

DRAW NEAR

SONNETS FOR ADVENT



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Draw Near
Poems for Advent

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Part One - The World in Darkness

Nov 30–Dec 7

Before the trumpet sounds, before the angel speaks, before a child is born, there is silence.

The world waits in shadow and in ache.

It groans under the weight of injustice,
of longing,
of forgetfulness.

In this first week, we don't rush to joy. We dwell where Scripture begins: in exile, in the wilderness, in the hard and bitter ground where hope must take root.

The sonnets that follow attempt to name this darkness.

Not to glorify it, but to reveal the holy tension in which Advent begins: A God who seems far, a people who have forgotten how to sing, and yet a promise that still pulses beneath the soil.

We begin with watching.

We begin with trembling.

We begin with waiting for a light we can't yet see.

The World Grown Cold

The earth lies bare beneath a bitter sky
Its beauty stripped by winter's searching breath
The flowers fade, the birds forget to fly
And silence sings the lullaby of death

The nations scorn what goodness still has heft
And hearts grow numb beneath the weight of days
We feast while justice starves and mercy's left
And call it peace while turning from your ways

Yet in this frost, a whisper dares to raise
Its fragile voice against the dark and dust
A hope not quenched by all the world's decay
Still grows beneath the ice in quiet trust

Draw near, O Lord, and breathe the thawing air
And plant a spring in hearts stripped cold and bare

The Silent Heavens

We scan the skies, but stars will not reply
No voice breaks through the veil we call the night
The heavens hold their breath, and angels lie
Unseen, while prayers dissolve in fading light

The prophets cried, then vanished from our sight
Their ancient words grown faint with passing years
Now hollow are the hymns we used to write
And hollow still our hope through all our fears

But silence is not void when love draws near
And stillness is the seedbed of the Word
A hidden flame awaits its time to sear
Though nothing in the darkness yet is stirred

Draw near, O Speech that birthed both light and song
And break the hush we've held for far too long

The Cry

Their voices echo down the canyon walls
Sharp as a blade and bright as desert flame
They thunder truth through shattered temple halls
And leave no soul untouched, no heart the same

They curse the lie, the bribe, the priestly game
They name the cost of mercy cast aside
They bear no charm, they make no bid for fame
They walk the edge where judgment must divide

Yet in their fire, a deeper hope is tied
That God has not forgotten what he swore
Their fury springs from love the world denied
And clears the path for grace to enter more.

Draw near, O Flame that burns but does not die
And light the hearts we thought too cold and dry

The Broken Crown

Where now the kings who claimed the world as theirs
Their golden thrones are buried in the land
Their empires crumble, built on blood and prayers
And none remain to grasp their vanished hand

The crowns of men are forged in shifting sand
Their wisdom, power, and might are turned to rust
They ruled with fear and never understand
That power dies when severed from the just

O come, true King, whose reign inspires trust
Whose scepter never breaks, whose throne is grace
No sword shall win what faith alone must trust
No rule endures unless it holds your face

Draw near, O King, whose rule shall never cease
And wear the crown of justice, truth, and peace

The Exile and Return

We hung our harps upon the willow tree
And could not sing the songs we used to know
Our feet grew sore from wanders endlessly
Our hearts grew cold beneath the captive's woe

We dreamed of home, of Zion's golden glow
But dreams dissolved like mist at break of day
We could not see the path by which to go
We only knew we had to learn to stay

Yet even here, your mercy finds a way
And sends us manna in the foreign land
You plant in exiles seeds of new array
And guide us to our home with outstretched hand

Draw near, O Shepherd of the lost and far
And lead us where your dwelling mercies are

The Fig Tree Bare

No blossom crowns the branch; the fruit is gone
The fig tree stands alone in winter's wind
The signs are stark, the fields are stripped and wan,
And every root seems twisted, dark, and thinned

The watchers wait for spring to rise again
But feel no warmth, and hear no lark's return
Yet deep beneath, the earth conceals its plan
A fire waits one day again to burn

