative virtual offerings this time around. For the past several years we have been deeply blessed by contributions from our sisters and brothers in Olomouc, Czech Republic, and this year is no exception. Our prayers and longing for the possibility of singing together again continue to connect us as both our countries bend under the weight of the pandemic. I also need to extend thanks to Pam Knox, Karen Wetherington, and Rindy Trouteaud without whom this volume would never have been organized or produced.





**Covenant Presbyterian Church
Advent Devotional Booklet, 2020
"A Song in Our Hearts!"**

*"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and
redeemed them." Luke 1: 68*

Through the weeks of Advent, may we prepare our hearts to receive the peace of heaven, come to earth, as Christ's peace is born anew in us at Christmastide. Let us go out into the world with joy, and return with the gift of peace!

God comes to us in Christ Jesus- - as a child needing our help, whose face lights our way, who shows us God's goodness, and who walks with us on life's journey

Symbols of Advent

“Advent” means “a coming,” and the four weeks preceding Christmas, known as the Advent Season, take on special meaning for Christians throughout the world as they celebrate the coming of God’s great gift of Love—Jesus Christ, whose birth brings new life and hope to all.

The Advent wreath, used at Covenant each of the four Sundays in Advent, has a great deal of symbolism. You are encouraged to make an Advent wreath for your home and use it each Sunday - or more often - as you read your Advent devotionals prepared by Covenant members and friends.

THE WREATH - made of wire, grapevines, styrofoam, etc., -with no beginning and no end, symbolizes the eternal nature and love of God.



THE GREENERY - used for an Advent wreath reminds us of everlasting life found through faith in Jesus Christ.

THE RED BERRIES - like drops of blood, remind us of Christ’s blood, shed for forgiveness of our sins.

THE CANDLES - sometimes RED candles, the color of blood, are used to represent life. Sometimes PURPLE candles are used, representing royalty—Christ the KING. Sometimes a ROSE or PINK candle is for the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete (rejoice) Sunday. Sometimes a taller WHITE candle, representing PURITY is placed in the center of the wreath and lighted on Christmas Day.

The four Advent candles are equally spaced around the wreath, and on the first Sunday in Advent, one candle is lit. On each succeeding Sunday an additional candle is lit until, on the Sunday before Christmas, all candles burn brightly, with the Christ Candle in the center.

There are many other symbols of Advent, and you are encouraged to discover, use, and find meaning in as many as you can so that this Advent Season may be a meaningful time for you and those you love.

First Week of Advent

We Believe

The Advent of the Son of Man

The days before Advent brings the message of the Apocalypse. We read sections in Gospels dealing with the so called “last things“. Mark shows us very dramatically what is “at hand“. In the 13th chapter we read of many woes. Wars, earthquakes, hunger, persecution, enemies, and false prophets.

In present days we could say – and the pandemics! Despite that the evangelist does not mention this. We feel threatened by many circumstances and dangers of our present.

We do not know when the infection will be over. After the spring and summer optimism, the Czech Republic is going to face the big difficulty as for the COVID 19. We are now in European pinnacle. That means - we are falling from the top to the bottom, and we can hardly see – as we say – the light at the end of the tunnel .

But despite all dark predictions, despite the growing fear, despite many voices who like to haunt people, we can see the hope. When Jesus says that his followers must reckon with many troubles, he also says that all those horrible things will just precede his coming. And he will come as certainly as the fig tree’s blossoming predicts the summer.

He will “come in clouds with the power and the glory“. We don’t know the exact term of his Advent, but we have to be ready to welcome him.

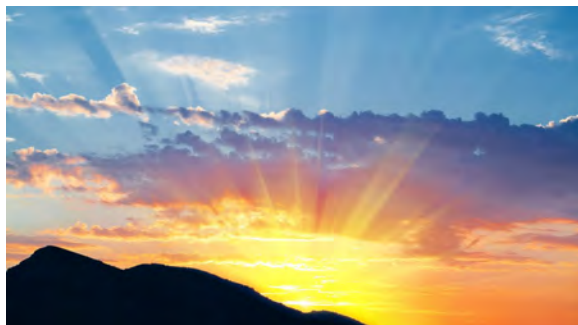
So – be awake, says the Son of man. This is the very center of the apocalyptic message. Not the catastrophes, not pains, and disasters will be seen – but the living, eternal Jesus Christ.

Dear friends in Athens, many greetings to you all from Olomouc. We wish you the blessed Advent and Christmas. And regardless the dangerous circumstances, there’s no need to lose our hope and joy !



Yours,

Jan Lukáš, Olomouc



I am writing this on a glorious October Monday morning. What a beautiful day it is today! You are reading this on another Monday, which may be glorious (or not). Late November weather is not usually like October weather in Athens. For some people, Mondays are never days to enjoy, because they mark the return to work and an end to the weekend and their time for relaxation. I enjoy my work and so

Mondays are not hard for me. But I admit that in 2020, all days feel a lot alike and if you are retired, of course, you may feel that way all the time. In any case, welcome! This is the first week of Advent, and so we are just beginning our journey to Christmas and the coming of the Christ Child. The sky is growing darker and the first stars are just starting to appear before the great blazing star that announces the birth of Jesus will appear. Since it is Advent and we are looking forward to the coming of the King, today's song is a perfect fit because it reminds us that at the end of days, Jesus the King will come again as those stars begin to fall, as described in the *Book of Revelation*.

I am excited that this year's devotional incorporates both scripture and music because I really miss the music at Covenant, and this way I can enjoy a little piece of heaven with my devotional reading. I hope that you will take the chance to sing or listen to these songs, or at least read the verses. *Pam Knox*

*Refrain: My Lord! what a morning;
my Lord! what a morning;
O my Lord! what a morning,
when the stars begin to fall,
when the stars begin to fall.*

*1. You will hear the trumpet sound
to wake the nations underground,
looking to my God's right hand,
when the stars begin to fall. [Refrain]*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJoDR704-BA>

Marian Anderson, Soloist

Tuesday, December 1

Isaiah 9: 2-7

Isaiah 9:2-7 ²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. ³You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. ⁴For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. ⁵Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. ⁶**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** ⁷**Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.** He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Take time to reflect on the names used to describe our Lord.

