

2019 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

# WHAT CAN'T WAIT



ART, REFLECTIONS, &  
PROMPTS FOR THE  
SEASON OF WAITING



*Sanctified Art*  
sanctifiedart.org



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>

## GOD'S PROMISED DAY (HOPE) CAN'T WAIT

*Carve out time today for prayer and quiet contemplation.*

*Read this poem as part of your devotional time.*

Someone once told me that hope  
was naive—

A foolish game that children play  
When they pray that summer  
won't end,  
And bedtime won't come.

Someone once told me that hope  
was naive as they

Cradled pessimism in their lap like a  
sleeping cat,

Stroking their ego while they stoked  
a fire within me.

Unfortunately for them, I'm allergic  
to cats.

And unfortunately for them, those  
who deny hope

Will never know vulnerability;

For hope requires us to believe in a  
better day—

Even when this one is falling apart.

Hope looks the 24-hour news cycle  
in the face,

Hope looks our broken relationships  
in the face,

Hope looks our low self-esteem  
in the face,

And declares at low tide that the  
water will return.

Hope is exhaling, trusting that  
your body will inhale again.

Hope is watching the sunset and  
setting an alarm.

Hope is planting seeds in the winter,  
assuming summer will come.

I never said it would be easy.

The ground is frozen, you are  
thirsty, and the night is long.

But I will say this—

I have found hope to be the rhythm  
of love and the fiber of faith;

For to hope is to believe in God's  
ability to bring about a better day,

And like a child with an  
Advent calendar,

I will always be counting down  
the days.

So to those who cradle pessimism  
and fear,

You can find me outside—

with the kids—wishing on stars,

Praying to the God of today

That tomorrow will be just  
as beautiful.

Set your alarm.

We'd like for you to join us.

The sunrise won't wait.

*Prayer by Sarah Are*



*Swords into Plowshares* | Hannah Garrity



---

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>

---

**READ** ISAIAH 2:1-5

**FROM THE ARTIST** | HANNAH GARRITY

What is God's view of the world? What does God plan for this world? This text is all about God's vision for the earth becoming a reality. It's all about beating swords into plowshares. It's all about building peace.

How does this vision come to be? In this image of hands, I imagine how we might actually make God's vision come to life.

I listen to Christian rock because it is the only station I can play in the car that doesn't play curse words for my children to hear. I change the station, however, when the radio personalities come on because the statements are often slanted heavily to a viewpoint that is judgmental at its root. I find this to be an intriguing dichotomy. The music is preaching the gospel, God's vision; the commentary is perpetuating division. Why do we do this? There must be another way.

There's a song that often plays on my Christian rock station from Matthew West's album, *Into the Light*. The song is called, "Do Something." The songwriter sees the pain of the world and asks God to do something. "I did, I created you," God responds, suggesting that with our hands and with our words, God has created us to act in God's name.

Here, in acrylic on canvas, a man wields a grinder, burnishing the edges of a sword that has been reformed into a plow. Growth, not death; care, not fear. The simple analogy of the sword transformed into the plowshare reminds us that peace is at the heart of all that God envisions for this world.

How might you make God's vision come into reality?

**PRAYER**

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.



---

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>

---

*Hope Can't Wait*

## **ACTION PROMPT**

Practice hope today by believing that your actions—even small ones—make a difference. Donate time, money, or resources to an organization that is helping create God's promised day where all are cared for and all are well.



---

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>

---

*God's Promised Day Can't Wait*

## **JOURNALING & REFLECTION**

*Isaiah 2:1-5 speaks of God's promised day—a day when wars end, swords are beaten into plowshares, and spears become pruning hooks. In the space below, write what God's promised day looks and feels like to you.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



*Peace Without Your Walls* | Lauren Wright Pittman



---

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup>

---

**READ** PSALM 122

**FROM THE ARTIST** | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

We all desire peace and security for ourselves, our families, and our communities. It seems, however, we often disagree about how to achieve peace and security, and about who is deserving of such well-being. Often, those who have realized even a baseline sense of peace and security quickly forget what it was like to be without. Fear creeps in and we separate ourselves with walls and isolate ourselves within towers. We worship and exist with people like us because it feels safe. We hoard peace and security as though they are finite resources, and elevate our own peace and security above that of other nations. We pray for ourselves, even if our answered prayers result in our neighbor's harm. This self-focused, defensive ideology is becoming increasingly pervasive in the United States, and it's finding strongholds in other countries too. Powerful people appeal to this inward-turning gaze, stoking fears and encouraging division.