We dare to hope though all around we learn
That life may hide where death has made its claim
The fruitless tree may yet be flame in turn
The silent bough still whispers forth your name

Draw near, O Root whose life defeats the grave
And make this barren world begin to brave

The Trembling Nations

The mountains shake, the oceans swell and roar
The nations rise like waves that crash and fall
The earth is groaning, waiting for much more
Than what we build with tower, wall, or sprawl

We cry for peace, yet sharpen war with gall
We speak of love, yet cling to scorn and pride
We dance on thresholds even as they stall
Afraid of what the heavens may decide

But judgment comes not only to divide
It cuts away the rot to plant the just
It rends the veil to let the truth abide
And scatters lies like ashes in the dust

Draw near, O Judge whose verdicts make us whole
And weigh the hearts of nations soul by soul

The Night Watches

The night is long and heavy on the land
The watchmen scan the east with weary eyes
Their torches dim, yet still they silent stand
Awaiting light that yet delays to rise

The stars wheel slowly through the wintry skies
A cold procession tracing time's decline
Yet hope endures when every signal dies
A stubborn faith in promise's design

They do not know the hour or the sign
But keep their post and whisper ancient song
Their vigil makes the morning's joy divine
They mark the dark that tells us night is long

Draw near, O Dawn whom watchers strain to see
And let your light at last break over me

Part Two - The Promise Awakens

Dec 8–16

Something stirs.

A breath moves where there was no wind.

The prophets' words echo again.

Not as thunder now, but as whisper.

A voice cries in the wilderness.

A shoot pushes through frozen earth.

This second movement of Advent is quieter than the first,
but no less urgent.

Here, we trace the slow unfurling of promise,
in the fierce honesty of John the Baptist,
in the visitations of angels,
in Mary's unheralded yes,
and even in the unborn child who leaps with joy.

The sonnets of this week bear witness to preparation.

Not the frantic hustle of holiday errands,
but the inward, trembling work of repentance,
readiness, and room-making.

God is nearer now.
Can we clear a path?

The Smoldering Wick

A wick still glows though wind has blown it low
Its flame reduced to trembling red and gold
The world would quench it, snuff its quiet glow
And leave the weak and weary in the cold

But you, O Lord, refuse to break or scold
You guard the spark the world would cast away
You mend the bruised, the burdened, and the old
And fan the ash into the light of day

So let the wick still burn, though none may stay
To watch it kindle into morning's flame
Though strength may falter, love will not betray
And mercy will remember every name

Draw near, O Wind that makes the embers live
And teach our fainting hearts again to give

The Voice

A voice cries out beyond the city's gate
Where dust and rock and solitude conspire
He calls not crowds, but hearts that bear the weight
Of sin and shame and long-forgotten fire

His words are flint; his gaze, a fierce desire
To see the road made level, straight, and wide
The hills brought low, the valleys lifted higher
That none may stumble, none be cast aside

He wears no crown, yet kings will not abide
The truth he shouts beneath the desert sky
His path is hard, but will not be denied
For even now the Lord is drawing nigh

Draw near, O Way through whom all paths are blessed
And walk with those who wander in unrest

The Straight Path

The road is rough, the stones lie sharp and deep
The winding trail avoids the truth it fears
Too long we've let the crooked places keep
Their hidden snares, their compromises, tears

But now a voice compels us past our fears
Prepare the way, repent, renew, return
Make straight the path that sin has bent with years
And let the fire of holiness still burn

The road is hard, but grace will not adjourn
The journey love demands of all who seek
Each stone removed, each turn we now unlearn
Will make our footfall firm and purpose meek

Draw near, O Way, who treads the path before
And guide us home by roads once lost and poor

The Threshing Floor

The winnowing fork is in the Master's hand
The threshing floor is swept by holy fire
He clears the chaff with wind at his command
And sifts the heart of every base desire

No empty creed, no robe or priestly choir
Can hide the soul when judgment's day is near
The fruitless boast, the idle, vain aspire
All fall away when righteousness draws near

