

THOSE WHO DREAM

POETRY PRAYERS

Written by Sarah Are

There are a number of ways to utilize poetry in your ministry. You might print and distribute these prayers to members in your community, or read them aloud to open and close study sessions. In worship, you could offer a poem as an opening reflection, a meditation during the sermon, a moment of reflection after the sermon, or as a written prayer printed in the bulletin. However you utilize these poems, please include credit as follows: Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

All in All

It takes strength to dream.
I imagine it's that same strength that leads
people to say, "I love you" first,
Those three vulnerable words,
Wrapped in heart strings,
Whispered,
Because what could be
Is too good to keep quiet about.

It takes strength to choose joy.
It takes strength to push the covers
Off our weary bodies morning after morning,
To plant weary feet on solid ground,
And look for signs of beauty.

It takes strength to remember that
we are not alone,
But the story starts with bone of bone and
flesh of flesh.
That feels like so long ago.

Oh yes,
It takes strength to dream.
I imagine that's why many choose not to,
For it would be far easier to simply sleep.
But there are always those who dream,
Those who are up at night picturing
what could be,
Because this world is too good not to.

So we say, "I love you."
We push the covers off.
We find solid ground.
We look for beauty.
And we dream.
We dare to dream.



The First Week of Advent

THOSE WHO DREAM... *keep awake* (hope)

Dream, Don't Sleep / Mark 13:24-37 & 2 Peter 3:8-15

They say you will come like a "thief in the night,"
The hour unclear, the day easily feared.

But I toss these words over the edge of my tongue,
And they don't taste right.

A thief is one that I lock out.
A thief is the one that I fear.

So I ask myself—
Did I downgrade you to no more than a thief, Great Builder?
Did you form me from the dust,
Breathe life into my bones,
And paint the horizon into the sky, all for me?

And was all of that fine,
Until you asked me to love my neighbor as myself?
Was all of that fine,
Until you said, "Dream, don't sleep"?
Was all of that fine,
Until you asked me to wake up to the suffering in the streets?

Did I imprison you to the role of the thief
To keep you from getting too close?

Forgive me, Great Builder.
Tear down the door to my house.
Crawl through the window.
Slip through the attic fan.
Dance in the security light.
Scream through the letterbox until I hear you again.
For this house is your house.
You built it.
You belong here.
I am begging you,
Break back in.



The Second Week of Advent
THOSE WHO DREAM... *prepare the way (peace)*

Prepare / Mark 1:1-8

My dad built me a changing table.
For nine months, my mom watched her ankles swell and her belly grow.
For nine months, my dad would come home from work, kiss her on her forehead—
Pressing bangs to skin—and tell her she was beautiful.
Then for nine months, he'd slip into the garage
To build sawdust sand castles and a dresser out of dreams.
I imagine she smiled, perched in that rocking chair.
He was in his woodshop, preparing the way.

Eighteen years later I left for college.
As I packed my bags, my mom baked blueberry muffins for the road—the smell of home.
She wrapped them in foil and placed them in a cardboard box,
Willing similar layers of protection to be wrapped around me, her little girl.
She was preparing the way.

My aunts and uncles bought sweatshirts in my new school colors.
My dad taught me how to change a tire.
My mom gave me the earrings I'd been sneaking from her jewelry box for the last four years.
I hid sticky-note love letters on the kitchen door for them to find when they returned home.
We were quiet in the car.
My brother cried.
We were all preparing the way.

And through these moments, I have come to see,
That preparation and love can be the same thing.
For there is something about love that makes us want to prepare.
There is something about love that compels us to
Throw open the doors,
Yell it from the rooftop,
Set the table,
Decorate the nursery,
Leave love notes on the back door,
Build the changing table,
Trim the tree,
Bake muffins for the road,
And when it's time,
If you must,
Let go.

Preparation and love can be the same thing.



The Third Week of Advent
THOSE WHO DREAM... *sow joy (joy)*

Sow Joy / Luke 1:46-55

If I wanted to sow joy,
I wouldn't use words.

