



Behold, the  
Bridegroom  
Cometh!

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AN ADVENT ARTS  
GALLERY & EVENT

*December 3, 2022*

# Advent Sunday

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BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go ye out  
With lighted lamps and garlands round about  
To meet Him in a rapture with a shout.

It may be at the midnight, black as pitch,  
Earth shall cast up her poor, cast up her rich.

It may be at the crowing of the cock  
Earth shall upheave her depth, uproot her rock.

For lo, the Bridegroom fetcheth home the Bride:  
His Hands are Hands she knows, she knows His Side.

Like pure Rebekah at the appointed place,  
Veiled, she unveils her face to meet His Face.

Like great Queen Esther in her triumphing,  
She triumphs in the Presence of her King.

His Eyes are as a Dove's, and she's Dove-eyed;  
He knows His lovely mirror, sister, Bride.

He speaks with Dove-voice of exceeding love,  
And she with love-voice of an answering Dove.

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh: go we out  
With lamps ablaze and garlands round about  
To meet Him in a rapture with a shout.

# Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh!

ANTICIPATION, ARRIVAL, & ALL THAT WE AWAIT

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# Remnant Roots

BY STEPHEN WILLIAMS

Imagine yourself of Israel's seed,  
Two centuries removed from Jacob,  
Still two centuries left to wait –  
Your life a hidden bridge of grief  
Between blessing and deliverance.  
You await an appointed time  
Your eyes will never witness, while  
Laboring beneath pillar and temple,  
Looking eastward to wonder what has become  
Of old promises and promised lands.

—

Imagine yourself of David's line,  
Unkinged now five lives of men, and  
Still uncrowned five lifetimes more –  
A royal remnant ruined and hidden  
At the crossroads of the world.  
You await an appointed time  
Your eyes will never witness, while  
Grieving as great men ford the Kidron  
To pollute the temple, the Zion that shall be  
When the ancient line is renewed.

—

If these can wait, then so can we  
Who also live unheralded and unknown.  
Caught between kairos and kairos –  
A people not (yet) wholly commendable  
Yet all possessed of a common grace  
Which hides us away –  
Burrowed, rooted in the cleft  
Of the remnant's holy stump –  
Awaiting the glory of the Lord.

# Unveiled

BY TERESA GEER

Wayward and lost was once my soul,  
Shrouded in darkness, never consoled.  
Hide from me, O Light, lest I be exposed.  
Stay hidden, dark secrets, behind doors closed.

Hear my voice, Beloved, and open the door.  
Let not your heart be troubled here—nevermore!  
Let shackles fall that once bound sin,  
At the foot of the cross my blood shall cleanse.

Rejoice my child, for you must know,  
The bridegroom comes for all he chose.  
His kingdom awaits for his bride to see;  
Unveiled from the darkness that once shrouded thee.

Drink from the chalice and break the bread;  
Renew the holy covenant, let thy soul be well fed.  
For the bridegroom has paid the wages of sin;  
Your sins clothed in scarlet, made white herein.

O heavenly Father, we seek that wondrous day,  
When death is no more, every tear wiped away.  
The darkness defeated by thy mighty sword;  
Unveiled to abide in your light evermore.

# Deciduous

BY ZACK CLEMMONS

In autumn, I see what always is—  
with a sound like the soft clattering of water  
the eloquent air wends its way  
and plucks a leaf, tired and shining  
from its sapped branch, and the leaf loiters,  
then spirals and gyres, flits and lifts,  
roaming the atmosphere's labyrinth,  
its form fit to each instance of air.

The fallen leaves alight where they've been borne,  
stacked and bent and lofted on spears of grass  
where they settle and gently moulder.  
They're staked lightly by their stems, or ridged edges,  
but when a gust sweeps low over the ground  
they tilt and waver like flames.

The snow will come,  
when the branches  
are stripped,  
and the leaves left will be  
pelted down and  
interred under  
the wet weight  
of frozen light,  
and all will be close and cold.

Boot steps, snowmelt,  
squirrelscurry and summer burn  
leave them tattered, threadbare,  
flecks of their former selves.  
Their flaming color now a dull gloam,  
life decayed down to sullen loam,  
and they are waiting.  
Waiting in winter and in spring, in summer and  
in autumn, waiting always for what will be—a seed.