Yet do not fear the flame, for love is here
And what is true shall in the fire remain
The floor is cleared, the wheat made bright and clear
The grain preserved, though husks be burned as vain

Draw near, O Lord, and thresh the proud from me
That I may stand in holy poverty

Water and Fire

The Jordan flows where prophets once did stand
Its waters old with mercy's ancient song
But now the fire descends with cleansing hand
To burn away what bound our hearts so long

The dove and flame together still belong
One soothes the wound, the other sears the sin
We fear the flame, yet cry to be made strong
To be made new, to see the change begin

The Spirit moves both outside and within
A storm of love, both gentle and severe
He washes clean, and then he draws us in
No heart too cold, no soul too far, too seared

Draw near, O Flame and Flood, O Wind and Dove
And make our wilderness a place of love

The Root Begins to Stir

Beneath the soil where lifeless things decay
A hidden root begins to stretch and grow
No trumpet sounds, no crowds attend its way
No eye perceives the sap that starts to flow

The stump seemed dead, the branch cut down so low
Yet now a stirring shivers through the deep
Though earth is cold and covered still with snow
The shoot begins to rise from silent sleep

Hope rises too, though buried long and steep
And green will come where gray has made its claim
The promise made in darkness still will keep
And joy will come though none recall its name

Draw near, O Shoot from Jesse's fallen line
And bloom again in hearts like theirs and mine

The Angel Rehearses Light

The angel waits, a word upon his tongue
A message forged before the stars took flame
He lingers near where old songs once were sung
Preparing light to enter without name

The time draws close, the world is not the same
Though few can sense the trembling of the air
The silence holds the shape of coming flame
And even shadows shine with hidden prayer

The Word prepares to speak, the veil to tear
And Gabriel rehearses what to say
The dawn is dressed in glory unaware
And heaven leans to see the break of day

Draw near, O Voice that waits behind the veil
And speak the Word that death shall not curtail

A Yes in the Shadows

The light came not with trumpet blast or blaze
But hovered near a village faint and small
A girl looked up, confused beneath the gaze
Of heaven's grace, and trembled at the call

No sign was there to mark her rise or fall
No witnesses to weigh her simple word
Yet in her heart the greatest yes of all
Was offered freely, pondered, prayed, and heard

No force compelled, no fame was sought or stirred
She chose the path that only love can prove
She bore the flame no shadow could deter
The womb where God would soon begin to move

Draw near, O Child, conceived in silent grace
And dwell again in every willing place

First Kicks

Two women meet and joy begins to leap
Though both have borne the weight of waiting years
Their secrets stir where promises run deep
Their laughter rings through long-forgotten fears

The unborn prophet kicks and knows he nears
The one he'll name as Lamb, as Lord, as Light
The Spirit speaks where none but God now hears
And praise breaks forth before the gift is sight

So even now, before the stars ignite
The joy of Christ begins to rise and shine
The womb becomes a temple burning bright
The silence hums with glory's hidden line

Draw near, O Babe, whose joy begins unseen
And make our souls a dwelling rich and clean

Part Three - The Dawn Approaches

Dec 17–23

These final days before Christmas are marked by a chant older than the church calendar itself.

The O Antiphons cry out from the deep well of Scripture, naming Christ by the titles the prophets gave him:

**Wisdom,
Lord,
Root,
Key,
Light,
King,
Emmanuel.**

These are not sentimental devotions. They are bold and desperate invocations, calling for a Savior who orders chaos, shatters prison bars, heals the nations, and comes to dwell with us.

Each day gives voice to a specific longing.

Each sonnet is a plea, and a proclamation.

The one we wait for is already drawing near.

