

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Jesus Christ is a towering figure of history. Billions of people acknowledge Him as God; His name is used with reverence by many every Sunday. Art, architecture, literature, charity, political systems, philosophy and science all owe Him a great debt. In the first four chapters of Luke, Christ is revealed to us as the **Son of God, heir of King David, and promised deliverer for Israel**. He is referred to as Son of God six times, David's son three times, and the deliverer seven times. Each of these terms has important meanings for us today.

If He is truly God, as we believe, this is a most gracious image of God. He is born in very humble circumstances, is lauded by His cousin, and is rejected by His neighbors from His home town. What an unexpected and reassuring image of a God who comes alongside us, and does not demand recognition. As King, He is in the long tradition of the **unrecognized prince** who is only known by a select few. The ones who do know are quite certain of His lineage and His valid claim to the throne. As the book goes on we will learn more of what His kingdom and kingship mean, yet even here we learn it means security and justice. As Jesus says in His first sermon, captives will be released, blind will see, and the oppressed will be freed.

The angels that appear—to Zechariah, to Mary, to the shepherds—add mystery and power. And this goes very well with His role as the powerful deliverer of Israel, the deliverer from all enemies. The wonder of prophetic voices—Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna—reinforces that He will deliver us from everything that frightens us. How remarkable that God should reveal Himself to us as someone who makes us safe. Someone who can protect us. Someone who will watch over us. Someone whose companionship is **reassuring**, not frightening.

The familiar images from this section—the Annunciation, the Adoration of the Shepherds, the Baptism, the Temptation—have been painted often. Our annual Christmas cards have built a homey and comforting iconography of Christ as a child. Our Nativity sets, our Nativity plays, our Christmas Eve services all weave an aura of **wonder**, peace, and joy. I would say this is good—this is the aura God has chosen to give us as He begins to reveal Himself. Like Mary, we can quietly treasure these things in our hearts. If we do not know Christ as a reassuring presence, we can ask Him to meet us in prayer as we lay all our worries and fears before Him. For that, too, is an important message in this section. We are told three times not to be afraid. Though we are told in the Old Testament that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” we see in these passages that it is wonder and awe that awaken faith, and prepare men for the reassuring presence of God. That reassuring presence is a healing one. That reassuring presence is one that brings a joyful and good message that God is in control.

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Preface

As someone who enjoys reading history, I appreciate Luke's commitment to research carefully and present the evidence that Christ fulfills Old Testament prophecy. His purpose is that we would know the truth: Christ is God who lived on earth, showed us God's character of compassion, who died, rose again, and ascended to Heaven where He lives as King over a new Kingdom.

Luke 1:1-4

Land records
Family trees
Public health codes
Liturgy manuals
Donor lists
Instructions for craftsmen
Architectural descriptions
Organizational charts

Amid the poetry
 Dramatic stories
 Wisdom
Is all the ordinary, work-day information

I like this about Scripture!
It gives authenticity,
 A touch of the raw materials of history
I suppose it's too hard to preach from lists
So without reading all of Scripture ourselves
We can easily lose the sense
Of how much God must approve of the mundane

Free Verse

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Luke 1: The Hidden King is Promised

Jesus' was born as a child from a poor Jewish family, He fulfilled the prophecy that He would be born in the city of David, descendant of that King. His unlikely choice of social class hid His true position as King of all.

1:5-25

The Hidden King is promised to Zechariah

God prepares for the promised King through the miraculous birth of John.

We're obsessed with when life begins
But it's crazy it can begin at all
Much less that our personalities
 And shapes and dreams
Start with something microscopic.
Apparently we're an idea in God's mind
Even before the microscope can see us.
How else to explain that God
 Could tell women
 The accomplishments
 Of their future sons?
 Sarah for Isaac
 Hannah for Samuel
 Manoah's wife for Samson
 Elizabeth for John,
DNA is crazy complicated,
An encyclopedia of info, they say.
But that doesn't even seem to cover the basics
On God's plan and calling.

I pray for my unborn grandchildren
That their births will bring as much joy
As John's did to Zechariah and Elizabeth.
And that God's plan and timing will be perfect.

Free Verse

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4



The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

1:26-45

The Hidden King is promised to Mary

God promises the birth of the King to Mary, His mother.