# Oh Mary

BY ALISON RITCH

Oh Mary, you are humble and hidden  
Open, overshadowed by the most high God  
Oh Mary, you are favored and faithful  
Blessed in believing the word of the Lord

And a sword will pierce your soul  
And tear you apart  
Still you treasure all  
In your beautiful heart

My soul magnifies the Lord  
And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
For he who is mighty has done great things  
And holy is his name  
He has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
And exalted those of humble estate  
He has helped his servant Israel  
In remembrance of his mercy

Behold, I am the servant of the Lord  
Let it be to me according to your word

# Advent Psalm for Mothers (Psalm 127)

BY ALISON RITCH

Unless the Lord builds the house  
Your building is in vain  
Unless the Lord protects your abode  
Your wakeful watching is a waste  
So why do you rise before the light  
And labor late into the night?  
Your anxious toil is bitter bread  
To his beloved he gives sweet rest

Children are a heritage from the Lord  
The fruit of the womb a reward  
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
Oh blessed is the one whose heart is full  
Whose heart and hands are full  
Beloved of the Lord

Your anxious toil is bitter bread  
Lay it down for his sweet rest  
Oh beloved, he gives you rest



# The Man of Earth

BY CHARLIE RITCH

And then feet appeared on the path under the eyes of no one at all.  
If there had been anyone to see any of it, focus and attention  
would have revealed a ghostly, spinning wheel to be in actuality two unbodied feet  
spinning furiously on each other through a forest of blackened leaves.

“Momma, look at those legs. They have no belly button!”  
Indeed, the feet after some months now extended upward almost to the trunk.  
The body was slow in its incarnation, adding inches and features  
apace the sapling oaks that reach hopefully skyward in faint forest light.

Sightings were most common in late fall, when it seems  
the body, having rested and grown lazy during the summer months,  
would again begin its running, exciting village children,  
who chased after it in droves, heedless of their parents’ reprimands.

Some fear the running body.  
Some write songs about it.  
Some have gazed too long at its beautiful form.  
Some have gone off to hunt it and never came back.

The common folk speculate it will one day grow into an angel,  
but the priest has studied the way it runs—never slacking into a jog,  
always inclined forward, always kicking up dirt as from a fresh start,  
as though it ran toward love hoped for or away from love betrayed.

He believes the earth is raising a god.

# Watch

BY F. J. CULPEPPER

Unconscious shoveling  
of the grindings  
from coffee beans  
dark fruit of wakefulness

Could you not watch one hour?  
No, Lord, not even  
for a moment could I bear  
to keep vigil,  
lamps trimmed and ready where  
taut jawbones of fools' power  
rush into angels' choirs  
demanding mock parley  
midst intent wails ever-swelling,  
over-ripe grins gnashing,  
louder and louder

A wise and dread spirit asks for a sign  
ashen ghost imperially unwound  
postures sportingly atop  
threefold agenda serpentine,  
"No need to interfere;  
kindly execute at bottom line,  
Empty-handed Herald,  
Thou must allow  
we must provide  
bread, bullion, and a bride;  
tis our esteemed duty  
we are solemnly obliged  
as warden over  
such irrational beasts  
to lay beds for their coupling  
choice cuts for their meat,  
and desist, Son of Man,  
from mountain trudges  
and rescues fleet

we count it a privilege to dispose  
of these your (frankly)  
overbred sheep.”

Silent lamb fixes kiss  
to unseat occultic lull  
on fevered brow  
above chattering teeth  
and mutterings somnambul

The kiss glows in the heart  
but we keep our ideas  
that tease and tempt  
as the mob draws near

# REIGN

BY F.J. CULPEPPER

What tremulous maneuvers  
untold, indefinite

Mark migrations  
ponderous steps  
of sorrel mare  
among myrtle trees  
in that glen

When: well, the boy takes  
curds with his honey,  
don't he?  
and with thanksgiving  
twixt colonnades  
of blessed Parthenon

All along in gloomy chains  
did strange bedfellows  
make inveterate bets  
'til violet hues  
bled through

And you met my eyes  
every time  
I pled dreams  
in and out of  
old Cush and Put

Behold: foot after foot  
approaches starry parade  
on sapphire pavement unmade

But well met  
Peace and promises kept  
on the heels  
of dragon's sweat  
chestnut flanks windswept  
and a royal roar

# Out of Season

BY RILEY KROSS

My two sons, ages three and five, share a bedroom, a set of bunk beds, and therefore a bedtime routine. The routine consists of your standard rituals—pajamas and potty time, stories and teeth brushing, prayers and kisses—but there also seems to be a constantly evolving element. Like in all liturgies, I guess, there is space for the holy and mysterious to enter. At least, this is my explanation for why my wife and I found ourselves repeating a series of animal sounds each night just before we closed our sons' bedroom door. Lion roar, wolf howl, monkey laugh, and then the crescendo where I took a deep breath, tightly pursed my lips, and blew out a long, sharp elephant's trumpet. All to my sons' sleepy glee.

