



How does a weary world rejoice?

We acknowledge our weariness

Advent Study • Week One • November 29, 2023

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 (Common English Bible)

80 Shepherd of Israel, listen!

You, the one who leads Joseph as if he were a sheep.

You, who are enthroned upon the winged heavenly creatures.

Show yourself ²before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh!

Wake up your power!

Come to save us!

³Restore us, God!

Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

⁴Lord God of heavenly forces,

how long will you fume against your people's prayer?

⁵You've fed them bread made of tears;

you've given them tears to drink three times over!

⁶You've put us at odds with our neighbors;

our enemies make fun of us.

⁷Restore us, God of heavenly forces!

Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

¹⁷Let your hand be with the one on your right side—
with the one whom you secured as your own—

¹⁸ then we will not turn away from you!

Revive us so that we can call on your name.

¹⁹ Restore us, Lord God of heavenly forces!

Make your face shine so that we can be saved!

Luke 1:1-23 (Common English Bible)

¹ Many people have already applied themselves to the task of compiling an account of the events that have been fulfilled among us. ² They used what the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed down to us. ³ Now, after having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, I have also decided to write a carefully ordered account for you, most honorable Theophilus. ⁴ I want you to have confidence in the soundness of the instruction you have received.

⁵ During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord's commandments and regulations. ⁷ They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. ⁸ One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. ⁹ Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. ¹⁰ All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. ¹¹ An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear.

¹³ The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the Lord's eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. ¹⁶ He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? My wife and I are very old."

¹⁹ The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in God's presence. I was sent to speak to you and to bring this good news to you. ²⁰ Know this: What I have spoken will come true at the proper time. But because you didn't believe, you will remain silent, unable to speak until the day when these things happen."

²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they wondered why he was in the sanctuary for such a long time. ²² When he came out, he was unable to speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he gestured to them and couldn't speak. ²³ When he completed the days of his priestly service, he returned home.

Artwork

- “Make Your Face Shine” by Lisle Gwynn Garrity, acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing
- “Annunciation to Zechariah” by Lauren Wright Pittman, acrylic and ink on wood panel

Wade In

Over time
wind and water
will sand down the edges of a stone.
For humans,
our wind and water
is the grief of the world.

Stay here long enough
and pieces of you
will be pressed upon
by life’s never-ending stream.
It’s enough to make you weary.
It’s enough to make you question.
It’s enough to make you quiet.
And yet, the stream continues.

So do not be afraid to stand in that water.
Wade in. Soak the hem of your jeans.
Drip wet footprints through every room in your house.
Let the water stains tell your story.
And when your body grows weary of swimming,
name the stream.
Acknowledge your weariness.
For eventually,
you will pick flowers from
the opposite bank.
And over and over again, we’ll tell this story.
And over and over again,
a weary world will rejoice.

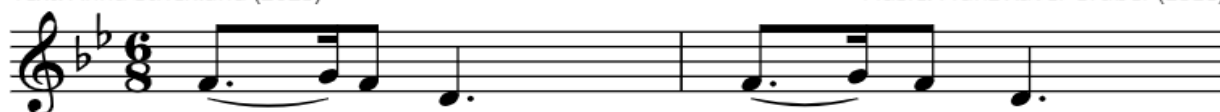
by Rev. Sarah Speed, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org

Weary World Rejoice

STILLE NACHT ("Silent Night")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Franz Xaver Gruber (1818)



Wea - ry world, God's own vine
Wea - ry world, bro - ken and bruised
Wea - ry world, out of hope
Wea - ry world, wait - ing still



Tears our on - ly bread and wine
Name of God so mis-used
Dis - be - lief is how we cope
Hold - ing our breath un - til



Cry - ing out to be re-stored
Can we see the light of Christ
We've left faith to rot and rust
Christ re - turns in truth and grace



Des - perate for a break from war
Glow - ing in each per - son we spite?
Dreams are cov - ered in lay - ers of dust
Will we re - cog - nize his face?



Wea - ry world re - joice



Come and raise your voice



How does a weary world rejoice?

We find joy in connection

Advent Study • Week Two • December 6, 2023

Isaiah 40:1-11 (Common English Bible)

40 Comfort, comfort my people!
says your God.

² Speak compassionately to Jerusalem,
and proclaim to her that her compulsory service has ended,
that her penalty has been paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins!

³ A voice is crying out:
"Clear the Lord's way in the desert!
Make a level highway in the wilderness for our God!"

⁴ Every valley will be raised up,
and every mountain and hill will be flattened.
Uneven ground will become level,
and rough terrain a valley plain.

⁵ The Lord's glory will appear,
and all humanity will see it together;
the Lord's mouth has commanded it."

⁶ A voice was saying:
"Call out!"

And another said,
"What should I call out?"

All flesh is grass;
all its loyalty is like the flowers of the field.

