



Come Light our Hearts

TENTH WEST SIDE // ADVENT READER

Hope

NOVEMBER 27, 2022 // ROGER RODRÍGUEZ LEWITES

*The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned. . . .
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.*

ISAIAH 9:2,6

REFLECTION:

I recently returned from a mission trip from Phnom Penh, Cambodia. This trip unveiled to me the fourteen years of involvement that Tenth Church has had in Cambodia and how rooted is the impact on those who have been blessed by it. I had a first-hand experience with young men and women leaders full of the Holy Spirit at Shalom Valley (the first and only Christian camp in the country). I witnessed the bold displays of leadership, profound words being shared about shame and guilt, and an compelling atmosphere of healing. The Lord revealed that although Cambodia has a past of a brutal genocide and deep brokenness, a new generation is being redeemed through an authentic experience of God's mercy and love. I genuinely saw the power of hope right in front of my eyes through the eyes, hands, feet, and hearts of the people of Cambodia. What an encouragement. There is hope!

SHOWN ON COVER:

Messianic Predictions

Thomas Ingmire

2005; Handwritten with quills on calf-skin vellum, gold and platinum leaf, and hand-ground pigment

PRAYER:

Lord I pray that your words of healing are heard in Cambodia. I pray that you open hearts to forgive the atrocities of genocide that occurred in the killing fields. I pray that through your love new generations find hope to rise from the ashes. May your light of truth guide them and provide the inner peace and joy that they need. As for Canada, our country, I pray for thankful hearts recognizing that you are the light who brings hope to nations. Thank you because you are our Creator who has breathed life unto us. Amen.

Hope NOVEMBER 28, 2022 // SONG

Listen to: *Every Ditch, Every Valley* by Ordinary Time, Until He Comes

Hope NOVEMBER 29, 2022 // READING

Spend time reading **Isaiah 9** and reflecting on how it might connect to hope in your own life and in the world.

Hope NOVEMBER 30, 2022 // PRACTICE

Take a minute to think of a person who could benefit from having their sense of hope reinforced. Send them a text or give them a call to encourage them today.

Hope DECEMBER 1, 2022 // POEM

Witness

by Denise Levertov

Sometimes the mountain
is hidden from me in veils
of cloud, sometimes

I am hidden from the mountain
in veils of inattention, apathy, fatigue,
when I forget or refuse to go
down to the shore or a few yards
up the road, on a clear day,
to reconfirm
that witnessing presence.

Hope DECEMBER 2, 2022 // CONTEMPLATION

With two minutes of silence, think about how God might be offering to be your hope today.

Hope DECEMBER 3, 2022 // ART REFLECTION

The two figures in this painting by **Grace Carol Bomer** embody the metaphor of heavenly love and the embrace of forgiveness found in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Bomer uses gold on the figure, face, and robe of the Father, but paints the Prodigal Son's face in ashen tones. Bomer also added the Hebrew text on the son's arm reading: "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine," from the Song of Songs (Song of Solomon 2:16). The Prodigal thankfully accepts his Father's embrace, is clothed in his Father's robe, is given his Father's ring, and is welcomed to a celebration feast. The gold leaf background is a perfect metaphor for the lavish, heavenly love of God the Father. The forgiving Father remains constant in his love throughout the story and is a picture of God himself. The wayward son had no right to claim a blessing and had nothing to offer except a life of service. But he repents and is prepared to fall at his Father's feet, begging for forgiveness and mercy. God greatly loves us and patiently waits for us to repent so he can lavish us with His great mercy (Ephesians 2:1-10). What wondrous love is this!



The Return of the Prodigal
Grace Carol Bomer
2017; Oil paint and cold wax medium on gold leafed panel

Peace

DECEMBER 4 // MEL DY SUN - MARTINE

*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse...
The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them...
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.*

ISAIAH 11:1A; 6; 9

REFLECTION:

The day I had my 20 week scan for my fourth child will be forever etched in my heart. Having had three children, I knew something was off when the radiologist had to stop in the middle of the routine scan and called the doctor. I was alone then, I didn't think my husband had to be there with me so I told him to just stay home with our 3 year old daughter. The doctor came in, checked our little baby from head to toe, then held my arm and told me she sees some markers for Trisomy 21. She recommended I do further testing and fast forward, yes, our little one was diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

My husband and I were in an emotional whirlwind and just did not know how to process what was ahead of us, our family and our baby. We were

certain we didn't want to give him up but didn't know how to move forward with what God was giving us. Despite the anxious thoughts, the fear of the unknown, the grief of knowing life will not be the same - the peace that surpasses all understanding washed over me like a warm blanket on a cold winter night. While I was wrestling with why God was allowing our family to be shaken, I was also comforted by the knowledge that He will strengthen and provide for us.