We tend to forget how political

The Annunciation was.

We focus on the miracle

(or skepticism about it)

Or we focus on Mary's humility and obedience.

It's a rich moment that artists have mined

To tell us about womanhood,

Mystery,

Majesty.

But think about it.

The Jews were an oppressed people

They expected liberation thanks to their prophetic literature.

They expected a King from David's line to restore the glory years.

Mary, well-versed in this tradition, is told her Son

Will take David's throne to fulfill the promise.

She thanks God for His mercy to Israel,

Zechariah thanks Him for salvation from enemies,

Simon rejoices in glory for Israel,

Anna tells all expecting Jerusalem's redemption.

Clearly the Kingdom they expected was

This-worldly, Political.

Jesus redefined it as

Spiritual, Infinite, Eternal,

With this-worldly impact beyond any expectation.

Jesus' followers are often tempted

To go for political power and

Results tend to be embarrassing:

Constantine

Holy Roman Empire

Crusades

Inquisition

New World Conquest

So a word of caution for us today!

Perhaps we're right to focus on

Miracle, Mystery, Majesty,

In the Annunciation.

"God in us" is much bigger than politics.

Help us, Lord, to keep our focus.

Free Verse

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

1:46-56

The Hidden King is promised through prophecy

Mary gives a prophecy of the King and the nature of His kingdom.

Lord, thank You so very much for Mary,
So expressive of her confidence in You,
Full of gratitude for what You'd done,
With vision and hope in what You'd do.
Such deep compassion, certainty of justice,
Including so much she could not have guessed:
Strategies to heal the sick, give skills
To the hungry, free those oppressed.
The impossible just takes some time.
You scatter haughty ones, I've seen them fall.
You take down tyrants, raise to us their victims.
Examples, Mary. I cannot name them all:
Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, Alexander Solzhenitsyn,
Nelson Mandela, Lech Walesa, Aung San Suu Kyi, Shirin Ebadi.

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1:57-80

The Hidden King is promised through prophecy

John is born and Zechariah prophesies

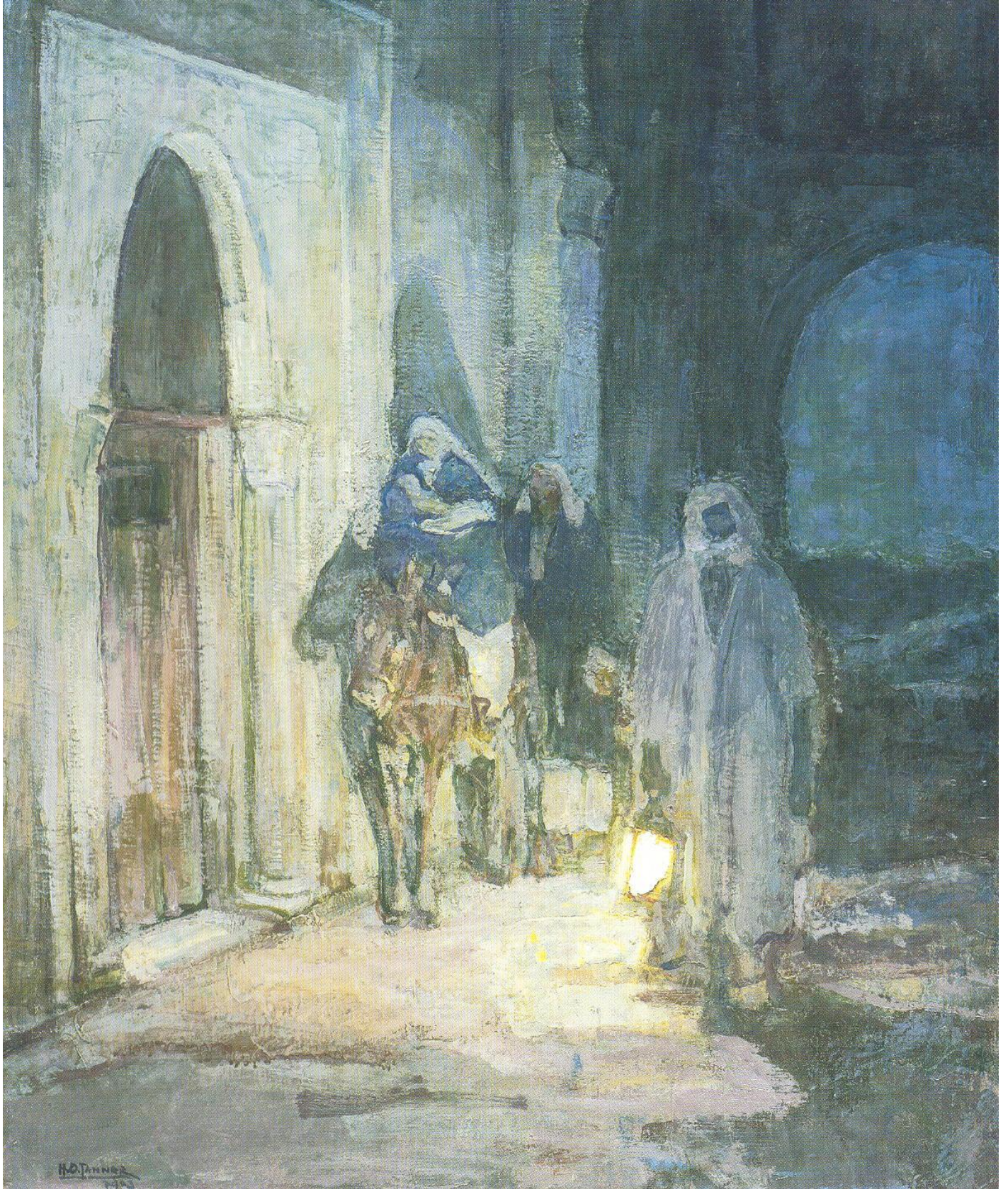
When John was born Zechariah said:

