

Week 2: Darkness Is Beautiful

Song of Solomon 1:2-6

The Song of Solomon is a love poem overflowing with rich imagery. It need not be explained as an allegory of Christ's love for the church but can simply stand as an expression of being overwhelmed by the beauty of another. While older translations of the Bible translate the conjunction in verse 5 linking "black" (or "dark") with "beautiful" (or "lovely") as one of contrast (that is, "I am dark, but lovely"), the NSRV joins them as two things that belong together ("I am black and beautiful"). The scholarship behind this decision would seem to be reflected in what follows: "Do not gaze at me because I am dark, because the sun has gazed on me."

This may seem an unusual passage to meditate on during Advent. Yet many of the images of Christ and the virgin Mary we are accustomed to seeing this season portray them with light skin, as if from European descent. This can give the incorrect impression that Jesus was white—a belief that has been used to defend notions of white supremacy. This passage offers a helpful contrast that is also more historically accurate.

Joyful Is the Dark



1 Joy - ful is the dark, ho - ly, hid - den God,
 2 Joy - ful is the dark, Spir - it of the deep,
 3 Joy - ful is the dark, shad - owed sta - ble floor;
 4 Joy - ful is the dark, cool - ness of the tomb,
 5 Joy - ful is the dark, depth of love di - vine,



roll - ing cloud of night be - yond all nam - ing:
 wing - ing wild - ly o'er the world's cre - a - tion,
 an - gels flick - er, God on earth con - fess - ing,
 wait - ing for the won - der of the morn - ing;
 roar - ing, loom - ing thun - der - cloud of glo - ry,



maj - es - ty in dark - ness, en - er - gy of love,
 silk - en sheen of mid - night plum - age black and bright,
 as with ex - ul - ta - tion, Mar - y, giv - ing birth,
 nev - er was that mid - night touched by dread and gloom:
 ho - ly, haunt - ing beau - ty, liv - ing, lov - ing God.



Word - in - flesh, the mys - ter - y pro - claim - ing.
 swoop - ing with the beau - ty of a ra - ven.
 hails the in - fant cry of need and bless - ing.
 dark - ness was the cra - dle of the dawn - ing.
 Hal - le - lu - jah! Sing and tell the sto - ry!

Text: Brian Wren, b. 1936

Music: LINDNER, Carlton R. Young, b. 1926

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