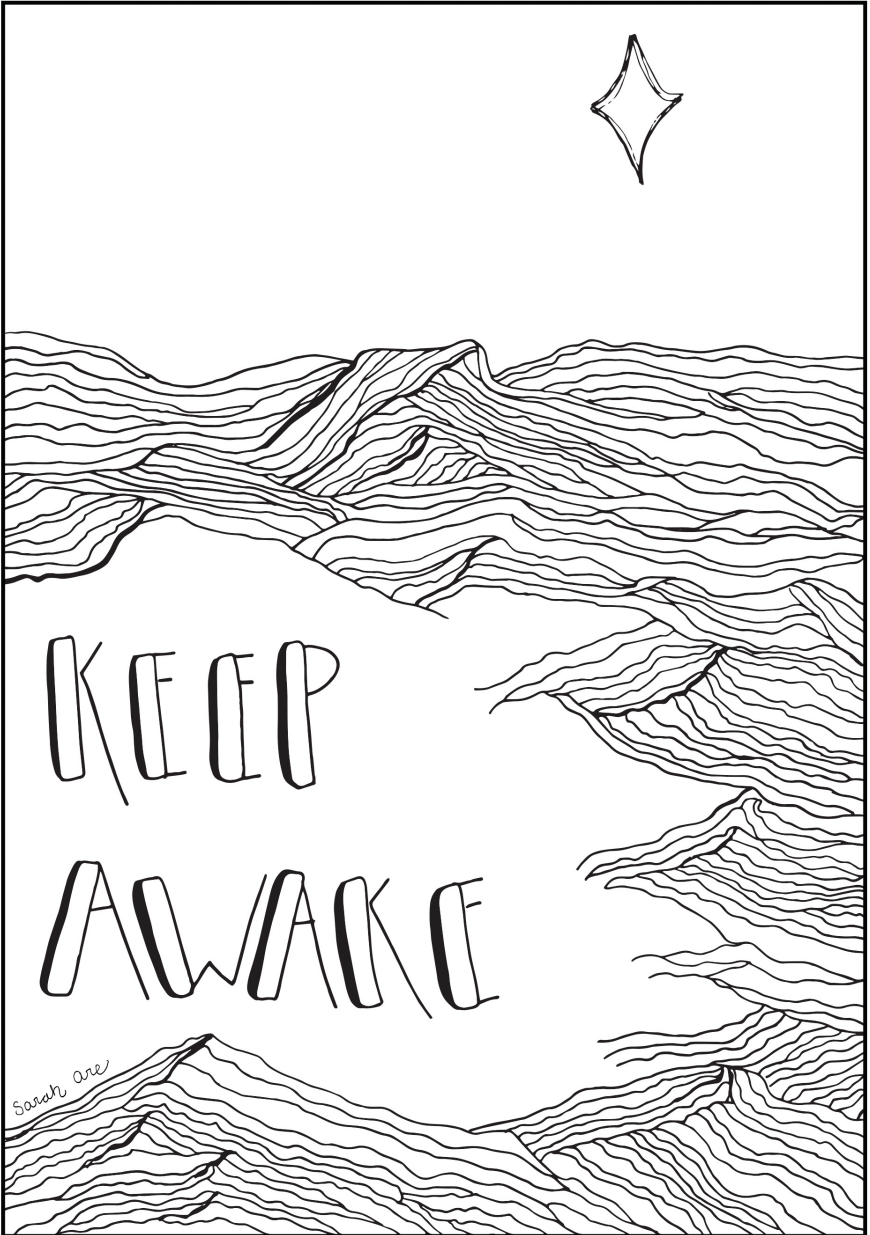
This text celebrates refuge. As we know well from the news and the growing volatility at our borders, there are many who have become refugees—those seeking security and peace—while those within their walls and towers seek the good of themselves.

