



# WHAT CAN'T WAIT

ADVENT 2019

## ABOUT THE THEME

Advent is a season of waiting, but is idle waiting what God wants of us? In preparation for the coming Messiah, we wonder together—what things can't wait? What demands our immediate attention? What requires our work and preparation? What is it that God can't wait for? Is it our praise, reconciliation, and proclamation? Is it the end of suffering, isolation, and fear? This Advent, we are invited to join in imagining, prioritizing, and preparing. As we wait, what can't?

## DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> | 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT | GOD'S PROMISED DAY CAN'T WAIT (Hope can't wait) ISAIAH 2:1-5 & PSALM 122

These texts speak of God's promised day—a day when wars end, swords are beaten into plowshares, and spears become pruning hooks. On the first Sunday in Advent, we focus on the need to hold onto hope, to continue dreaming of and reaching for God's promised day where there will be peace and all will know love. How does this unrelenting hope change us? How does it change our world?

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- In light of these scriptures, what *can't* wait? What *can*?
- Where is God at work to bring about *hope*? Where are we joining God in this work?

#### Isaiah 2:1-5 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

**2** The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

<sup>3</sup> Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Judgment Pronounced on Arrogance

<sup>5</sup> O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

#### Psalms 122 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"

<sup>2</sup> Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together.

<sup>4</sup> To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

<sup>5</sup> For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

<sup>6</sup> Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you.

<sup>7</sup> Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers."

<sup>8</sup> For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, "Peace be within you."

<sup>9</sup> For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

#### New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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## SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES

by Hannah Garrity inspired by Isaiah 2:1-5 | acrylic on canvas



What is God's view of the world? What does God plan for this world? This text is all about God's vision for the earth becoming a reality.

It's all about beating swords into plowshares. It's all about building peace.

How does this vision come to be? In this image of hands, I imagine how we might actually make God's vision come to life.

I listen to Christian rock because it is the only station I can play in the car that doesn't play curse words for my children to hear. I change the station, however, when the radio personalities come on because the statements are often slanted heavily to a viewpoint that is judgmental at its root.

I find this to be an intriguing dichotomy. The music is preaching the gospel, God's vision; the commentary is perpetuating division. Why do we do this? There must be another way.

There's a song that often plays on my Christian rock station from Matthew West's album, *Into the Light*. The song is called, "Do Something." The songwriter sees the pain of the world and asks God to do something. "I did, I created you," God responds, suggesting that with our hands and with our

words, God has created us to act in God's name.

Here, in acrylic on canvas, a man wields a grinder, burnishing the edges of a sword that has been reformed into a plow. Growth, not death; care, not fear. The simple analogy of the sword transformed into the plowshare reminds us that peace is at the heart of all that God envisions for this world.

How might you make God's vision come into reality?

—Hannah Garrity

## PEACE WITHOUT YOUR WALLS

by Lauren Wright Pittman inspired by psalm 122 | acrylic & ink on canvas



We all desire peace and security for ourselves, our families, and our communities. It seems, however, we often disagree about how to achieve peace and security, and about who is deserving of such well-being. Often, those who have realized even a baseline sense of peace and security quickly forget what it was like to be without. Fear creeps in and we separate ourselves with walls and isolate ourselves within towers. We worship and exist with people like us because it feels safe. We hoard peace and security as though they are finite resources, and elevate our own peace and security above that of other nations. We pray for ourselves, even if our answered prayers result in our neighbor's harm. This self-focused, defensive ideology is becoming increasingly pervasive in the United States, and it's finding strongholds in other countries too. Powerful people appeal to this inward-turning gaze, stoking fears and encouraging division.

This text celebrates refuge. As we know well from the news and the growing volatility at our borders, there are many who have become refugees—those seeking security and peace—while those within their walls and towers seek the good of themselves.

When I began to paint this piece, I kept wondering how walls and peace can coexist, but if I'm honest, if true shalom were to be realized, there would be no need for walls or towers. For me, peace looks like open doors leading out of the confinement of stone walls and into a field of poppies. For me, peace looks like flowers scaling walls, weakening the strength of stone foundations, and over time, bringing the barriers down. Peace looks like open arms—open to the difficult work of welcoming peace, and open to receiving the boundless gifts of a truly peaceful world.

—Lauren Wright Pittman