

2019 ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

# WHAT CAN'T WAIT



ART, REFLECTIONS, &  
PROMPTS FOR THE  
SEASON OF WAITING



*Sanctified Art*  
sanctifiedart.org



A Dance | Hannah Garrity



---

MONDAY, DECEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>

---

**READ** LUKE 1:46B-55

**FROM THE ARTIST** | HANNAH GARRITY

Somehow, Mary is thankful. How is she doing that? How can she genuinely appreciate her situation? Her perspective amazes me.

Carrying a baby is difficult even in the best of circumstances. The physical and psychological weight grows quickly. Society changes its view of you, you change your view of yourself. Like Advent, it is a time of waiting. It is also a time of anticipation, dread, concern, excitement, pain, fear, and confusion.

Mary is carrying a child out of wedlock. Her fiancé is considering leaving her. She has nothing but her word to explain this circumstance to him, to her family, to her community. All of the typical and difficult pregnancy feelings must have been multiplied, yet Mary is thankful.

In this painting, I cast Mary's hands in a ballerina's dance. She reaches up in prayer, in praise. She reaches up to glorify our God. She reaches up in thanks for the most challenging thing she has possibly ever had to deal with.

Should I be counting my challenges as well as my blessings? Should I be glorifying God for the pain in life as well as the joy? Perhaps, I should.

**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 17<sup>TH</sup>

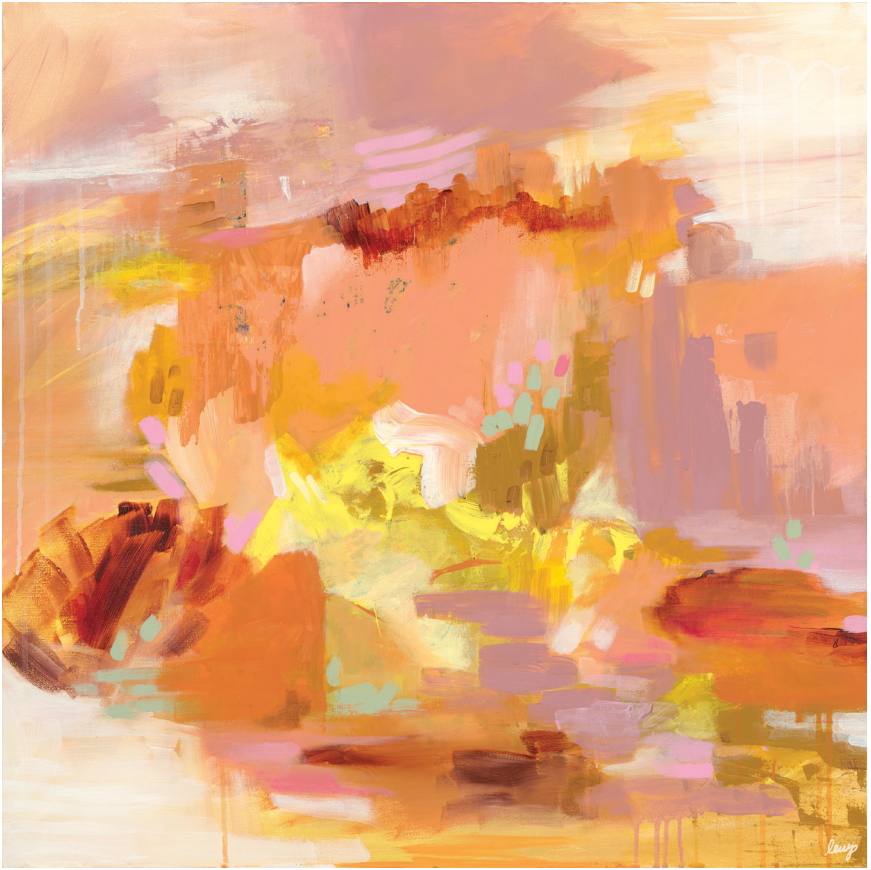
---

*Joy Can't Wait*

## **ACTION PROMPT**

Record a short video message that is joyful and send it to a friend. Make the message fun and playful—sing a song, dance to upbeat music, or simply tell your friend how much they mean to you. After you send your message, ask your friend to also record a joyful message and pass it along to someone else. Spread joy.