⁷ The grass dries up

and the flower withers
when the Lord's breath blows on it.
Surely the people are grass.
⁸The grass dries up;
the flower withers,
but our God's word will exist forever.
⁹Go up on a high mountain,
messenger Zion!
Raise your voice and shout,
messenger Jerusalem!
Raise it; don't be afraid;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"
¹⁰Here is the Lord God,
coming with strength,
with a triumphant arm,
bringing his reward with him
and his payment before him.
¹¹Like a shepherd, God will tend the flock;
he will gather lambs in his arms
and lift them onto his lap.
He will gently guide the nursing ewes.

Luke 1:24-25 (Common English Bible)

²⁴Afterward, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She kept to herself for five months, saying, ²⁵"This is the Lord's doing. He has shown his favor to me by removing my disgrace among other people."

Artwork

- "Comfort, O Comfort" by Lauren Wright Pittman, inspired by Isaiah 40:1-11, digital print
- "Two Mothers" by Nicolette Peñaranda, inspired by Luke 1:24-25, acrylic, ink, and mixed media collage on canvas

Lessons in Connection

It's been a long day,
long enough to complain,
long enough to wine and dine my
disappointment,
to give weariness
keys to the house.
But then you get the giggles
dancing with the dog in the kitchen.
Paws-sliding, tail-wagging,
side-cramping giggles.
I can hear it from across the house.
Your joy burrows its way
through the cracks in my armor
and then we are both laughing,
gulping for joyous, electric air.
And that's when I know—
if you grab my hand,
if you ask me to dance,
if our weary human souls can
make room for connection,
then we will survive.
Joy will take root.
Love will keep
her keys to the house.

by Rev. Sarah Speed, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org

I Can Celebrate You

CRANHAM ("In the Bleak Midwinter")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Gustav Holst (1906)



I can cel - e - brate you, I can hold your joy
I can re - cog - nize good fruit that you will bear
We can hold each oth - er in our joy and fear



When the load is crush - ing and you've lost your voice
When your own self - doubt hides gifts you have to share
Know - ing that the Spir - it moves when we are near



I can cel - e - brate the pro - mise your life holds
I can re - cog - nize your Christ - light deep with - in
We can hold each oth - er, lift each oth - er up



When the wear - i - ness bears hea - vy on your soul
Ev - ery gift that God has sown wait - ing to be - gin
Fill - ing one a - noth - er from the Spir - it's cup



How does a weary world rejoice?

We allow ourselves to be amazed

Advent Study • Week Three • December 13, 2023

Psalm 126 (Common English Bible)

126 When the Lord changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was like we had been dreaming.

² Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts.

It was even said, at that time, among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them!"

³ Yes, the Lord has done great things for us, and we are overjoyed.

⁴ Lord, change our circumstances for the better, like dry streams in the desert waste!

⁵ Let those who plant with tears reap the harvest with joyful shouts.

⁶ Let those who go out, crying and carrying their seed, come home with joyful shouts, carrying bales of grain!

Luke 1:57-66 (Common English Bible)

⁵⁷ When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a boy. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives celebrated with her because they had heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy. ⁵⁹ On the eighth day, it came time to circumcise the child. They wanted to name him Zechariah because that was his father's name. ⁶⁰ But his mother replied, "No, his name will be John."

⁶¹ They said to her, “None of your relatives have that name.” ⁶² Then they began gesturing to his father to see what he wanted to call him.

⁶³ After asking for a tablet, he surprised everyone by writing, “His name is John.” ⁶⁴ At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak again, and he began praising God.

⁶⁵ All their neighbors were filled with awe, and everyone throughout the Judean highlands talked about what had happened. ⁶⁶ All who heard about this considered it carefully. They said, “What then will this child be?” Indeed, the Lord’s power was with him.

Artwork

- “Watercourses” by Hannah Garrity, inspired by Psalm 126, Oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas
- “What Wonder Turns Into” by Lisle Gwynn Garrity, inspired by Luke 1:57-66, acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing

All the Way to Joy

We could play hard and fast,
not let anything touch us at all,
keep composure,
have all the answers.
Or we could crack ourselves open
and let everything in.
We could feel everything,
every touch, every marvel.
We could stand gaping
at the beauty of the world,
mouths wide open (because sometimes
a mouth wide open is the very best gratitude).
We could laugh so loudly
that the whole restaurant looks,
and err on the side of goofy
whenever possible.
We could put our defenses down.
We could grow soft.
We could choose awe.
We could take her by the arm.
We could let her lead us all the way to joy.

by Rev. Sarah Speed, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org

Awe

The birds could spend their lives
on telephone wires,
feet under them,
sure and steady.
Or they could open their wings,
leave the ground,
and let the wind carry them home.
I want to be like the birds.
I want an open heart,
open arms,
open eyes.
Give me a sky view,
for I do not want to miss a thing.

by Rev. Sarah Speed, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org

Isn't It Amazing?