Praise Israel's God who now
Redeems us through a King
Sent from David's line
As prophets used to sing.
Our enemies can't hurt us.
We need not live in fear.
His covenant of mercy
Has now to us come near.

You will be a prophet, son,
Preparing for His reign,
Telling how forgiveness comes
Through mercy. Making plain
That light will shine for all
Hidden in death's dark.
For His bright light, my son,
You are the starting spark.

Free Verse

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4



The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Luke 2: The Hidden King is Presented

2:1-20

The Hidden King is Presented to the shepherds

Jesus is born, and angels announce "the son of David" to humble shepherds.

Christ's birth brings joy to each believing heart,
As with wonder on this truth we gaze,
That God became a little child, they say,
And in a manger here on earth He lay.
How this fills our hearts with joyous praise,
Calling us with love to do our part.

The time when Mary and Joseph had to part
From home, each traveled with a hopeful heart
Recalling all God's acts for them with praise.
As they came to Bethlehem their gaze
Fell on the little village as it lay
So glad to come, they had no need to say.

But when no inn was found, what could they say?
They knew they had to go to any part
And find a place where Mary then could lay.
For each of them knew deeply in their heart
The time had come. So with a tender gaze
Joseph found a place, accepting it with praise.

And when the Child was born they lifted praise
For them there was nothing else to say
As on the swaddled Child they set their gaze.
And Mary knew that she had done her part,
And Joseph felt such gratitude of heart
As they watched Him where He lay.

That night shepherds in the fields did lay
When suddenly an angel came with praise.
"I bring good news of joy! Let not your heart
Feel fear. In Bethlehem tonight, I say
Your Savior has been born! Now, depart!"
And at the host of angels they did gaze.

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

To find the Child the shepherds set their gaze
And found where Jesus in the manger lay.
They told the town the news as they did part
And they went back into their fields with praise
For Christ and all they'd heard the angels say.
But Mary treasured all this in her heart.

We gaze at Christ now filled with praise
We lay our lives before Him here and say,
"Take all my heart and joy, every part!"

Sestina



The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

2:21-35

The Hidden King is Presented to a prophet

Jesus is presented in the temple and Simeon blesses the family, recognizing Him as the Messiah.

Simeon, a man wise and old
Heard from God of Israel's release
And at the temple found the Child to hold.

"Lord, now I can die in peace,
I've seen the Savior, Your light to all.
Let Israel's glory also now increase."

He blessed the parents and the Child so small
"To some this Child will be their greatest joy.
Others will reject Him and will fall."

"Mary, don't let your pain destroy,
Though a sword will pierce your very soul
As you see what happens to your boy."