Wonderful Counselor. A **counselor** is someone who listens, who gives guidance. Synonyms include advisor, consultant, guide and mentor. Have you talked to Jesus as your counselor lately? Have you sought his feedback, his guidance in prayer and nature? Walk in the woods. Let your soul speak for you and then see if you can quiet your mind to hear his response. He wants us to talk to Him.

Mighty God. **Mighty** is to possess great and impressive power. 2020 has been a tumultuous year. Dare I say like a storm on the sea. Jesus once calmed the waves. He is mighty. He can handle absolutely everything that we cannot. If you are anything like me, you have this terrible habit of having pride. This keeps us from asking for help. This gives us the false confidence that we can handle it. We have a mighty God. Give him what you keep trying to carry. You don't need to carry it anymore.

Everlasting Father. **Everlasting** seems self-explanatory. But humans have a hard time psychologically grasping something without end. Endless, eternal, undying. He knows the past, present, and future. We know our past, live our present and hope -maybe fear? – for our future. Take strength, friends, knowing that he is before after us. **Father.** To be honest, this term is now controversial. Not everyone grew up with a father-figure and some grew up with the opposite of a good father. I grew up with a Father who was strict, who expected a lot from me, but I also knew I was loved. God is perfect. So everything our earthly fathers are not, God is so much more. Someone to look up to, to seek help from, to ask questions to. Pray today and ask for healing and strengthening in your relationship with God the Father.

Prince of Peace. **Prince** means leader, son of a king, ruler. We serve an eternal king. Worldly leadership will come and go and always fall short. Jesus provides us a leader who never fails us, does not fall short. Verse 7: "*Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.*"

God be with you, Merry Christmas. Abby



Breath of Life

*For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.
– Job 33:4*

When I meditate, I recall times I learned about breath. Isaiah 40 is the basis for the alto aria in Handel's Messiah, a short piece assigned to me by my voice teacher, Myrna Rose Robertson. I stood at the corner of her piano, concentrating on air in and out of my lungs and the shape of my mouth as I sent the air through. These exercises provided the conditioning to carry off a role in the musical, "Godspell," which also has some lyrics found in Isaiah 40. Training as part of the Clarke Central Chorale prepared me to sing with a mixed chorus in timeless and towering sacred places of Europe the summer I graduated. Those are the kind of song experiences that get into your DNA and remain there.

Waiting and attending has come to us all very early, stretching throughout this year.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.

Thank you, God, for the memory of breath. Thank you for the gift of song that surges through me and causes me to rise up to declare hope and peace.

*You who bring good news
to Zion, go up on a
high mountain.
You who bring good news to Jerusalem
lift up your voice with a
shout, lift it up, do not be
afraid.*



Holy Spirit, breathe through us and give us your strength. Help us quell our fear by your enlivening energy. Tune our hearts to sing your praise, and place your signatures on the chorus of our common life. With grateful hearts we rejoice in Emmanuel: God with us. Amen.

Kathy Boardman

God Promises to Rescue His People

Isaiah 43: Israel, the Lord who created you says, “Do not be afraid. I will save you. I have called you by my name— you are mine. When you pass through deep water, I will be with you; when you pass through rivers your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned, the hard trials that come will not hurt you....

God commands us to take care of our brothers and sisters in these troubled times to help us serve and bring peace on Earth.

I don't remember ever having sung this at Covenant but I have asked Gene's son, Scott Holshouser and his son (Gene's grandson) to sing this song. Here it is for you to enjoy. Anna Holshouser

<https://youtu.be/7hBQoE1NZsg>



¹A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD- ³and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

I recently ran into the etymology for the word “posterity,” and learned it originally described a practice of protecting the stump of a tree after it has been cut. This was done that no sylvan creatures might eat the new shoots created, all of which could become a part of the still living tree.

As I understand it, these newest, leaves and stems are the most vulnerable, both of their lack of a tough, outer bark, but also for their tastiness.

This new shoot from the stem of Jesse might be paradoxical in its needs and providence; the passage speaks of the fear or awe that brings, the power of a new justice for those in need and a dedication to protect the needy, yet it begins with an image that is delicate and small.

The reminder of Christ in my life, the Spirit of the Lord might tickle my brain with small, interesting ideas, some that are even easy to swallow. But that could be it. That could be the end. Not for the tree, but for my connection with what my faith can be. But this passage makes me feel that we must respect what this branch from the tree of Jesse can become at all times; Christ has branched out from the greater tree to be more than a tasty bite for ourselves, but a great arc of justice for all.

The idea that I can protect something vulnerable and small inside me, the beauty of the idea of Christ that manifests as my faith, and that this connects me to his mission of growing protection and righteousness for all brings me some peace.

All of that won't really fit on a sticky note, but it's good to remind myself. You know....for posterity. *Christine Carpenter*

Second Week of Advent



*1. As the wind song through the trees, as the stirring of the breeze,
So it is with the Spirit of God,
as the heart made strangely warm, as the voice within the storm,
So it is with the Spirit of God.
Never seen, ever known where the wind has blown
Bringing life, bringing power to the world,
As the dancing tongues of fire, as the soul's most deep desire,
So it is with the Spirit of God.*

*2. As the rainbow after rain, as the hope that's born again,
So it is with the Spirit of God,
As the green in the spring, as a kite on a string,
So it is with the Spirit of God,
Making worlds that are new, making peace come true,
Bringing gifts, bringing love to the world,
As the rising of the yeast, as the wine at the feast,
So it is with the Spirit of God.*

This is my twentieth consecutive year of contributing the December 6th Advent Devotional as a memorial to the day in 1992 when our beloved daughter (and child of Covenant), Marni, left us and joined the Great Spirit of the Universe. I am feeling deeply affected by the poetry of the lyrics of this beautiful hymn, and sensing that the Holy Spirit has somehow been involved in the happenstances of this being the musical 'scripture' selected for this particular day of our devotional!