While He has allowed us to experience the difficult emotions of accepting and being at peace with the unexpected, He chose to whisk our little angel back to heaven. Again, we had to grapple with the loss of our little baby. Just when we thought we were ready, God had other plans. And again, He washed his peace over us.

Peace by definition is freedom from disturbance. As followers of Christ, we will not be spared from disturbance in this world but Jesus promised that when he left, he would give us His peace - the kind of peace only He can give.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, thank you for your promise of peace. We pray that in every circumstance you allow us to be in, whether good or bad, that we will have your peace and that we will be a light to those around us so they may see You and Your presence in our lives. Amen.

Peace DECEMBER 5, 2022 // SONG

Listen to: *Benedictus* (feat. Nicholas Chambers & Page CXVI)
by Porter's Gate, Advent Songs

Peace DECEMBER 6, 2022 // READING

Spend time reading **Isaiah 11** and reflecting on how it might connect to peace in your own life and in the world.

Peace DECEMBER 7, 2022 // PRACTICE

Take a minute to think of a person who is longing to experience peace. Send them a text or give them a call to express solidarity with them today.

Peace DECEMBER 8, 2022 // POEM

Let Evening Come

by Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.
Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.
Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.
Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.
To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.
Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

Peace DECEMBER 9, 2022 // CONTEMPLATION

With two minutes of silence, think about how God might be offering his peace to you today.

Peace DECEMBER 10, 2022 // ART REFLECTION

In artist **Alexander Ivanov's** painting we see the Angel Gabriel miraculously appear to the righteous Zechariah, the high priest of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, to announce that Zechariah's elderly and barren wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son. Because of his unbelief at this angelic message that he and his wife will soon become parents, Zechariah is struck mute until the birth of his son, St. John the Baptist. The story of Elizabeth and Zechariah's childlessness resonates with feelings of loneliness, disbelief, desperation, and then joyful anticipation for anyone who has waited for prayers to be answered. And while we may not have an angelic visitation with miraculous tidings like Zechariah, we can quite often be wonderfully surprised to the many ways in which God chooses to answer our deepest longings, desires, and prayers.



The Angel Gabriel Appearing to Zechariah
Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov
1824; Oil on canvas

Love

DECEMBER 11, 2022 // JOE RAGBIR

*Ask the Lord your God for a sign,
whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights...
the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and will call him Immanuel.*

ISAIAH 7:11;14

REFLECTION:

When I think of this passage, I remember the imagery of getting into a pointless argument with my dad and storming off to see one of my good friends for a casual hangout. Normally, my arguments with my dad are about something temporary. It may be leaving for a meeting that I failed to mention, or something simple like forgetting to turn off my lights in my room. Somehow, these arguments get under my skin repeatedly. However, as I storm off to see my friend, and vent to him, he listens to me but he also speaks words of wisdom and reminds me that Christ is Lord. In the moment, my stubbornness kicks in and my humour filled relationship becomes serious. My heart is still hardened. A couple minutes into this listening process, I realize the sign from God is my brother in Christ's love for me. His words of wisdom, admonition and prayer are my sign that it will be alright, and that Jesus goes with me. My heart posture changes, and I remember my identity in Christ. In this moment, I'm truly grateful for the love of a friend. In reflecting the image of Jesus, he has my back even when I don't.

PRAYER:

Jesus as we continue to walk through this advent season and explore the theme of love, may we turn to You in our moments of joy and sorrow. May we respond to others with love in this period of advent. May we know that you are the reason for this season. We have a sign and it's you Jesus. Thank you Lord for always being there for us. We love You. Amen

Love DECEMBER 12, 2022 // SONG

Listen to: *Light of the World (Sing Hallelujah)* by We The Kingdom, A Family Christmas

Love DECEMBER 13, 2022 // READING

Spend time reading **Isaiah 7** and reflecting on how it might connect to love in your own life and in the world.

Love DECEMBER 14, 2022 // PRACTICE

Take a minute to think of a person who might feel alone today. Send them a text or give them a call remind them of your love.

Love DECEMBER 15, 2022 // POEM

Annunciation

by Marie Howe

Even if I don't see it again—nor ever feel it
I know it is—and that if once it hailed me
it ever does—
And so it is myself I want to turn in that direction
not as towards a place, but it was a tilting

within myself,
as one turns a mirror to flash the light to where
it isn't—I was blinded like that—and swam
in what shone at me
only able to endure it by being no one and so
specifically myself I thought I'd die
from being loved like that.

Love DECEMBER 16, 2022 // CONTEMPLATION

With two minutes of silence, think about how God might be desiring to communicate his love to you today.