When I began to paint this piece, I kept wondering how walls and peace can coexist, but if I'm honest, if true shalom were to be realized, there would be no need for walls or towers. For me, peace looks like open doors leading out of the confinement of stone walls and into a field of poppies. For me, peace looks like flowers scaling walls, weakening the strength of stone foundations, and over time, bringing the barriers down. Peace looks like open arms—open to the difficult work of welcoming peace, and open to receiving the boundless gifts of a truly peaceful world.

## **PRAYER**

Breathe deeply as you gaze upon the image on the left. Imagine placing yourself in this scene. What do you see? How do you feel? Get quiet and still, offering a silent or spoken prayer to God.





KEEP  
AWAKE

*Sarah Are*

Love Surprises Us | Sarah Are



---

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>

---

**READ** MATTHEW 24:36-44

**FROM THE ARTIST** | SARAH ARE

When I was a little girl, my mom asked me to recount the best part of my day every night before bed. If I had a bad day I would promptly tell her that *nothing* was good. There were zero positive moments. However, my patient mother would not accept that answer. Before I could sleep, I had to name at least one thing worth celebrating. This ritual taught me to look for the good in my days, and in many ways, I think that is what this text is inviting us to do.

For years people have wondered how to interpret this particular scripture. Is it implying that God will come and some will be left behind, or that some are being called forward into new lives with new vocational callings? How do we understand verbs such as “taken” or “keep awake”?

When I read this scripture, the thing that stands out is how love surprises us. Throughout scripture, God’s love for this world and for humanity shocks the system. Tables are turned, people are healed, the outcasts are seen, children are welcomed, and boundaries are broken.

In this Advent season, I think we are invited to look for God in our midst—to look for the surprising places that love shows up. We are challenged to stay awake so that life and the divine do not pass us by.

The repetitive language of fields and water led me to create the line drawings around the text. As I began to draw, I was able to see the worker’s fields described in the text, as well as the Shepherd’s fields, and the scenery Mary and Joseph may have passed on their way to Bethlehem. These simple lines serve as a reminder that God’s surprising love and grace shows up in ordinary places along the way.

### **PRAYER**

In quiet contemplation, color in the page on the left, reflecting on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist’s statement. Conclude with a silent or spoken prayer to God.

## SABBATH CAN'T WAIT

What *can* wait? On this day of Sabbath, identify one thing in your life that feels urgent but can actually wait in order for you to rest. Commit to one of the activities below, or spend time doing something else that centers and recharges you.

- Go for a walk outside.
- Sit quietly and meditate.
- Plant something indoors or outside.
- Try cooking or baking with a new recipe.
- Spend time with a friend or loved one.
- Dance or play music.
- Explore a new area of your town or city.
- Take a nap.
- Draw or create something.
- Write a poem or a song.
- Play a board game with friends or family.
- Read a book.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>

## REPENTANCE (PEACE) CAN'T WAIT

*Carve out time today for prayer and quiet contemplation.  
Read this poem as part of your devotional time.*

Sometimes,  
While the sky is still dark,  
I slip sock feet into tennis shoes and go for a walk.  
Step by step  
I ask my deepest questions,  
While the sky lets go of its deepest dark blue.  
Am I doing enough?  
Ink to indigo.  
Does my brother know how much I love him?  
Indigo to navy.  
Will my friends keep showing up?  
Navy to royal blue.  
Will we ever know peace?  
Royal blue to gold.  
And after a while, my pilgrimage must end,  
So I turn apologetic feet toward home  
And walk my repentance back toward the sun.  
And once again, while I stand in sock feet and tennis shoes,  
God takes my breath away.  
For once again,  
The sky's deepest void is now a watercolor of light.  
And I am reminded  
That like the sky,  
God touches everything.  
And I am reminded,  
That like the sky,  
Nothing is so broken that it can't be painted gold.  
In the morning light, there is peace.

*Prayer by Sarah Are*