I am feeling certain that Marni (as a lifelong student and lover of piano music—starting with Mary Lil Fortson here in Athens, in her Bachelors degree with Dr. William Ransom at Emory University, and in her Masters of Musicology program at Boston University) would have loved this hymn. She believed in God, and throughout her three-year struggle to survive lymphoma-leukemia she found and heard the voice of the Spirit of God within the storm of her life and in the reassuring hope of the rainbows she knew and in the Grace in which she believed she was given.

This seems to be among the most trying, stressful times in human history. As the song of the wind, the dancing tongues of fire, the continuing creation of new worlds, even the making of bread and wine for the feast to celebrate the gift of the birth of our Savior, so it is with the Spirit of God---bringing life, renewing hope, making peace come true, and bringing love to the world.

Larry L. Hatfield

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXcn6brw7dg>

*He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.*

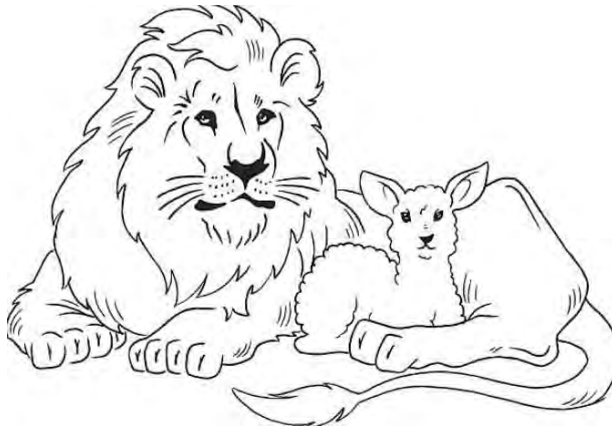
When I think of miscarriages of justice, I often think of problems of evidence: items gone missing or witnesses gone silent. Or possibly of legal technicalities, where guilt is proven but excused. The first four lines of this passage from Isaiah 11 don't necessarily contradict that, but they are puzzling. How else is a judge to decide if not by what is seen and heard? Is righteousness just a matter of reading between the lines of what's provable?

The larger context here is about the coming Messiah, who will set about reordering things, making wolves and lambs cuddle up together. And in that coming world, justice is not defined by accurate readings of the law. After all, maybe a lamb did trespass on the wolf's property, but that doesn't mean that he deserved to get eaten. Instead, there's an argument here for divine judicial activism, for decisions that uniformly favor the vulnerable and dispossessed, regardless of the legal details. It's a call for judges who will help build God's shalom, the beloved community where everyone has their own vine and fig tree.

This resonates with many of Jesus' own parables about grace, where unlikely characters end up with much more than they technically deserve—wages for an hour's work or party invitations they didn't expect. These give us a glimpse of a coming world that runs by very different rules from our own.

Jerry Shannon





#378 We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom

Verses 1 & 2

*We wait the peaceful kingdom, when wolf and lamb shall lie
In gentleness and friendship without a fear or sigh,
When lion shall be grazing, when snake shall never strike;
A little child shall lead us both strong and weak alike.*

*Where is the peaceful kingdom? When will this new day start?
We long for peace and comfort to reign within each heart.
Yet not in our lives only, nor simply in our home:
We pray that all creation will one day find shalom.*

Doesn't this hymn name say it all – We Wait the Peaceful Kingdom? The first verse paraphrases Isaiah 11:6-9 and the remaining stanzas reflect on that passage in widening frames of reference.

According to my MacArthur Study Bible, those verses from Isaiah mean that “*Conditions of peace will prevail to the extent that all enmity among men, among animals – rapacious or otherwise – and between men and animals will disappear. Such will characterize the future millennial kingdom in which the Prince of Peace (9:6) will reign.*”

And, of course, when I read Isaiah 9:6, the movement “For Unto Us a Child is Born” from Handel’s *Messiah* immediately starts playing in my head. Isn’t music so uplifting? Just think of the music we, animals and human, will sing when the peaceful kingdom is here and we find shalom!!

Thank you, God, for the gift of your Son.

- Linda Rogers



Although the revelation sent to Mary is at the center of this passage, I think it's essential that her cousin Elizabeth's story is its bookends. As devout and trusting as Mary was, she was sure to be terrified at the circumstances she was given. She had to have known that her chastity would be questioned, her family shamed and her soon-to-be-husband mortified. Even her very life could have been in danger. But when Ga-

briel told her the news, her response was confusion as to how this feat would be accomplished since she was a virgin. We don't know if there was the subtext of denial or fear under that question, or if she wondered why she was the one chosen for this most astounding of tasks. We do hear the angel reassuring her right away, though; reassuring her that not only can God do all things, but He has provided a comforter, a friend and an encourager in her own family to be there with her – her older cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth is only 6 months ahead of Mary, carrying her own miracle baby. Not only was the Spirit of God going to be with Mary, but God provided her with an understanding, supportive human to help her through, even if Elizabeth wouldn't be able to be at her physical side for very long.

I often think of this when I ponder my husband's and my recent move from Athens. Although we are closer to the ends of our careers than the beginning, we felt called away from our friends and family, and all that was comfortable to us, to begin a new chapter in a new state. We knew we wouldn't be alone, though. Not only would we meet new friends here, but we would always have our dear friends at Covenant/Central in our hearts, supporting us on our journey. Little did we know that the pandemic would allow us to worship "with" you all these last many months, supporting us in a way we never anticipated. I shouldn't be surprised though – God always finds a way to make known to us both His presence and the presence of dear others.