Love DECEMBER 17, 2022 // ART REFLECTION

This exquisite work by contemporary Ukrainian artist **Lyuba Yatskiv** captures the beauty of the Nativity story. The central image features the Madonna and Child in a tender embrace while the vignettes surrounding them illustrate various events of Jesus' birth: the shepherds who came to worship, faithful Joseph, and the three kings who came from distant lands. Yatskiv brings a quiet peace and solitude to the artwork through its harmoniously balanced composition. She adheres to traditional compositions and does not artificially dramatize the separate scenes. At the same time, however, her iconography remains distinctly individual and she invites the viewer to experience established visual elements and traditions in a new way.



The Nativity
Lyuba Yatskiv
2014; Acrylic, white gilding on wood panel

Joy

DECEMBER 18, 2022 // HALLIE YOUNG

*The desert and the parched land will be glad;
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom...
say to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come...”*

ISAIAH 35:1,2-4A

REFLECTION:

When I think about where I experience joy, I can't help but think that joy comes to me in many different forms. I find joy in many of the opportunities I have, the people I spend time with, as well as general moments that make up quotidian life. During October, we had a three day retreat in Squamish at Camp Summit as a part of a school expedition. During the retreat we had to sleep outside underneath tarps and we participated in activities like high ropes and mountain biking. By the second morning of camp, I was already exhausted. We had participated in many activities, learned different skills like knot tying, and on top of that, gotten minimal sleep outside in the cold. Many people would jump at the opportunity of camping and being outside in nature for such long periods of time; however in that particular moment I simply felt drained and cold. On the second night, we had a campfire, which was in a small cleared area of the forest that had a clear view of the sky. As we filed into the benches around the campfire, stories were told and we were prompted to stare into the fire and reflect on all

the activities that happened that day. I remember thinking the whole idea of reflection with the fire was trivial, until one of our camp councillors abruptly pointed at the sky and claimed a shooting star had gone by. As all of our heads turned upwards, an abundance of stars greeted us. It was an incredibly pure moment, to be surrounded by my friends and to be looking at so many bright stars. I felt like God showed me a sign of joy and purity in nature in that moment which allowed me to fully appreciate camp and the experiences that came along with it. Although at first I thought this brief experience was insignificant, in thinking about it more, I can see how it allowed me to see the beauty of God's creation and to recognize that the minor inconveniences of camp didn't compare to the joys I had spending time with God in nature, taking in all that he made.

PRAYER:

Dear God, we thank you for the signs of joy that you give us, especially when we're going through tough times or uncertainties. We pray that we are able to embrace these signs further, and that they allow us to build better relationships with you and to direct our gratitude to you for the many joys you bless us with in our lives. We pray that when we do feel signs of joy, we are able to recognize that you are there with us; and ask that you guide us in strengthening our patience for happiness to occur in our lives if we ever lose sight of you. Amen

Joy

DECEMBER 19, 2022 // SONG

Listen to: *Come Thou Long Expected Jesus* by Carolyn Arends, Christmas: An Irrational Season

Joy

DECEMBER 20, 2022 // READING

Spend time reading **Isaiah 35** and reflecting on how it might connect to joy in your own life and in the world.

Joy DECEMBER 21, 2022 // PRACTICE

Take a minute to think of a person who may have not experienced joy for some time. Send them a text or give them a call to help support their movement towards God's goodness.