GLORIA ("Angels We Have Heard on High")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Traditional French Carol



Seeds with-in the so - il grow Deep un - der the
Deep - er, deep - er grow the roots Reach-ing up-ward
Cell by cell a plant is built Toward the sun the
Ev - en when the earth seems bare Plant the seeds of



ground be - low Plant - ed when the earth was bare
grow the shoots Through the earth they weave and snake
leaves will tilt Nour-ished by the sun and rain
hope with care If you wat - er in the drought



No life show-ing an - y - where Glo -
Un - til so - il starts to break Glo -
To bring forth its seed and grain Glo -
You will reap with joy - ous shout Glo -



ri - a Is - n't it a - ma - zing?



Glo - ri - a



Is - n't it a - ma - zing?



How does a weary world rejoice?

We sing stories of hope

Advent Study • Week Four • December 20, 2023

Luke 1:46-55 (Common English Bible)

⁴⁶ Mary said,

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

⁴⁷ In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior.

⁴⁸ He has looked with favor on the low status of his servant.

Look! From now on, everyone will consider me highly favored

⁴⁹ because the mighty one has done great things for me.

Holy is his name.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy to everyone,
from one generation to the next,
who honors him as God.

⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered those with arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations.

⁵² He has pulled the powerful down from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty-handed.

⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his servant Israel,
remembering his mercy,

⁵⁵ just as he promised to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to Abraham’s descendants forever.”

Luke 1:67-80 (Common English Bible)

⁶⁷ John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,

⁶⁸ "Bless the Lord God of Israel

because he has come to help and has delivered his people.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house,

⁷⁰ just as he said through the mouths of his holy prophets long ago.

⁷¹ He has brought salvation from our enemies

and from the power of all those who hate us.

⁷² He has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,

and remembered his holy covenant,

⁷³ the solemn pledge he made to our ancestor Abraham.

He has granted ⁷⁴ that we would be rescued

from the power of our enemies

so that we could serve him without fear,

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness in God's eyes,

for as long as we live.

⁷⁶ You, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High,

for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way.

⁷⁷ You will tell his people how to be saved

through the forgiveness of their sins.

⁷⁸ Because of our God's deep compassion,

the dawn from heaven will break upon us,

⁷⁹ to give light to those who are sitting in darkness

and in the shadow of death,

to guide us on the path of peace."

⁸⁰ The child grew up, becoming strong in character. He was in the wilderness until he

began his public ministry to Israel.

Artwork

- "Prophecy" by Hannah Garrity, inspired on Luke 1:67-80, oil paint, charcoal, and copper leaf on canvas
- "Embroidered Borders" by Nicolette Peñaranda, inspired by Luke 1:46-55, acrylic, ink, and mixed media collage on canvas

The Sound of Hope

We've been singing a sad song
for quite some time,
the melody syncing with our heartbeats,
the lyrics stamped to the front of our minds.
You say, *sad songs are honest*.
It's hard to disagree,
for sad songs tap us on the shoulder.
Sad songs remind us
of the 100 different corners
heartbreak could be behind.

But I don't have it in me
to sing a sad song forever.

So despite the news,
despite the aches in my body,
despite the phone call last night
that says she's waiting for the test results,
despite yesterday's shooting,
despite the unknown and unchanged,
I am going to sing a song of hope.

Like a canary in a snowstorm,
I don't need another song of what is;
I need a song of what could be.
So sing with me.
Our voices may get drowned out by the wind,
but surely someone will ask:
Was that a flash of yellow in the snow?
Was that the sound of hope?

by Rev. Sarah Speed, A Sanctified Art LLC, sanctifiedart.org

Lullaby of Praise

WARUM SOLLT' ICH ("All My Heart This Night Rejoices")

Text: Anna Strickland (2023)

Music: Johann G. Ebeling (1666)



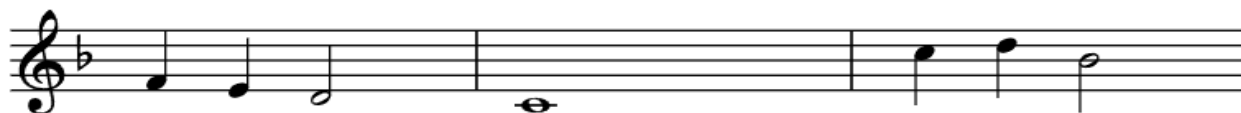
Praise to God, for God is wor - thy
Praise, my soul, for God is ho - ly
Praise to God who shows us fa - vor



Seers of old have fore - told
O - ver - throws lof - ty thrones
Brings us hope, lifts the low



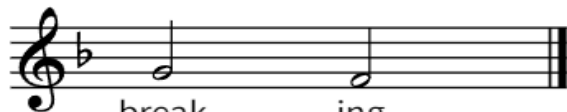
Cov - e - nants of mer - cy God's great love for
Lift - ing up the low - ly God's great jus - tice
Sends to us a sav - ior God's great mer - cy



us is ach - ing Guide our feet
roles re - ver - sing Hun - gry fed
here re - deem - ing Set - ting free



in - to peace As the dawn is
more than bread Rich the and haugh - ty
'til we see earth and heav - en



break - ing
serv - ing
meet - ing