I would turn the music all the way up,
And push the table against the wall,
Until we had room to dance.

I would roll the windows down
And drive you out of town,
Until fresh air filled your lungs.

I would squeeze your hand
And look you in the eye,
So that you would know you are not alone.

I'd lay down the picnic blanket and we'd look at the stars,
So that nothing could separate you from God's great beauty.

I'd open my door, like Elizabeth did for Mary.
I'd tell you to stay as long as you'd like.
Make yourself at home. What's mine is yours.

And maybe we'd sing. And maybe we'd laugh.
And maybe it would be enough to be in the presence of God and each other.

If I wanted to sow joy, that's what I'd do.
So sing me your song. We've got dancing to get to.



The Third Week of Advent
THOSE WHO DREAM... *sow joy (joy)*

Mary / Luke 1:46-55

When I was young, my church hosted a Christmas pageant.
Families would show up on Christmas Eve
With diaper bags and children thrown over their shoulders.
No amount of Silent Night could quiet that room.
It was a holy and beautiful chaos.

What was special about that church Christmas pageant,
Was we, the children, got to pick our character in the story.
So for one night, we could be Magi in Burger King crowns.
We could be angels with wings made of clothes hangers.
We could be shepherds in bathrobes, protecting the flock.
We could be Mary, beautiful and brave.

And the preacher would stand on the steps
And tell us the Christmas story,
And as our character entered the scene,
We would run down the center aisle and assume our place at the manger.
(As an aside: *Is there anything more holy than seeing a child
Run down that center aisle, as if getting closer to God is all they have in mind?*)

And as the story progressed, the front steps would become crowded
With dozens of Magi and a wide array of animals,
But I would always choose Mary.

I would always choose Mary—
Mary the teen mom.
Mary who said, "My soul magnifies the Lord."
Mary who sang.

For even at that age, even as a child,
We could tell that Mary was afraid, and into that dark, Mary sang.

So I and most of the other little girls in the church that night,
Would tighten the blue bed sheets draped around our shoulders,
And run down the center aisle when our name was called.
For in that moment,
We were on our way.
In that moment,
We were those who dream.
In that moment,
We were all Mary.
In that moment,
We were brave.



The Fourth Week of Advent

THOSE WHO DREAM... *are not alone (love)*

Joy Like Water / Luke 1:26-45

Mary went to Elizabeth's house,
Because that's what we do when the world falls apart.
That's what we do when the script is flipped,
When the rug is pulled,
When it rains inside.
We go home.
We find friends.
We find love.

So Mary went to Elizabeth's house,
Harboring good news that must have felt like water—
Something capable of helping her float or pulling her under.
And only then,
Only there,
In the presence of a face that looked like love,
Does the word "joy" appear.

Mary said, "How can this be?"
The angel said, "Do not be afraid."
Mary said, "May it be so."
But when Mary went to Elizabeth's house
And Elizabeth opened the door,
Joy—like a tipped cup of water—
Spilled out everywhere.

I imagine that Elizabeth laughed.
I imagine that Mary framed her growing belly.
I imagine that both women pressed palms to stomach
When that baby began to kick,
A holy ritual as old as time.
I imagine that God smiled.
And I imagine, that for the first time,
Mary could float.

Isn't it always that way?
I could harbor joy to myself.
I could tuck joyful moments deep into pockets,
Saving memories of better days for long nights.
But when I share my joy with you,
When you open the door,
Joy spills out everywhere,
And it is love that helps me float.



The Fourth Week of Advent
THOSE WHO DREAM... *are not alone (love)*

Not Alone / Luke 1:26-45

He never said to me, "I feel so alone,"
But I could tell every time we talked on the phone.
For you can hear loneliness move through the line.
It sounds like quiet and feels like tired.

But I never brought it up.
I pretended we were fine,
Passing stories like chess pieces
Until he'd resign.