Joy DECEMBER 22, 2022 // POEM

The Visitation

by *Malcom Guite*

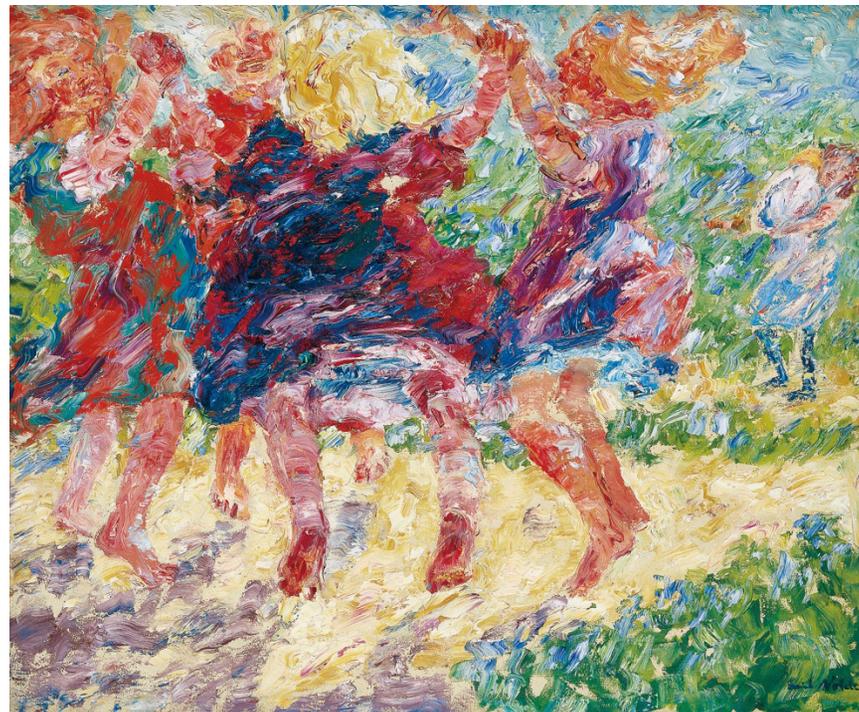
Here is a meeting made of hidden joys
Of lightnings cloistered in a narrow place,
From quiet hearts the sudden flame of praise,
And in the womb the quickening kick of grace.
Two women on the very edge of things
Unnoticed and unknown to men of power,
But in their flesh the hidden Spirit sings
And in their lives the buds of blessing flower.
And Mary stands with all we call 'too young,'
Elizabeth with all called 'past their prime.'
They sing today for all the great unsung
Women who turned eternity to time,
Favoured of heaven, outcast on the earth,
Prophets who bring the best in us to birth.

Joy DECEMBER 23, 2022 // CONTEMPLATION

With two minutes of silence, think about how God might be wanting to give you an experience of joy today.

Joy DECEMBER 24, 2022 // ART REFLECTION

Emil Nolde was a member of Die Brücke, a group of expressionist artists who shared an interest in expression of extreme emotion through high-keyed, non-naturalistic colors and abstraction. They were heavily interested in dance since it exemplifies self-expression through its ability to be spontaneous, abstract, and expressive without concern for formalized techniques and traditional compositions. Nolde's painting of children dancing expresses unadulterated and unrestrained joy through the use of colorful, dynamic brushstrokes.



Wildly Dancing Children
Emil Nolde
1909; Oil on canvas

Preparing to welcome Christ

DECEMBER 25, 2022 // KATHIE SIEMENS

*How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news..
Burst into songs of joy together,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the Lord has comforted his people,
he has redeemed Jerusalem...
and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God.*

ISAIAH 52:7A; 9; 10B

REFLECTION:

Growing up, my father mostly worked far away from home on major construction sites. As much as possible, he would come home on the weekends, always arriving after dark on Friday night.

Across the road from our house was a large field, then a small airport, another field and finally far off in the distance, the highway on which my dad was coming home.

I remember, as a young child, watching, through a darkened bedroom

window, the tiny, distant headlights of cars on that highway and waiting to see when one of them made its way down the off-ramp that would ultimately lead to our house. When one did, I'd have to wait about five more minutes (an eternity for a young child waiting for her father!) to see if those same headlights would turn the corner at the top of our road. Lots of cars came down that ramp, but only one ended up turning on that corner that led to our house!

In that watching and waiting was such longing in excited anticipation of the pure, complete joy when, finally, I would be embraced in my father's arms.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, keep us watching and waiting in excited anticipation to welcome You this Christmas season, and to be welcomed by You into Your embrace of love, comfort and pure, complete joy. Amen.

Christmas Day

DECEMBER 25, 2022 // ART REFLECTION

Massachusetts-based artist and illustrator **Tanja Butler** is known for her liturgically based works. Her paintings utilize different "symbolic systems of stylization to describe an internal reality," she explains. Byzantine icons, for example, "use an inverted perspective to portray space as if seen from the viewpoint of eternity." A cubist fragmentation of space in her compositions can be used to describe "multiple perspectives as a metaphor of the transformation and growth initiated by the Spirit." Butler combines different artistic genres, theologies, Scriptures, and symbols to create what she calls "multilayered metaphors of God's sojourn with us."

Celebrate the arrival of Christmas by praying that a friend might experience the light of Christ!



Burning Bush
Tanja Butler
2005; Oil on canvas

IMAGE REFERENCES:

Messianic Predictions (Cover)

Thomas Ingmire

2005; Handwritten with quills on calf-skin vellum, gold and platinum leaf, and hand-ground pigment

The Return of the Prodigal

Grace Carol Bomer

2017; Oil paint and cold wax medium on gold leafed panel

www.gracecarolbomer.com

The Angel Gabriel Appearing to Zechariah

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The Nativity

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2014; Acrylic, white gilding on wood panel

Wildly Dancing Children

Emil Nolde

1909; Oil on canvas

Burning Bush

Tanja Butler

2005; Oil on canvas

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