He heard from God and understood the goal.
Like him I wish to hear God's voice
And thereby act to fully play my role.

Christ has come and we can now rejoice,
By God's grace, this is our holy choice.

Terza Rima

2:36-38

The Hidden King is Presented to the people

Anna shares the news of the "promised King" with those waiting for Him.

When I am eighty-four
Let me be like Anna
Or let me be like Ruth—*
Reverent, eager, bright, alert,
Hopefully a little pert,
And glad to share the truth.

I want friends like theirs
To hear good news I share.
To never be a bore
But worship, pray, fast and sing,
To Jesus Christ our promised King,
When I am eighty-four.

Free Verse

*Ruth Bell Graham, a great example of Christian womanhood from her youth to old age.

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Neither the story of the Wise Men nor the Flight into Egypt is in the book of Luke, but rather in Matthew. However, both stories were important to Tanner, and both are wonderful images of God. One is His universal appeal and a signal that he calls people from all cultures to learn of him, even through things within their culture. The flight shows us Jesus as a refugee—his parents flee the country to preserve his life which is at peril because of the politics of his own country. The migrant face of God recurs throughout scripture and reminds us to see Christ in the face of every migrant, every refugee.

A star arose once in the east
And wise men left their land
To find the newborn Jewish King
And offer treasures from their hand.

Lord, show a sign here in my life
That You are born again in me
That I might bow before You
Offering all that I can be.

Here is my gold, my time, my treasure;
Here my frankincense, my heart;
Here my myrrh, my suffering,
I offer all, every part.

The ruling king heard from these men
That a rival King had now been born,
And in his rage he killed the children
But Christ was gone, for God did warn.

At the anger of the world
I will follow You in flight
To exile from the threat of death
And follow You in deepest night.

Free Verse

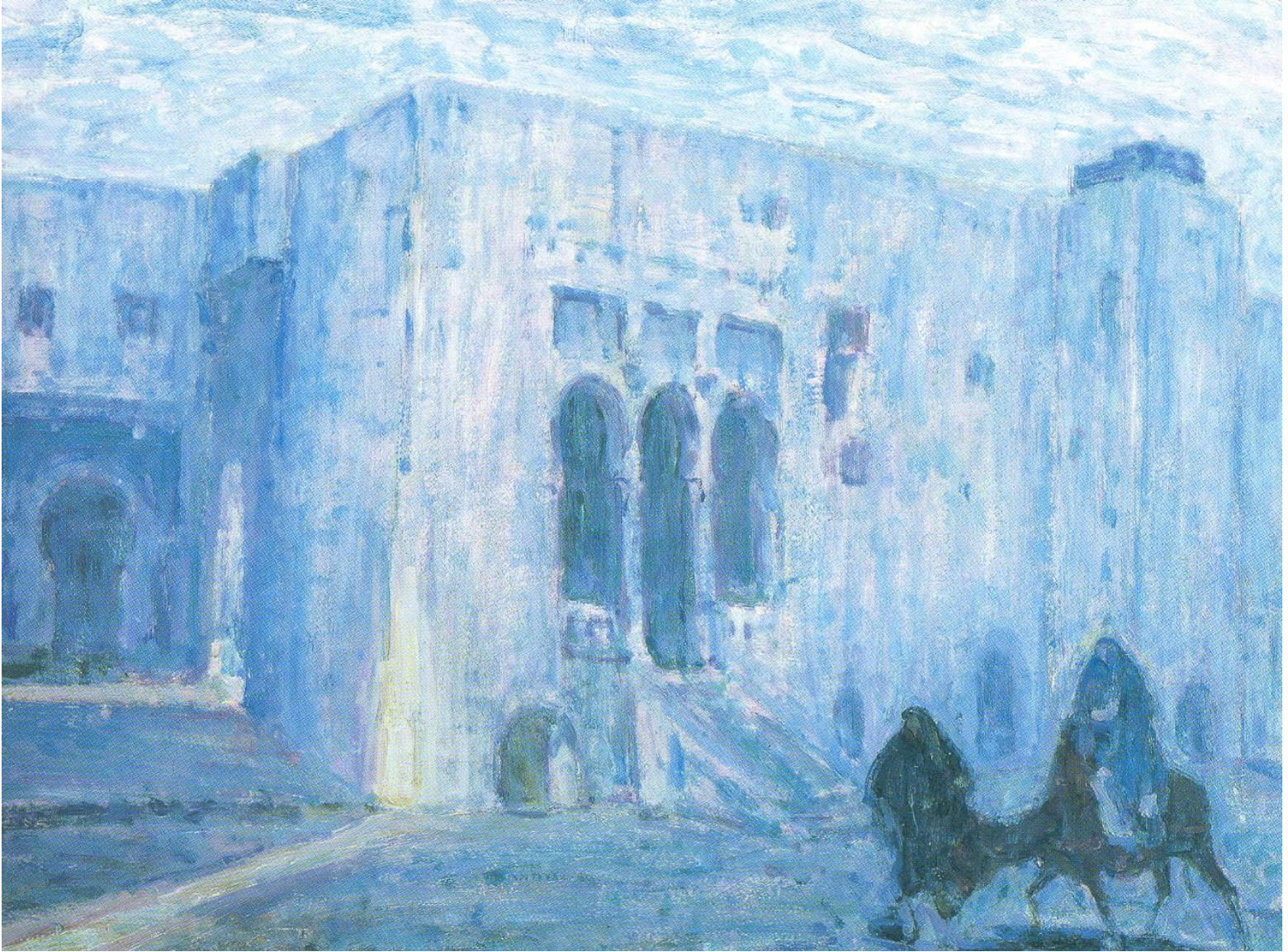
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The Hidden King: Luke 1-4



