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**A Light to the World (2019)**

**Drawing Nearer to the Sacred (2019)**

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**True Bread: An Advent Prayer (2018)**

## A Light to the World

Lord, You have chosen us for Your very own.  
You, whose birth announcement was the  
brightest star that ever shone, always desire  
that radiance for us, Your beloved children.

*Please, Lord, help us to claim the light.*

Light is life, we know from Deuteronomy;  
therefore we choose light. We are a light  
to the world, we know from Your apostle  
Matthew; therefore we long to shine our light  
into the darkest crevices of this hurting world.  
We desire only to be lit candles of Your love.

*Please, Lord, help us to claim the light.*

Though we long for the light, You know well  
that sometimes we do not feel like Your beloved;  
shadows lengthen under our feet and the darkness  
of a perilous world threatens to entrap us. Even so,  
Lord, envelop us with the gift of Your radiance  
so it may keep our candle-flames brightly lit  
and chase the encroaching darkness away.  
Help us to emulate the wondering shepherds  
who drew near Your manger-crib, faces lit  
with joy at the quiet miracle of Your birth.  
Fill us with rejoicing at the gift of Your love.

*Please, Lord, help us to claim the light.*

Into our world send others who seek the light,  
we pray, and bless us with time in holy places  
where we can sense the presence of the sacred.

*Please, Lord, help us to claim the light in this  
blessed season of light, so that we may know  
the joy of being Your beloved all our lives.*

## Drawing Nearer to the Sacred

Sometimes we feel it, Lord, that strong sense that we are drawing near to a sacred space.

It can happen when we kneel in church and see a single shaft of light glance through stained glass.

It can happen when a choir soloist reaches an ethereal, other-worldly note.

It can happen outdoors, when we glimpse lofty pine boughs swaying in the wind or a butterfly alighting – just for an instant – on the upturned face of a flower.

It can happen when we tiptoe in to watch a sleeping child curled in bed, peaceful and still.

Transported are we at such times, sent briefly somewhere beyond this finite earthly realm.

Fleeting are they, these sacred moments.

They renew, they inspire, they humble, they heal.

They ask for no interpretation, no explanation.

Gifts from You are they, Lord, subtle signs of Your nearness. We pause, longing to prolong these moments out of time, but it is not to be.

Sucking us back into its own reality, the world reclaims us, and we are once more under harsh lights and subjected to constant din. We are clutched at, pawed and pummeled by too many competing demands.

And yet...hints of the divine remain with us, faint imprints of those otherworldly sacred spaces.

Wondrous secrets are they, to be guarded inwardly, much too precious to reveal.

Lord, during this wintry season we earnestly pray that You will send us more of these sacred moments. We so long to draw close to Your newborn son, Jesus, to feel Your nearer presence in holy spaces. Please help us to cultivate heightened sensibilities and a serenity of spirit so that we will never, ever miss a one of them.

### **First Christmas**

That night the stars dimmed  
in deference to the dominant one  
they knew outshone them.  
That night a donkey's breath  
and the warmth of a prone cow  
heated a straw-lined stable that drew  
bemused shepherds with widened eyes  
and three learned men who shed  
their dust-laden travel robes for eastern finery:  
embroidered sleeves, red silk and threads of gold.  
That night a young girl knelt  
before a manger softened with fodder  
to praise the infant she'd carried in her womb  
and birthed without mother, aunt or sister  
to serve as midwife, comforter.  
If she was exhausted, if her eyes craved sleep,  
if she wanted privacy after pain,  
if she longed to cradle her baby  
and guard him from foreign eyes,  
she did not show it.  
That night, knowing he was born  
to minister to others even as a child,  
the young girl knelt and prayed,  
not minding the stable boards  
hard on her knees under the straw.  
For that night, that night in a stable  
under a dominant star whose light  
could not be denied, she was a mother.  
She saw how his eyes searched out hers.  
That night she was a mother, and even  
a Savior needs his mother's strength and love.

**In God's Good Time**

*But as for me, I will look to the Lord, I will wait  
for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.*

--Micah 7:7

Lord, how earnestly we desire to be people of patience, awaiting Your plan for us. Frantically grasping, clenching and clutching what we think we desire is not Your way for us, that we know well.

But, Lord, if we are honest, we readily concede that waiting does not come naturally, and so we humbly ask for Your help. Please grant us the gift of patience and act in Your own good time. In this hurry-up world, we may be tempted to believe that our highest satisfaction is but a finger-click away. Do not let us be deceived: glittery baubles also tarnish. What we await has a long, hidden birthing process.

Help us to revere and emulate biblical examples of patience, we earnestly pray. Did not St. Paul echo Micah, saying, 'If we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently?' Behold gentle Mary, treasuring the deepest mysteries silently and pondering them in her heart while patiently awaiting the Savior's birth.

Regard aged Simeon in the temple, waiting, watching, enduring, confident he would not leave this earth until he beheld the Messiah face to face. God's people have always had to be people of patience. God's promises endure, and are always fulfilled. But His time is not our time. A year, a decade, a century... all are but the blink of an eye to the Lord.

And so we watch, we pray, we wait. And while we do, we silently ponder. Like Micah, Mary, Simeon and St. Paul, we trust that God will act in His own time, as He did at that first Christmas. We know that His time is always good.

### True Bread: An Advent Prayer

How tempting is the corner bakery, Lord: long, slender baguettes, puffy muffins, chewy bagels and flaky, curled croissants... The warm, wafting scent of freshly baked dough fills our nostrils and draws us irresistibly to the shop. And why not?

Do we not pray 'Give us this day our daily bread?' But it is this question of *daily* that gives us pause, for our hearts yearn for something lasting. How earnestly we await Your birth in Bethlehem. Like the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, we long for manna, bread from heaven that satisfies our souls. We heartily crave the bread that endures not for just a day, but for all eternity. Lord, Your word is the true bread, the bread that fills and lasts.

Give us Your own true bread, we pray, so that we can satisfy this soul hunger no bakery can ever satiate. Our hunger is an aching emptiness no baked bread can assuage, a restless, gnawing longing beyond our ability to name or placate.

Lord, You told Your followers, 'the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' You said also, 'I am the bread of life.' Please Lord, give us this true bread always, the bread of Yourself. For if we have You, we know that our gnawing soul hunger will leave us, and we can spend our days nourished by Your spirit and strengthened for Your service.