

Advent Audio Retreat 2023 | Episode 4 | “Another Bethlehem”

Prayer and reflection resource

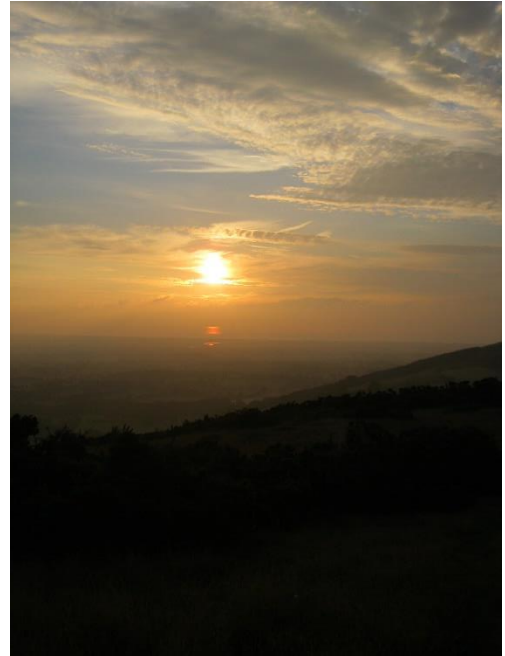
Hope sees and hope acts. It's not the escape from reality of wishful thinking, or the glossing over of obstacles of optimism.

Hope sees what is, in all its complexity and difficulty, and the more of what this reality can be.

Hope sees – in the language of the prophets – that the metal used to make swords is better used to make ploughshares. [Isaiah 2.1-5]

There is a better way to live than tearing one another apart. Hope is not hope if it doesn't find its Bethlehem – the word must be made flesh.

For hope sees, and hope acts.



It's not all over, this birthing,
there are always newer skies into which
God can throw stars.
When we begin to think we can predict the
Advent of God,
that we can box the Christ in a stable in Bethlehem,
that's just the time God will be born in a place we can't imagine,
and won't believe.
Those who wait for God watch with their heart
and not their eyes.
Listening, always listening, for angel words.

Ann Weems, extract from 'Kneeling in Bethlehem'

Hope sees possibilities. Where others see dead ends, those moved by hope see open doors – or at least doors that, with some persistence might one day open.

How we see will affect how we act.

Hope is vision – sometimes with the eye, sometimes with the imagination, sometimes in the active trust of what has begun to beat inside you – or even who has begun to beat inside you.

You in God and God in you: no matter what stands in your path, together, you find a way to begin.



I live my Advent in the womb of Mary:
And on one night when a great star
swings free from its high mooring
and walks down the sky, to be the dot
above the Christus i,
I shall be born of her by blessed grace.
I wait in Mary-darkness;
faith's walled place, with hope's expectance
of nativity.
I knew for long she carried and fed me,
guarded and loved me,
though I could not see.
But only now, with inward jubilee,
I come upon earth's most amazing
knowledge:
Someone is hidden in this dark
with me.

Jessica Powers, 'In Mary-Darkness'

Some bible readings for reflection

- Hosea 2.14-21
- Isaiah 11.6-9
- Luke 1.67-79

“Midwinter spring is its own season...”

“When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire...”

“No wind, but Pentecostal fire

In the dark time of the year.”

Lines from ‘Little Gidding’, by T.S. Eliot