Gazing at Christ: Meditations on the Gospel of Luke ~ Elaine Elliott

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

2:39-40

The Hidden King is Presented to his parents

Jesus grows healthy and strong, and with wisdom beyond his years.

The infant Jesus
Touches Joseph's face,
Laughs, and plays with his long beard.
The artist went back in time
To that holy place.

Modified Tanka

2:41-52

The Hidden King is Presented to the priests

*Jesus is revealed as wise to the teachers in the Temple,
His "Father's house."*

His parents didn't miss the boy at first.
No problem. Time to hear the neighbors' views.
He had friends—good chance to joke and jostle—
They could chat and catch up on all the news.
But when supper came and He did not
They spent the evening trying to track Him down.
I wonder if Mary felt like me. I've thought
"Why didn't they call?" (with a fierce frown).
It became a standing joke with us
That if our teens were lost, they were at church.
It only happened once with Jesus,
But our teens often left us in the lurch.
An image: Young Jesus picking up His cell,
"No worries, Mom, I'm okay. Doing well."

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The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Chapter 3: Preparation for the Hidden King

3:1-20

Preparation for the Hidden King by John

John prepares the way by announcing the coming of the promised One.

Luke makes the point that Jesus went public
At a moment in time.
29 A.D. in fact, 15 years into Tiberius' reign.
He lists the rulers Jesus came to challenge
Emperor,
Corrupt sub-officials,
Pompous religious figures.

Competition between kings:

Tiberius Caesar vs. Christ.

Competition between their agents:

Herod vs. John the Baptist.

Competition between kingdoms:

Imperial Rome vs. the Kingdom of God.

Competition between messengers:

Obey Caesar vs. obey God.

Competition on how to obey God:

Tradition vs. the Spirit.

So who won?

Christ was killed by the State, 33 A.D.

Herod cut off John's head.

Roman imperial troops destroyed Jerusalem.

Pontius Pilate went into obscurity after 36 A.D.

Tiberius' reign ended in 37 A.D.

Herod lost his army when he fought his (former) father-in-law,
king of Arabia.

He was exiled to Spain in 39 A.D. and died there.

Roman emperors after Tiberius were assassinated, poisoned,
murdered, executed, killed in battle and committed suicide.

And the empire came to an end in 476 A.D.

But Jesus rose from the dead,

Generations recognize Him as King.

His followers today number 2.1 billion in a world of 6.5 billion,

And celebrate him weekly.

On the other hand,

The Roman Empire is contained in books, and
bores generations of schoolchildren.

It's pretty clear who had more power.

Free Verse

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

3:21-21 Preparation for the Hidden King by Baptism

God's creatures as God's messengers—
The dove came with the voice of God
So we see the Holy Spirit.