Prayer: Dear Parent, thank you for the gift of supportive friends through all our journeys.

by Joelle Ré Arp-Dunham

“Mary Was the Queen of Galilee”

One of the things I am enjoying about this year’s devotional is the chance to learn about new songs that I did not know before. Today’s selection is one that I had not heard of, and I love it. The YouTube version below is a haunting, simple song that describes Mary, the mother of Jesus. It’s just a few phrases, sung as a traditional Spiritual in a minor key, describing Mary’s role as the Queen of Galilee for her role in going to Bethlehem and birthing the Holy Lamb of God.

In this season of watching and waiting, Mary’s role as the expectant mother who is waiting to welcome her new son represents us all, waiting to welcome our Lord. What will His coming be like? How will our lives change? How will the earth respond? We can only wait and watch, hope and pray for the coming of our Lord in human flesh.

Pam Knox



Who was Mary?
Who was Mary?
Who was Mary?
Mary was the Queen of Galilee.
Who was Mary?
Who was Mary?
Who was Mary?
Mary was the Queen of Galilee.
Mary was the Queen of Galilee.
Mary rode to Bethlehem
Mary was the Queen of Galilee
There brought forth a holy lamb
Mary was the Queen of Galilee
Who was Mary?
Who was Mary?
Who was Mary?
Mary was the Queen of Galilee.
Mary was the Queen of Galilee.

Listen to the song at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl8sZx0_VS4.

If there's a line between happiness and joy, it must be a mighty fine one. Sometimes I think that we use those words interchangeably, with "joy" being simply a more intense version of the "happiness" that one of our country's sacred documents gives us a right to pursue. Unfortunately sometimes one person's right to pursue happiness comes at the expense of another's health or safety. Meaning, wear a mask!

I remember reading a wise theologian who suggested that there really is a difference between happiness and joy, with the difference being rooted in circumstances. Happiness, she said, depends on positive conditions, like good health or job and financial security, or lots of toys. By contrast, joy can erupt even when a situation seems dire and tense, as in a hospital waiting room, a prison cell, or even in an unusually empty house at Thanksgiving. The only requirement for joy is the presence of God and recognizing it.

It seems like something like that was happening when two cousins got together in the hill country of Judah to lean on each other in the face of their unplanned pregnancies. No sooner does Mary set foot in the house to hug her relative's old neck than Elizabeth breaks into song: *The babe in my womb/skipped like a lamb for sheer joy*. Luke wants us to know that Baby John recognized the presence of God in Baby Jesus long before the water broke, long before they reconnected and entered the waters of the Jordan River.

Even now, even in these times of numbing isolation and run-away-train death rates, the God of compassionate love finds a way into our world. Through exhausted nurses and doctors and teachers and grocery store workers and Amazon delivery drivers. Through caring phone calls and -- who knows? -- even through Zoom meetings. The God who is stronger than COVID-19 and even more persistent than our stubbornness and willful ignorance, this God finds a way to be present for us where we are. So if joy inexplicably breaks out in your heart, just go with it. And know that Elizabeth was right: blessed are you!

Mark Harper

Joseph Brodsky was born in St. Petersburg in 1940 but was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1972. He moved to the United States and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1987. He became the U.S. Poet Laureate in 1991. His book of Nativity Poems was translated from Russian by Melissa Green and published by Farrar, Status, & Giroux in New York. His poems are beautifully written and the translation preserves the rhyme of the original poem in Russian.

There are many ways to sing. A poem is a song in written language. *Dick Zimdars*

25. XII. 1993 - Joseph Brodsky

For a miracle, take one shepherd's sheepskin, throw
in a pinch of now, a grain of long ago,
and a handful of tomorrow. Add by eye
a little chunk of space, a piece of sky,

and it will happen. For miracles, gravitating
to earth, know just where people will be waiting,
and eagerly will find the right address
and tenant, even in a wilderness.

Or if you're leaving home, switch on a new
four-pointed star, then, as you say adieu,
to light a vacant world with steady blaze
and follow you forever with its gaze.

1993

Translated by Richard Wilbur

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_up_TRb7GI

Third Week of Advent



Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. ⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. ⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. ⁵⁴ He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; ⁵⁵ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

This beloved scripture is one of our favorites. One of the central texts of the Advent season, it is a song of joy, hope, praise, and paradox, which offers us much hope in the dark times we are going through. It is inspiring to learn that God has chosen a poor girl from the low end of society to bear the Savior of us all. There is hope for us all! Mary is filled with gratitude for the grace bestowed on her by God, and she expresses her hope and praise in her song of joy. Grace, gratitude, and hope are the essential ingredients for joy! They make our lives rich with possibility.

Paradoxically, although this text has been adopted as a key part of the high church liturgy, it has also been adopted by the proponents of liberation theology. We don't necessarily notice some of its radical precepts in the standard liturgy, but it is remarkable that Mary is sending us a message not only of hope and praise, but of the world turned upside down. God may be showing mercy, but he is doing it by upending the existing hierarchical order. While humility is rewarded, the haughty and prideful will see a comeuppance. The people on the bottom will be raised up and fed, while the rich will go away hungry. God's mercy will be shown to Israel and the children of Israel for all time. Christians can share this heritage through Mary's son, Jesus.

Mary's song, the Magnificat, is the theme of countless inspiring musical representations, including Schütz, Bach, Mozart, and Charles Pachelbel (son of Johann and organist in colonial Charleston, one of our favorite renderings). Try googling "Magnificat" music and composer name, and enjoy the uplifting music! Alleluia, Amen!