*Desert Blooms* | Lauren Wright Pittman



**READ** ISAIAH 35:1-10

**FROM THE ARTIST** | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

When I approached this piece, I read the first few verses of the passage until a phrase stuck in my head, “like the crocus [the desert] shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing” (Is. 35:2). I thought I might paint a study of a crocus flower—one zoomed in on the subtle shifts in shades of purple. However, when I began to roll the phrase around in my mind, I felt the need to paint the colors of the desert. The text says the desert blossoms “like a crocus” not “with crocuses.” I almost missed the desert for the flowers. For me, flowers are evident metaphors for joy and a clear testament to God’s magnificence. After all, Emerson wrote, “Earth laughs in flowers.”<sup>2</sup> My initial instinct with this painting was to transform the desert with flowers, but instead, I think I needed to see the desert for what it is.

The desert is often associated with desolation, scarcity, and death, but it’s really a place of surprising, subversive beauty—a place of meeting the Divine. I found myself grabbing paints I don’t typically use—mauves, ochres, pale greens, and dusty pinks. My painting intuition doesn’t often lead me to desert colors because I’m drawn to deeply saturated hues that I find more obviously beautiful. It takes a bit more effort to see the desert as a place of abundance and overflowing worship of our Creator, but I think this intentional shift in seeing is part of what it means to prepare the way during Advent. What would it look like to delight in elements of creation that you often overlook? How can you help the parched places of your corner of the world blossom into new life?

## **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.

---

2 Ralph Waldo Emerson, from the poem, “Hamatreya.”



Give Us Bread, But Give Us Roses | Lisle Gwynn Garrity





---

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20<sup>TH</sup>

---

**READ** PSALM 146:5-10

**FROM THE ARTIST** | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

In 1911, Helen Todd, a leader in the women’s suffrage movement, coined the phrase, “bread for all, and roses too,”<sup>3</sup> to advocate for both fair wages and better working conditions for women factory workers. The phrase took on life as a chant in textile strikes and as a refrain for other suffragists. It expressed the heart and soul of the movement. Bread referred to the necessities for survival—safety, shelter, wages, food. Roses symbolized the things that are often treated as luxuries only for the rich to indulge in—the arts, education, nature, beauty.

In other words, women of the early twentieth century insisted that they deserved to not only make a living; they also deserved to make a life worth living.

In this psalm, we are reminded that God provides bread—food for the hungry, protection for the immigrant, sight for the blind, justice for the oppressed, freedom for the imprisoned. And God offers roses—joy to those who find hope and rest in God. God’s justice isn’t just about survival. God desires our thriving, too.

In this image, I depicted two hands. One reaches up in need, with urgency. The other opens in a posture of generosity. A question mark cuts through the space between them, inviting us to consider who is in need of not only bread, but roses too.

Who are the hungry among us? What does it look like to feed those hungering for beauty, for delight, for the kind of joy that leads to a whole and holy life?

## **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.

---

3 Todd, Helen. *The American Magazine*. Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1911. 619.

## 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 22<sup>ND</sup>

## COURAGE (LOVE) CAN'T WAIT

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

When people talk about love  
They talk about heartbreak.  
They talk about the love that  
got away,  
And the love that left them longing.

When people talk about love  
Rarely do they say, “be brave.”  
I wish they would.

To love is to pull the oxygen from  
your lungs and to say,  
“Here, take a breath.”

To love is to come out from hiding,  
To allow the light to shine on you.  
To love is to wear your heart outside  
of your body—

Fingers crossed that the holder  
handles it with care.

To love is to trust that sometimes  
hurt and pain come with the  
territory,

But you’re going to love anyway.  
So love anyway.

Love like there’s no tomorrow.  
Love as if love is not a scarcity.  
Love like Mary, who cradled a baby  
amidst the threat of being stoned.  
And love like Joseph, who took a  
child in that he knew was not  
his own.

Of course I say all of this because  
I need to hear it too.  
There are dusty corners of my heart  
that I still protect—  
Love stored up like grain  
While the world is in famine.

So the next time you see me,  
Remind me to be brave.

The next time you see me,  
Invite me to stand in the light  
with you.

The next time you see me,  
Handle with care and maybe,  
Just maybe,  
We’ll find a holy and wild  
Love that won’t wait.

When people talk about love  
They talk about heartbreak.  
Rarely do they say, “be brave.”  
I wish they would.

*Prayer by Sarah Are*