Animals that are images of comfort,
Noah's dove, Isaac's ram, Elijah's ravens.
Images of judgment,
Elisha's bears, Moses' snakes,
Pharaoh's plagues, Joel's locusts.

God's creatures have been God's messengers to me,
Messengers of joy and peace.

Two doves flying near a white steeple in a deep blue sky.
Three tiny deer lying in a meadow in the canyon at dusk.
An astonishing number of birds along a Honduran river.

Yesterday we stopped by the ocean on the way home.
Dolphins leaped in the waves near the shore—
What a gift, a great gift of joy!

Free Verse

3:23-38 Preparation for the Hidden King by His lineage

Jesus came from a royal line.

Theory on the genealogy—
Many say Luke gives us Mary's line,
And Matthew gives us Joseph's.
Comparing the two one sees
Both descended from David.
The line diverges but touches again at
Zerubbabel, who led the people rebuilding the temple.

But there are five more generations
Between David and Zerubbabel in Luke.
And eight more generations between Zerubbabel and Jesus in Luke
Than in the lineage in Matthew.

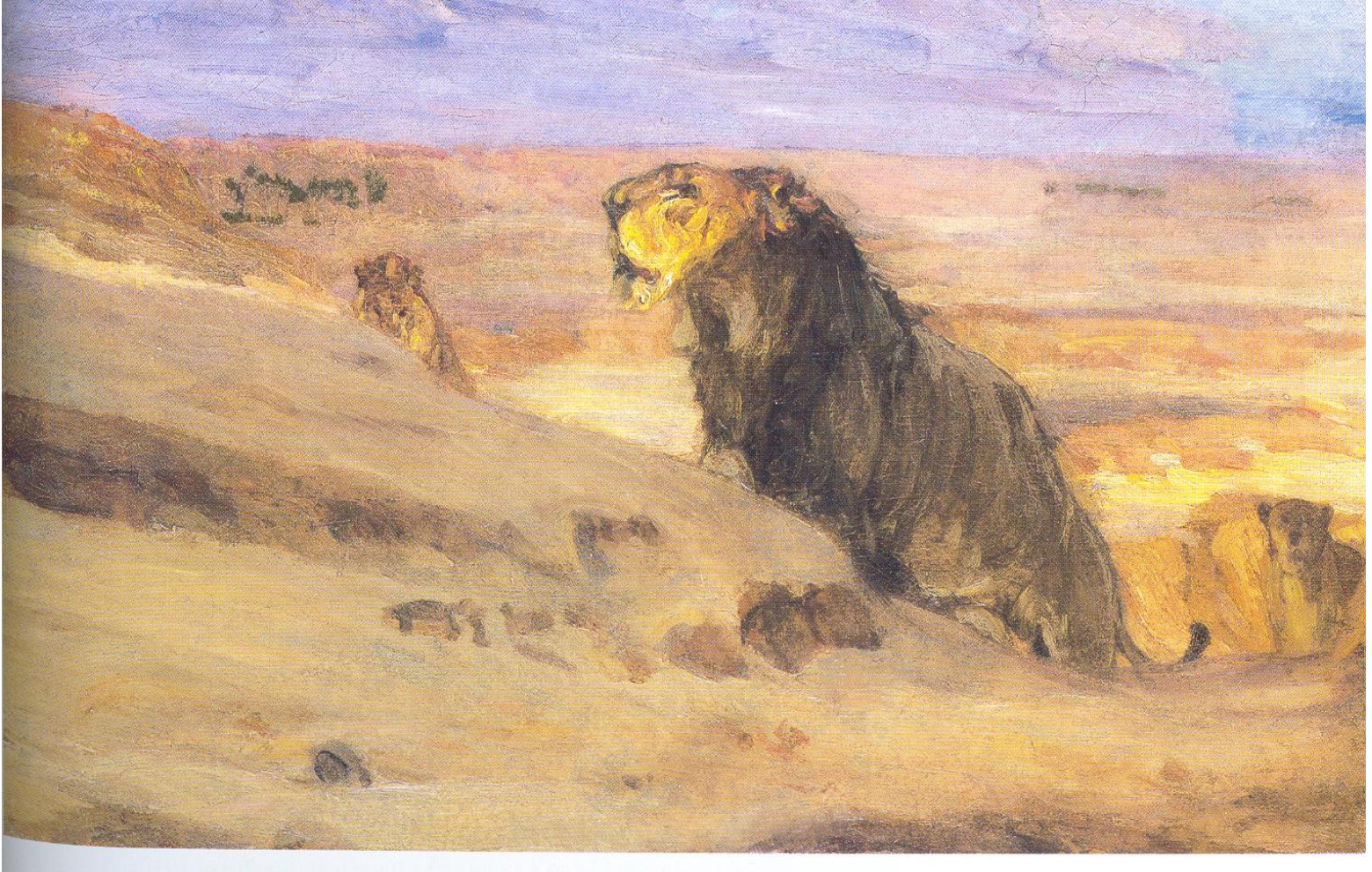
A theory: the kings in Joseph's line perhaps
had better life expectancy?