Jim and Ann Anderson



I must admit that although the refrain strikes a chord of hope for me, especially in these difficult years, many of the verses seemed obscure. So I did a little internet search and was blessed with new understanding, and HOPE! The Glory to God Hymnal says that this is based on Mary's "Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55). Reading the verses from the Message showed some similarities, but it was Katherine A. Greiner's commentary that opened my eyes and my mind.

Greiner writes of how Luke's stories often highlight a world being turned upside down. The rich are poor, the poor are rich. The lost are found, what was hidden in darkness is brought to light. The rejected are honored and the last are first. The World is About to Turn. This is not just "Good News" for the oppressed, it is a call and warning to those of us who have had the advantage of privilege. We must look at the world through Jesus' eyes. We must reach out as His hands. We must be the means by which God turns this world from one of "might makes right" to one of "Love your Neighbor", and even to pray for those who despitely use us. "The World is About to Turn". *Sandy Whitney*

Mary sings about her situation, can we also sing about ours?

1. "My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the God of my heart is great, and my spirit sings of the wondrous things that you bring to the ones who wait. You fixed your sight on your servant's plight, and my weakness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?"
2. Though I am small, my God, my all, you work great things in me, and your mercy will last from the depths of the past to the end of the age to be. Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the strong to flight, for the world is about to turn."

Refrain: "My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn." AMEN !

Katherine A. Greiner <https://dailytheology.org/2014/07/17/the-canticle-of-the-turning-the-gospel-of-luke-and-radical-imagination/>

Isaiah 7:14:

¹⁴Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

A leader, King Ahaz of Judah, was given a prophesy that was worth more than he would ever know. He had simply wanted assurance that the two countries attacking his would not conquer Judah. God speaks through Isaiah and offers King Ahaz not only reassurance, but a sign. King Ahaz declines, yet God gives it to him anyway. The sign would be that of the virgin giving birth to a boy, who would be called "God with us." He gave him a much bigger promise than what the king was even asking for.

As I sit here contemplating the words given to King Ahaz, who would never appreciate them, nor would he live to see them come true, I wonder how many of God's signs we miss in the world around us. It is so easy to get caught up in the currents of despair and impending doom that seem to waft around us in this trying time. Is God sending us signs that we will all be okay? Would we decline those signs as King Ahaz did, or open our hearts to God with love and trust?

The Holiday Season is a time to celebrate the very child that this verse was foretelling about, yet it can be a struggle for many of us. Yet, as I read this passage, I realize that God is here with us and will help us through this time of tumult. So, this year, I will look for his signs that he sends us; the smile from a stranger when I am down, the ability to help others, the hope that we will all make it through this pandemic and troubling political times and come out a stronger, closer country. I will take comfort in the words of Isaiah and let the promise God gave to King Ahaz give me hope, too. *Missy Green*



Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

Emerging out of the Middle Ages was a tender yet profound little poem telling of an ancient woman who became the most venerated woman in the Christian world. *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* tells of the birth of Jesus, featuring his mother Mary, the "rose" of the poem, and her lineage that validated the historical significance of her baby boy. Author unknown, the German text is dated 15th century. The tune we are most familiar with appeared in a hymnal in 1599 and the harmonization (we love to sing) was written by German composer Michael Praetorius in 1609.

The translation of German verses 1 and 2 is as follows:

A rose has sprung up,
From a tender root,
As the old ones sang to us,
Its strain came from Jesse
And it has brought forth a
floweret
In the middle of the cold
winter



The little rose that I mean
Of which Isaiah told
Is Mary the pure,
Who brought us the
floweret.
At God's eternal counsel
She has borne a child
Who makes us blessed.

Compare the above words with our hymn 129 verses

And there it is, in the loveliest of terms, the story of a woman whose family history goes all the way back to Jesse, father of David, the most famous and beloved king of Israel. Promised by the prophet Isaiah, from that kingly line is born to the Rose a baby boy who is destined to become our Savior. Throughout the two thousand year history of the Christian church the name of Mary the Mother has been honored, revered, even held sacred by many. Her simple trust and obedience to God's plan teaches us that the most unlikely person can have a part in that plan. When we sing this lovely song, make it a prayer of thanks for the woman who was there for Jesus from his beginning and through the cross and resurrection. Pray we celebrate his birth with the same faith, trust and obedience she represents.

God bless you this Christmas season.

Carol Huber

Read Matthew 1:18-25

There are many miraculous occurrences to ponder around Advent and Christmas, both in the now and the 'once upon a time'.

One that doesn't usually get top billing is the story of how Joseph did not allow Mary to become an 'unwed' mother. Certainly there was a stigma in those days (and even in the days of my youth) regarding conception and birth out of wedlock. Back in Joseph's time there were acceptable ways for a man to cancel his engagement given such an event. In that case, the woman would bear society's disapproval and shame alone, and her life and that of her child would likely become most difficult. I guess it has always been easy for a man to deny his responsibility in such matters. In choosing not to abandon Mary, Joseph opened himself up a share of society's disapproval, regardless of whether he was the father or not. He must have loved her truly; he certainly provided for a more secure future for her/their child.

In the history of Christianity, this is a very special story, but isn't it always somewhat miraculous when one chooses the well-being of others at the expense of self? Jesus taught by word and deed the availability and the desirability of such selfless behavior. Thanks be to God! *Phil Hale*

John Prine, a favorite musician of mine, wrote this about the injustice and sadness felt by an expectant young woman, alone:

"Unwed Fathers"

In an Appalachian Greyhound station
She sits there waiting in a family way
"Goodbye brother, tell Mom I love her
Tell all the others I'll write someday"

Chorus: From a teenage lover to an unwed mother
Kept undercover like some bad dream
While unwed fathers, they can't be bothered
They run like water through a mountain stream

In a cold and gray town, a nurse says, "Lay down
This ain't no playground and this ain't home"
Someone's children out having children
In a gray stone building all alone (Chorus)