And as I look back, if I could do it again,
I'd get on a plane and say to him—
You are made from nothing but love,
Inside and out, you are more than enough.
And if I could build you a home out of beautiful things,
I'd write all day and sing and pray.
But I cannot build your home,
Or make you love your own.

All I can do,
Is open my door and turn on the light,
So if you walk by you might stop inside.
And if you did, there you would find
The light is on.
The table is set.
The music is loud.
The bed is soft.
The food is warm.
What's mine is yours.

For no amount of space or time,
Or grief or doubt,
Or pain can subside
The fact that I am by your side.
Love and I will always abide.

I learned that from God.
I learned that from you.
Love doesn't go away.
I'm here to stay.
So like Mary and Elizabeth,
This door is open.

You didn't have to say you were lonely.
I could hear it in your voice.



Christmas Eve

this night, we are THOSE WHO DREAM

To Carry a Dream / Luke 2:1-20

To carry a dream
Is to walk at night,
Or to walk by light,
But with a pebble in your shoe.

To carry a dream is to
Wake at night
To wake and blink twice,
In case you see something new.

To carry a dream
Is to plant trees in old age,
To be a part of a church,
That is human and frayed.

To carry a dream is foolish and wild.
It's the faith of a child,
Wishing on stars.

But to carry a dream is also hopeful and wise,
The faith of our elders,
Saying God will provide.

So may we walk
Until we see the light.
May the pebble in our shoe
Remind us why we fight.
May they say
We are foolish and unwise,
And may we continue to dream;
May hope keep us alive.



The First Week after Christmas
THOSE WHO DREAM... *will not keep silent*

Swell / Luke 2:22-40

You know that feeling when you fall in love?
Time-stands-still *and* moves too fast.
You'd give up sleep just to talk all night,
Because there's so much to say and not enough time.

It's that full to the brim,
Over the stars,
Living is dreaming,
Too-good-to-be-true
Kind of feeling?

I imagine that's how Simeon and Anna felt
When they saw Jesus that day.
I imagine it was that full to the brim,
Over the stars,
Living is dreaming,
Too-good-to-be-true
Good news kind of feeling.

I imagine it was love.
And I imagine that that good, good news
Swelled to the tip of their tongues
Until they could not keep silent.

So may we know what Simeon and Anna knew,
Which is that some dreams we hold close to our chest,
For ourselves to cherish and never forget.
But other dreams must be spoken out loud—
Dreams of justice and love and hope, here and now.

So today my prayer is to know that swell,
For there is good, good news
That we must tell.



The Week of Epiphany
THOSE WHO DREAM... *persevere*

I Imagine / Matthew 2:1-12

I imagine they packed bags—
Water and food, blankets and clothes.

I imagine they packed tools—
Maps and telescopes that could bring the stars closer,
As if the sky was a comforter they could pull near.

I imagine they hugged loved ones and said,
“We’ll be back soon.”
And when loved ones said,
“Don’t leave,”
“It’s risky,”
“You don’t even know what you’re chasing,”
I imagine they put lips to foreheads and said,
“There is a light in the darkness. I must chase that.”

And then I imagine they walked.
I imagine they walked until legs were tired and knees gave out.
Maybe they told stories on the road and laughed into open sky,
Or maybe they sat in silence and prayed for more light.
However the road unfolded, I imagine it was not easy.

I imagine all of this, not because I’ve chased stars,
But because I have dreamed.
And these dreams for justice make the Magi’s story my own.
For every time we fight for justice,
We start in the dark.
We hug loved ones and say,
“There’s a light in the darkness, I must chase that.”
We walk until we’re tired,
And then we keep walking.
We laugh at the open sky as a form of resistance.
We pray in the night for signs of more light.
And no matter how important the journey is,
And no matter how much progress we make,
The journey to justice is never easy.

And so I pray,
That maybe one day,
We will be like the Magi,
And will walk ourselves into the light.
Until then, don’t forget—
There’s a light in the darkness. We must chase that.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Sarah Are, *Founding Creative Partner of A Sanctified Art*
Sarah (*she/her*) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every

door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world.