O Sapientia (O Wisdom)

O Wisdom born before all time began
Who weaves the stars and sings the planets' song
From end to end you shape salvation's plan
Both firm and gentle, ruling right and strong

You teach the proud where all their thoughts go wrong
You counsel hearts that tremble in the night
You bring the lost to where the saints belong
And guide the feet that seek the path of light

O come, and break the chains of fleshly might
Dispel the fog where lies and shadows stay
Enkindle in our souls a holy sight
That we may walk your wise and wondrous way

Draw near, O Wisdom, flame of holy mind
And teach our eyes to see as you designed

O Adonai (O Lord)

O Lord of hosts, who spoke through flame and smoke
Whose voice made Sinai tremble at your name
You loosed the bonds of Egypt's tyrant choke
And robed your servant in your holy claim

You carved your law in stone with hand of flame
And led your people through the desert wide
No power of kings, no fear, no sword, no shame
Could stop the grace of God who walks beside

O come, and stretch your arm both true and wide
To break the yoke that holds our hearts in fear
With mercy's rod and justice as your guide
Bring freedom forth and wipe away each tear

Draw near, O Lord, whom burning bush foretold
And claim your flock within your saving fold

O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse)

O Root of Jesse, sign for every land
The branch once hidden now begins to rise
From withered stump you lift a royal hand
And bring new life where hope in silence lies

The nations seek the light that never dies
And kings fall still before your throne of grace
No scheme of men, no worldly power or prize
Can shift your reign or steal your dwelling place

O come, and plant your truth in every place
Let righteousness and peace together flow
Your justice blooms in deserts dry and base
And bids the wastelands into gardens grow

Draw near, O Root whom David's line has known
And make all hearts a branch of Jesse's throne

O Clavis David (O Key of David)

O Key of David, holding heaven's gate
You break the bars that bind us in the night
No lock can stand against a love so great
No chain withstands your ever-rising light

You seek the lost and give the blind their sight
You call the dead to rise and walk once more
You cast out fear and put the dark to flight
And open wide salvation's narrow door

O come, and set the prisoners evermore
Free from the cells of guilt and silent pain
Let songs of joy resound from shore to shore
And let the shadowed sit in light again

Draw near, O Key, whose mercy none can bind
And break the locks that shackle humankind

O Oriens (O Dayspring)

O Radiant Dawn, bright light from eastern skies
You chase the dark that holds the world in dread
The shadow flees before your morning rise
And hope breaks forth where night once bowed its head

You warm the cold, you raise the sleeping dead
You shine where pain and silence long have reigned
No fear survives where you, O Light, have led
No soul remains in shadow, lost or chained

O come, and let our weary eyes be trained
To seek your face beyond the veil of strife
With healing beams let every wound be stained
And flood our hearts with everlasting life

Draw near, O Dayspring, light that's ever true
And make the earth and every heart anew

O Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations)

O King of all, desired by every land
The piece once scorned now stands as cornerstone
You form us from the ever-yielding sand
And bind our hearts as one before your throne

No walls divide where you have made your own
No rival gods can steal your rightful praise
You bear our flesh and make our weakness known
Yet hold the world in wise and wondrous ways

O come, and end the war our world displays
Let every nation bow before your peace
Unite the scattered with your justice blaze
And bid all strife and selfish empire cease

Draw near, O King whom broken hearts adore
And be our guide and ruler evermore

O Emmanuel (O God with Us)

O God with us, our soul's most fervent cry
The longed-for guest whom prophets dreamed to see
You dwell not far in some exalted sky
But take our dust and share our poverty

You walk with us in grief and victory
You sit with us in silence and in song
The manger holds Incarnate mystery
The child through whom the weak will be made strong

O come, and right our centuries of wrong
Restore the world with mercy's gentle art
Let heaven's joy be justice on our tongue
And birth your kingdom deep in every heart

Draw near, O God whose name is love made flesh
And make this rancid world forever fresh

Part Four - The Child Has Come

Dec 24-25

The long night breaks beneath a burst of light.

The promises whispered in shadow
are now sung in the open fields.

Angels pour their song into the midnight air,
and shepherds leave their flocks to kneel before a manger.

The Word who once spoke the stars into place
now sleeps beneath them, and the Maker of all
draws breath among the lowly.

Here, at last, is the wonder for which creation has groaned.

The holy God in fragile flesh,
the eternal cradled in time.