I cannot tell you when or why or how the animal sound ritual began. It just happened, and once it had happened, it had to happen every night.

Most nights the grand finale of animal sounds—my elephant's trumpet—sounded more like the grating, squeaking, half-hearted sound our family van's brakes make when they're wet. By that point in the day, I did not want to be an elephant or a monkey or a wolf or a lion. All I wanted was for my children to be quietly, questionlessly, whinelessly, asleep in their beds.

And eventually, thankfully, just as *ex nihilo* as the animal sound ritual began, it disappeared back into nothingness. One night—I don't know which and I don't know why—my wife and I did not roar like lions and the boys did not ask for us to, and we closed the door and I said aloud, "Praise God."

But then the next night, my three-year-old requested something new.

"Will you sing Jingle Bells?" he said.

It was summertime. In Alabama. July. The middle of Ordinary Time. Even though it was dark outside, temperatures were still in the 90's. You could swim in the humidity.

"Jingle Bells?" I asked.

He nodded.

Naive as I am—foolish you might say—I did not foresee how granting this silly request would create a new absurd bedtime ritual.

The next night, he asked again. "Jingle Bells?" And the next. And the next.

Then the ritual evolved. My three-year-old son began specifying that I sing "Jingle Bells" and then "Dashing through the snow," as if these were two separate songs. Whenever I finished singing, he would claim that I did not sing "Dashing through the snow" too.

"Yes, I did," I said.

"No you didn't," he said.

"Yes, I did," I said.

"No you didn't," he said.

I understood this as my son's clever ploy to prolong the bedtime routine,

but regardless, I found myself having to decide between standing up for truth or weathering an overtired three-year-old's temper tantrum.

I sang the "Dashing through the snow" part again.

It is probably unnecessary to state that I began to deeply resent the "Jingle Bells" bedtime ritual.

Singing it out of season annoyed me. Singing it at the end of the day when I was exhausted angered me. Repeating "Dashing through the snow" under false accusations undermined my sense of justice. And of course, there was the realization that I had given into this absurd request from the beginning. My three-year-old did not make me sing. Beguile, sure. Manipulate, definitely. Entrap, probably. But no force was involved. This "Jingle Bells" monster was of my own creation.

So I sang "Jingle Bells." And I sang "Jingle Bells." July. August. September. October.

*O'er the fields we go*

*Laughing all the way—ha ha ha*

But then something unexpected happened.

It might have been the early Alabama cold snap. It might have been the leaves just starting to curl and yellow at their edges, the soft frost on still green grass. It might have just been a simple trick of the mind—Stockholm syndrome maybe—but singing "Jingle Bells" night after night began to feel less and less silly.

Whatever it was, it was grace. My resentment began fading with the early darkness of Autumn, and then one night as I lay down in the bottom bunk with my three-year-old I noticed something: all those months I had begrudgingly sang "Jingle Bells," my three-year-old had been singing too. He was singing along, and I had been too annoyed to hear the sincerity in his voice, the soft excitement, the anticipation. He loved the "Dashing through the snow" part. He wanted to hear it again. Sure, part of it was a scheme to prolong bedtime, but another part, I realized, was a holy longing for joy.

I quieted my voice and listened to his. I watched him, the golden bedside-light glowing across his three-year-old face. His eyes focused on something far away in the dark of his room, but his attention folded inward as he sang. It has been said that the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. My son was singing, I think, out of that part within him where the eternal dwells. The eternal that has no set time or hour, that is beyond seasons. The eternal that can sing "Jingle Bells" joyfully in July. The same eternal that once entered time in a manger in Bethlehem beneath a star-bright sky.

I joined my son's voice. I tried to pray the words.

*Bells on bobtails ring*

*Making spirits bright*

*What fun it is to ride and sing*

*A sleighing song tonight, oh!*

# O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

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BY JOHN MASON NEALE  
*translator from the original Latin*

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel;  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Day-Spring, come and cheer,  
Our Spirits by Thine Advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, Thou Key of David, come  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
And order all things, far and nigh;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And cause us in her ways to go.

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
All peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;  
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

## ORDO

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