The minor nobility in Mary's line had lower life expectancy?

Either way, the prophecy is fulfilled
Jesus is the Son of David.

Free Verse

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The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

Chapter 4: Proclamation of the Hidden King

4:1-13 **Proclamation of the Hidden King in the wilderness**
Jesus is offered the rule of the world by Satan, and resists.

Temptation is so boring
Same old things work every time
 Food, Fast-track, Fame
Our culture is obsessed with food
 Recipe books, magazines, internet sites
 Fabulous food selections at the groceries
 Diets, weight-loss programs
 Gourmet restaurants
 Fast food, fats
 More diets
We're determined to get on the fast-track
 Resulting in
 Corporate scandals
 Shady government decisions
 Lawsuits
 Workaholism
 Stock-market bubbles
We're crazy for fame
 Celebrity watching
 Marrying and getting fired on TV
 24/7 coverage of the latest trial
I'm vulnerable.
 Just have some cookies available and
 Healthy eating is gone.
 My strategic plan is a
 Remarkably vain document.
 I've run ahead of God's plans
 More than once in my life.
The antidote to temptation still works:
 Word of God
 It's not about food
 There are much bigger purposes.
 Worship
 It's not about the fast-track
 It's not about me.
 Wisdom
 It's not about fame.
 It's about waiting for God to act.
Word, Worship, Wisdom
Shift my perspective please.

Free Verse

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

4:14-30 Proclamation of the Hidden King as prophetic fulfillment

*Jesus announces the fulfillment of prophecy,
that He is bringing "freedom from oppression."*

As Jesus came into the world
This is the first word that He read—
A kingdom banner He unfurled—
As Jesus came into the world.
He stood and a scroll uncurled
And read what the prophet said
As Jesus came into the world
This is the first word that He read.

"The Spirit of the Lord on me
Anointed Me to preach to you
And tell you captives will be free.
The Spirit of the Lord on Me
Tells you that the blind will see
And that oppression now is through.
The Spirit of the Lord on Me
Anointed Me to preach to you.

"God's favor now is here
It is the Year of Jubilee
There is nothing more to fear
God's favor now is here
And perfect joy now has come near
Every captive is set free
God's favor now is here
It is the Year of Jubilee.

"Now is the time of My good reign
When all wrong is set to right.
When joy replaces all your pain
Now is the time of My good reign
When all your losses become gain
When all that's dark becomes bright.
Now is the time of My good reign
When all wrong is set to right."

Triolet

The Hidden King: Luke 1-4



The Hidden King: Luke 1-4

4:31-44 Proclamation of the Hidden King in Galilee

Jesus preaches the good news of the Kingdom and heals the sick.

Perhaps Luke's profession as a physician (Acts) made him particularly interested in Jesus' healing ministry through touch and verbal commands. In John's gospel there are four healing stories; nine in Matthew; twelve in Mark, and eighteen in Luke.

Jesus commands
Come out!
Be healed!
Stand up!
Reach out your hand!
Go on home!
Young man, get up!
Get up, my child!
Woman, you are healed!
Go!
You can see!

Things happen
The demon leaves,
Leprosy disappears,
A paralyzed man walks,
A deformed hand becomes normal,
A servant becomes well,
A funeral comes to a stop,
A little girl comes out of a coma,
A crippled woman straightens up,
Leprosy disappears from ten men,
A blind man sees.

I've seen miracles.
We went to Jesus, We asked for His touch.
Jesus commands today,
And things happen.

Free Verse