And the Glory of the Lord Shone Round About Them

While Caesar's call went forth through every land
And kings made lists and towns grew full and loud
A silent birth took place by God's command
Unseen beneath the census and the crowd

No palace doors, no fanfare for the proud
But swaddled hope where beasts and shadows lie
Where straw and starlight weave a humble shroud
And glory falls where none would think to try

The shepherds trembled at the singing sky
Yet heard good news the poor had never known
A Savior born, the Lord who draws us nigh
Whose peace makes lowly hearts his royal throne

Draw near, O Child, whose cry makes angels sing
And be our joy, our peace, our everything

The Word Was Made Flesh

The Word through whom all galaxies were spun
Now lies within a manger, small and still
The Maker joins the world he once begun
And enters not by force, but by God's will

No sword in hand, no sign of strength or skill
He comes where weakness waits with aching eyes
The light of life comes down the midnight hill
And sings of peace beneath the starlit skies

So come, ye hearts grown weary, worn, and wise
Come see what love has wrapped in mortal clay
This infant voice shall cause the dead to rise
And chase the final, fearful night away

Draw near, and see your Maker in the hay
The Word Made Flesh. The Life. The Truth. The Way.

Part Five - The Light Has Come

December 27 – January 6

Christmas is not the end of the story.

It is the birth of a flame that now begins to spread...
from cradle to martyr, from temple to exile,
from starlight to Gentile kings.

These twelve days trace the widening circles of incarnation:
not just that Christ came,
but that Christ comes still...
into pain, into witness, into worship,
into the lives of saints, strangers, and seekers.

The light has come.

Now watch how it moves.

St. Stephen

They could not bear the word he dared to speak
A fire too bright for hate to leave alone
He named the just, the holy, and the meek
And saw the Son beside the Father's throne

They gnashed their teeth and cast their heavy stone
But still he prayed for mercy as he fell
The truth he died for was not his alone
It lives wherever love outlasts the shell

His blood became a spring in martyr's well
A firstfruit of the cross that saints will bear
His dying breath rang like a temple bell
Forgiveness loosed upon the choking air

Draw near, and see how light defies the grave
And learn from him who died not mad, but brave

St. John the Evangelist

He leaned upon the breast of God made flesh
The Word he heard now beating in his ear
He saw the light the darkness could not thresch
And named it Love, the name that casts out fear

No sword was his, no martyr's wound or spear
But witness carved in ink and tender line
He wrote the signs that made the silence clear
And told of water changed to living wine

Through him, the light began to rise and shine
In sentences that sang what eyes had seen
He bore the truth with grace and form divine
And showed the Word where flesh and love convene

Draw near, O soul who longs to know and live
And find the love no fear can keep from give

The Holy Innocents

The cradle shakes beneath a tyrant's fear
And swords are drawn for those who cannot run
The weeping echoes sharp and raw and near
A lullaby cut short before begun

No angel spares the sons of Bethlehem
No star defends the nursery or street
The shadow falls, and mothers cling to them
While death walks in with swift and sandaled feet

Yet even here, the Christ child is not beat
Though spared, he bears the weight of every name
The Innocents shall in his justice meet
Their cries redeemed within his rising flame

Draw near, and weep with those who dare to mourn
For even grief may mark where Christ is born

The Flight to Egypt

The child departs before he learns to speak
A stranger led by night beyond the land
The king who cannot crush the poor or weak
Still hunts the hope he cannot understand

The donkey bears the Word through foreign sand
The promised One becomes a refugee
He hides not just from Herod's bloodstained hand
But walks with all who flee captivity

He takes the road with every exile, he
Knows hunger, border, danger, fear, and loss
The path to glory runs through Galilee
Through Egypt's dust, beneath a borrowed cross

Draw near, and see the God who knows your flight
Who makes his home beneath a foreign night

Simeon and Anna

He came, a child, and still they saw a flame
The old man's arms shook not with age, but joy
His eyes had waited, searching every name
And now they fixed on Israel's promised boy

She, too, had fasted more than half a life
And sang to see the dawn in swaddled form
They knew salvation not through might or strife
But in a face still pink and breathing warm