On somewhere else bound, Smoky Mountain Greyhound
She bows her head down, hummin' lullabies
Your daddy never meant to hurt you ever
He just don't live here, but you've got his eyes (Chorus)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8g0cx3PdBDI>

Sweet Little Jesus Boy

*Sweet, Little Jesus boy,
they made you be born in a manger.
Sweet Little holy child,
- they didn't know who you were.
Didn't know you'd come to save us Lord,
- to take our sins away.*

*The world treated you
mean Lord -
treats me mean too.
But that's how things are down
here, Lord - we didn't know
who you were.*



*Sweet Little Jesus boy;
Sweet Little holy child;
and we didn't know who
you were, - Jesus boy.*

*Our eyes were blind,
and we could not see,
and we didn't know who you were.
A long time ago you were
born in a manger, born
in a manger low. Sweet
Little Jesus Boy.*

*Master, - you have shown us how,
even when you're dyin' ?
Just seems like we can't
do right; look how we treated you.
But please, Sir - forgive us Lord.
We just didn't know 'twas you.*

A beautiful, crisp, autumn morning is spent sipping lemon ginger tea and snacking on pumpkin bread, while listening to different CD versions of "Sweet Little Jesus Boy", words and music by Robert MacGimsey. The first: Kathleen Battle & Christopher Parkening - exquisite; the second: Kenny Rogers - heartfelt; the third: Covenant's Christmas Choral Music, 1984 to 2001 - a beautiful and precious gift shared by this faith community. Reflections enlivened memories of musical offerings by both individuals and ensembles of all ages, celebrated to the Glory of God in rehearsals, worship, and life together.

We began attending Covenant Presbyterian in 1983, both of us 36 and with two young children. We were far away from home, West Virginia and Wisconsin respectively. Like many others, we immersed ourselves in Covenant's work and worship life. It was still a "growth" time for churches. The loving, giving spirit, sharing of time, talents, and resources led to families worshipping regularly, meeting in Sunday School classes and studying the Bible as well as the works and teachings of Jesus, along with contemporary theological themes through creative discussions, contemplations, celebrations, and all forms of modern media. Children and youth were involved and enfolded; fellowship events were held throughout the liturgical year, save for a summer break in August. Mission and service outreach efforts, locally and internationally, got planned and carried out, by this extended-family faith community.

These words from "Sweet Little Jesus Boy" - "our eyes were blind . . . we couldn't see . . . we didn't know 'twas you", were not how we experienced Covenant. We saw the love, hope, joy, and inspiration of Jesus reflected in diligent efforts and heartfelt worship of Covenant's members along with its many friends. There was a Glory of life in Christ with good news generously shared by and for all. Let the Peace of God be with you this Advent and Christmas season! Let love fill your hearts, hope fill your dreams and prayers, and joyfulness be your dance as you pass along Christ's peace for experiencing by everyone whom you encounter.

And may Christ's Grace and God's enduring Love embrace you, Betsy & Rich

Now: Census 2020, during a tumultuous election year.

Then: Census more than two thousand years ago, Mary and Joseph made their way to Bethlehem to be counted by their Roman rulers. Voting was not an issue in those days, as their country was completely subjugated by the harsh rule of the Roman Empire. The future must have looked bleak for new parents. However Mary had a song in her heart, still ringing from her visit to Elizabeth, “My soul glories in the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” The song encouraged her.

As a friend reminded me, courage comes from the French *couer*, meaning *heart*.

Having a song in my heart causes my heart to sing, fills me with love which overcomes fear and gives me courage to face the day! Are you thinking of the songs you know *by heart*, including the memories that go with them?

One thing I miss about COVID restrictions of social distancing and masks is singing together. I was shocked after a month of COVID to discover how my singing voice, unused for so long, came out as a dreadful croak! After Zooming to Covenant Presbyterian in Athens, GA, I began belting out “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.....” while washing my hands. After Zooming to Bethel Presbyterian in Kingston, TN, I started singing Wendy’s catchy song, “This is the day, this is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Gradually this song began to play in my head, cheering me up, and encouraging me; as I sang aloud, my croak began to change to the sound of a (courageous, older) human singing!

Some people sing as they do their chores, but that is not my habit. Coal miners underground in PA sing as they learned to from the Welch miners who taught them to dig for coal. Workers in the fields, slaves and chain gangs sang together, making the work bearable. Singing the protest songs gives power and strength in community. Keep singing with gratitude in your heart for all the gifts that God gives us daily. Sing faith, love, and hope for the trials of the day. Remember the words of the Angel, “Fear not” and sing with the hosts of heaven.

I want to learn *by heart* the words of one of the songs our friend Coffee Worth chose for her memorial celebration: “I Cannot Keep from Singing.” And I hope to sing it too, aloud or in my heart during the coming days.

Margaret Weirich

Uplands Village, near Crossville, TN



Fourth Week of Advent



Close your eyes and picture this newborn baby of Mary's. See his helpless beauty, touch his softness, smell his fresh breath, hold him close to your heart and feel the sweet potential of the child, the strength and enthusiasm of the youth, the wisdom and commitment of the man. This is Mary's experience in the stable. She knew hers was a special baby who would someday become a very important messenger of God. She embraced this child and this knowledge with willingness and love.



In William Wordsworth's poem, *Intimations of Immortality*, he writes,

“. . .trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, Who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!"

Jesus truly came trailing clouds of glory and signifying for each of us, from those too poor to afford a home and bed, to those who reside within the ultimate royalty of heaven, that all are linked together—stable, animals, stars, the wise and the simple, the quietness and the music. The blessings of Mary's baby and Christmas are offered to all of us with love, compassion and grace.

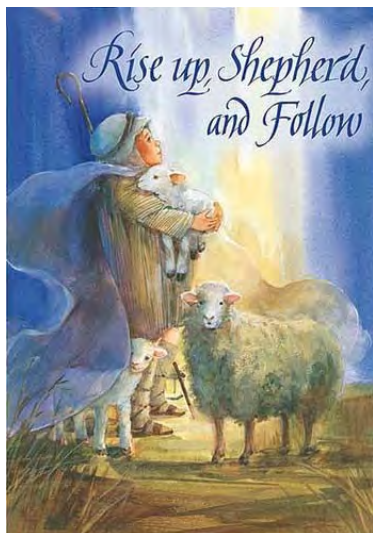
Barbara Burnett

The world in solemn stillness lay, To hear the angels sing.

It happens one day a year, or at least, that was what we were told, but what does a five year old know? On the first day of winter, as the pale pink sun poked through the gray clouds pillowing the horizon, I tiptoed outside while my parents and siblings slept and watched, entranced, as the newly-fallen snow arced heavenward to catch stray glimmers of morning light uncompromised by the fumes of school buses, snow plows, and harried commuters in their boxy station wagons. I waited patiently, clapping my mittened hands together to ward off frostbite, looking for a sign of a divine visitation which I would recognize because, well, I BELIEVED. Afterall, I heard the throaty soprano in the flowing robe whom I thought was the most beautiful woman in the whole world, next to my mother, sing it in church. *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear*...angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. Knee-deep in a snowbank ablaze with diamond flakes, no two of which were alike, according to Miss Mary of *Romper Room* fame, I spied flecks of errant gold and rolled them in a fist-sized snowball. Cradling this precious treasure in my icy-cold hands, I slipped into our darkened house and tracked through the kitchen in wet boots to place my gold-speckled snowball in the freezer. Later that afternoon as my mother took out a cellophaned package of pork chops for dinner, she saw the snowball and cried out with exasperation, “How did this thing get in my freezer?” and I told her with excitement that angels scattered gold from their harps in the snow in front of our house just like the Christmas carol promised and she said, “O honey, you’ve got that confused with leprechauns and rainbows.” But I knew better. I had seen the smile on the face of the Baby Jesus sleeping in the straw-filled manger in the church front yard, and I knew he closed his eyes listening to angel lullabyes and dreaming of peace on earth.

Prayer practice: Go outside at dawn with your steaming cup of coffee and imagine the skies filled with the heavenly host greeting God-with-Us, Emmanuel, and join them in longing for the day when *the whole world (will) give back the song which now the angels sing.*

Rindy Trouteaud



1 There's a star in the East on Christmas morn;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
It will lead to the place where the Christ was born;
Rise up, shepherd and follow.

Refrain: Follow, follow; Rise up, shepherd, and follow. Follow the Star of Bethlehem; Rise up, shepherd, and follow.

2 Leave your sheep, leave your sheep,
and leave your lambs; Rise up, shepherd, and follow;
Leave your ewes and your rams, leave your ewes and
rams; Rise up, shepherd and follow. [*Refrain*]

3 If you take good heed to the angel's words;
Rise up, shepherd, and follow; You'll forget your flocks, you'll forget your herds; Rise
up, shepherd and follow. [*Refrain*]

Like many spirituals, the origins of this popular Christmas hymn are shrouded in the mists of time and the text does not accurately reflect the biblical narrative of Christ's birth (it was the wisemen who followed the star, not the shepherds). However, this does not detract from the hymn's strong call to action. Like our own imperfect attempts to point others towards our Creator, this carol invites us to rise and follow; our long wait for salvation is over. It also reminds us that God's call often comes at an inconvenient time and it can be oh-so-tempting to say "Yes, but not now." Whether it's shearing the flock or trying to meet an important deadline at work, God pierces through our reality and leaves it to us to heed the angel's words. *Jacob Douylliez*

Admittedly, the painted plaster manger scene we had when I was a kid wasn't very realistic. The sheep were as clean and fluffy as teddy bears. All the figures looked orderly and perhaps even a little bored. Mary definitely didn't have the disheveled look of a new mother (who gave birth in a barn, no less) nor did Joseph appear as though he'd missed any sleep. By the time January 6 rolled around, we'd often forgotten about the manger scene or it had already been packed away when the tree came down. But if we did remember, on Epiphany three more figures were added. These latecomers were males in jewel-toned robes edged with a few dabs of metallic gold paint. Each had a different skin and hair color. Each held a fancy gift box. These were the Magi.

If you do a search for these biblical figures in theology books or even just through the web, it quickly becomes a rabbit hole with branching tunnels to explore. The Magi are also known as kings or wise men. Some believe they were astrologers or magicians. There are always three Magi in Christmas cards, carols, and Renaissance paintings—a tidy number so each can carry one of the gifts mentioned in the scene. In actuality, Matthew doesn't tell us how many Magi there were. A few centuries after Christianity began, tradition declared that not only was it a trio but they were named Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior. They were also revealed as multicultural, traveling from far flung places. Matthew, however, does not elaborate on Magi origins. With Bethlehem and Jerusalem near the far edge of the Mediterranean sea, there are many countries that would count as "east."

All we really know is that the Magi "from the east" had to travel to Jerusalem from another country. They knew about Jesus' birth through the phenomenon of the star, correctly interpreting this enigmatic sign. They understood the significance and acted accordingly—traveling in an era when travel wasn't easy, bowing down to show honor when they arrived, worshipping, and offering gifts of great value. After their mission was accomplished and God spoke to them in a dream, they were again spiritually "in tune" and understood the message. They respected and obeyed. Although they were brought before a powerful king and taken into his confidence, they chose to disobey the earthly ruler, risking their safety to instead obey the higher unseen power. The Magi practiced civil disobedience to protect the innocent. The implication of the story is that they were not Jews. They certainly weren't Christians as this religion was just sprouting from long-planted seeds. Nevertheless, the Magi were in tune with God, communicated with God, and helped accomplish God's will.