No throne was needed, nor prophetic storm
Just faithful eyes, and time enough to wait
The Word they longed for now had flesh and form
The Light arrived, though wrapped in something late

Draw near, and wait with those who've long been still
And bless the Lord whose promise he will fill

The Turning

The clock gives way, the year dissolves again
The numbers shift, the pages turn once more
We mark our days in ink, and yet, in vain
They pass like breath across the ocean's shore

But Christ has come and walked our fragile span
He wore our dust and entered into time
The maker of the stars became a man
And sanctified the minutes and the grime

So do not fear the bells or ticking chime
No year can come that he has not made new
He holds the whole of time within a rhyme
And names each moment holy, just, and true

Draw near, and step into the time he keeps
The one who wakes us even as time sleeps

The Name

The name was spoken softly on the eighth
A name the angel whispered long before
No crown adorned his brow, no pride, no wraith
Just Mary's arms and Joseph's love secure

But in that name, the Word began to pour
Into the world with healing, fire, and breath
The Name above all names the heavens bore
Would speak to storms and silence even death

The syllables still sing across the earth
In liturgy, in whisper, in lament
It names the one who gave the cosmos birth
And yet in swaddled breath was humbly spent

Draw near, and speak the name no tongue can give
The only name that makes the dead to live

The Journey Begins

They saw a light and left their maps behind
Their questions lit by stars the wise must trust
They followed signs that puzzled every mind
Drawn not by proof, but by a promised just

They journeyed far through silence, heat, and dust
No scroll to show the place, no voice to guide
Just one lone star and longing's sacred thrust
To find the King no kingdom could provide

They were not sure, yet still they did not hide
They risked the road for joy not yet made clear
And even now, the signs are still supplied
To those who move through wonder, awe, and fear

Draw near, and start the journey toward the true
And let the long road make a path through you

The Star

The star went on before them through the dark
A lamp above the path they could not see
It sang no song, it bore no gilded mark
But told the skies: the Lord of all is he

No pulpit spoke, no prophet's voice decreed
Just sky and silence drawing eyes and feet
The Maker set this lamp for those in need
And wrote in light what words could not repeat

Creation knelt to make the moment meet
And all the heavens echoed Bethlehem
The stars themselves bowed low to kiss his feet
And whispered grace in their celestial hymn

Draw near, and read the sky with patient gaze
And find the child by more than earthly ways

The Gifts

They loaded up their chests with gifts of gold
A crown for one whose cradle had no throne
They loaded frankincense, both sweet and bold
To praise the God the world had not yet known.

And then the myrrh, for love must stand alone
A gift that smelled of burial and loss
These gifts, these kings, before a child unshown
To all but those who journeyed by the cross

They bring what marked his glory and his cost
To worship not with words but with their knees
To name him Savior, though the world still lost
Its grip on what such royal homage means

Draw near, and lay your treasures at his feet
And learn that loss and love in him are sweet

The Light for the Nations

Arise and shine your light has come at last
The darkness breaks beneath the newborn flame
No shadow now can hold the grieving past
No night can smother what the stars proclaim

We all can come and call upon his name
And every tribe and tongue begins to sing
The far-off ones now enter with acclaim
And strangers bow before the infant King

The hidden Word now rises like the spring
His glory gathers those once cast aside
From east and west, from low and high they bring
The gifts of earth and hearts no fear can hide

Draw near, and let his radiance be your own
The light that makes the nations all his own

The Epiphany

The Light once veiled now burns through every shore
Its radiance no creed nor clan confines
The voice once hushed now calls forth evermore
Through tongues and tribes, through all the earth's designs

No border holds the love by God assigned
No gate can bar the mercy breaking through
Each heart that seeks, though wandering or blind
Shall find the path made straight, the world made new

The high brought low, the lowly lifted high
The first made last, the lost restored to grace
The heavens open wide to every cry
And Christ reveals the Father's shining face

Draw near, O Christian, what more can we give
The Word made flesh, who dies that all may live

January 6