When I was growing up, I was thankful for the Magi portion of the Christmas story because otherwise gifts might not be a part of our holiday traditions. Now I love it for another reason—the gift of glimpsing God working outside our known sphere, beyond our knowledge and comfort zone.

Valerie Stone

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi ^[a] from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."
³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:
⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."^[b]"
⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."
⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.





“Sister Mary Had-a but One Chile”

*Refrain: Sister Mary had-a but one chile
born in Bethlehem
An' ev'ry time de baby cried
She'd rock it in a weary land.
She'd rock it in a weary land.*

*O' three wise men through Jerusalem came
Dey traveled very far
Said, “Where is He born King of the Jews:
For we have seen His star.”
King Herod's heart was troubled.
He marveled but his face was grim
Said, “Tell me, where de chile may be found
I'll go and worship Him. I'll go and worship Him.*

Refrain

*Den an angel appeared to Joseph
An' gave him dis command
“Arise an' take-a yo' wife an' chile
Go free into Egypt Land.
For yonder comes o;' Herod
a wicked man an' bold
He's slayin' all de chillen
From six to eight days old.
From six to eight days old.*

Weary, oh, how weary we sometimes are. Weary of hearing the news of more and more sickness and death from a worldwide pandemic. Weary of being separated from so many of our loved ones. Weary of the loss of the physical connection with community and friends. Today, we may be especially weary if we are unable to celebrate Christmas with our beloved traditions.

This beautiful and touching performance of a spiritual once sung by enslaved Africans reminds us that being weary is nothing new. Yet, these oppressed people believed that in Jesus there was hope for the morrow. God provided a way for Mary, Joseph and Jesus to travel to Egypt to escape Herod's cruel orders. Was Mary weary? What new mother wouldn't be--with a young child to care for and an arduous journey to a strange land? Yet, she must have been so thankful that her son's life had been spared.

Prayer: On this day, may our own weariness give way to thankfulness and the promise of a new day. Jesus has promised to be with us always and he has given us His peace. Thanks be to God. *Pam Butts*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ffANdDZ1RUK>

“The waiting is the hardest part” – Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, “The Waiting”

It is finished! Our time of Advent preparation, of keeping hope alive while walking in darkness, is ended at first light. It was just four weeks, but it felt like four years. In the words of Mississippi bluesman Furry Lewis, “I been down so long it seems like up to me.” Christmas Day turns us over and makes us upright again.

At Christmas we celebrate the arrival of the Christ Child. Today’s scripture is from the beginning of the Gospel of John. It begins with a birth story, but it’s not about the no-vacancy sign at the inn and the baby Jesus. The Prologue of John reads like a new creation story. “In the beginning” in Genesis describes the creation of a good and initially sinless world. John’s “In the beginning” tells of the *re*-creation, with the Word becoming flesh to make our relationship to God whole again.

“One little word shall fell him” – Martin Luther, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

What is this Word? Jesus; but not just Jesus, I think. It’s easy to forget in 2020 that we are People of the Book, as are our Jewish and Muslim cousins. Words matter, have meaning, and can and should convey truth to us. We live in a culture that directly challenges these beliefs. Words in our time do not partake of the sacred; they are not “the Word,” they’re just “word salad” in response to a question, or “fake news” if their truth hurts. It is a lifeless darkness.

Martin Luther cryptically tells us that just *one* word overcomes all this truly Satanism. What is this word? Theology student Bryce Young provocatively proposes that the word Luther had in mind is: “Liar!” The darkness loses power when the Confuser—as Clarence Jordan translated “Satan” in his Cotton Patch Gospels—is shorn of his disguise and outed as a con man.

Justice Louis Brandeis famously noted regarding political corruption, “Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.” Shining a light into the darkness dispels it; shining the Light on the Confuser makes us upright again.

“John himself was not the Light” – John 1:8, The Living Bible

The Confuser is an artful dodger, however, and he always has a side deal to save his skin and steal your soul. “Look how much attention you will get by outing me,” he says. “Only Jesus will be more famous than you!” Watch out. In the immortal words of Admiral Ackbar, “It’s a trap!”

In our joy at the coming of the Lord, we must not lose the hard-won humility of the Advent season. John instructs us with reference to another John, the Baptist. The people in darkness wanted this John to be their savior, but he didn’t let his high ratings go to his head. Instead of being their false god, John chose to be their humble guide to the true Light.

As we emerge into that Light on Christmas Day, let us do so with the Word on our lips, a song stuck in our heads, and the peace, love, grace and truth of the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts, for now and evermore.

Dear sisters and brothers,

You might be surprised to see somebody from a small Central European country daring to write about the typical African-American spiritual song from the middle of the 19th century. Let me explain. This song means a lot in my childhood memories. I grew up in the period of communist totalitarianism and we (especially we Christians, but not only) were used to reading between the lines in lyrics, speeches, poetry, songs. We felt a lack of freedom, we wanted to encourage ourselves and longed for being encouraged in every possible way. One of the ways was singing African-American spirituals, expressing the desire for freedom we identified ourselves with. And to sing them in English (in the language of “the imperialists”) was a sign of resistance. You who spent some time in Olomouc might have noticed this affection of the whole community to African-American songs. And it might have seemed ridiculous to you. But by singing these songs we used to express our deep hope that “we shall overcome”. And we also knew a revised version of the song *Go, tell it on the mountains* – the version sung by Peter, Paul and Mary (1963). One verse in this version is a reference to the biblical story from Exodus: “Let my people go”. We wanted to be free, we wanted to be freed from spiritual slavery. Even now we have a number of spirituals in the Christian hymnbook for young people. In both languages: Czech and English.

And now? Our world suffers not only from COVID 19 or other terrible diseases, but we all suffer from an instability of political systems, from fears of the future, from human weakness. Into our reluctance to be empathetic, humble, kind, helpful to the people around us etc., the joyful news of Christ's birth is to be heard clearly and with conviction even this Christmas.

Jana Vraiová







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