

Poetry for the Lord Instead of the World:
A Study of the Romantic Poets, the Imposters,
and Our Response as Christians

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By

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Dedication

To all those searching for the Lord
in the nature He created for us-
the same way I find myself
searching every day.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my family for their endless support and encouragement. Specifically, I thank my parents and husband for pushing me to follow my dream of writing. I also want to thank my professors at Liberty for their support. Dr. Rice and Professor Paul have provided huge support in completing this thesis.

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Artist Statement

A Lesson That Must Be Heard: Resting in the Lord in Every Moment

Introduction to the Manuscript

When I was a little girl, I watched my grandfather read all the time. He had shelves full of books stacked on more books. My grandparents had an entire room dedicated to holding the books he'd read over the years. Almost 5 years ago now, we had to move my grandparents out of the home that they had lived in for over 40 years. Going through all those books, my dad found one he knew I had to have. I have always loved collecting old books, and one of my favorite older poets is Edgar Allen Poe. My dad found a Poe Collections book from when my grandfather was in grade school.

My grandfather didn't even know why he kept it all those years, but that book would mean the world to me so many years later. Through the centuries, Poe has always been acclaimed for his dark, emotional poems. There were many emotions he would write about that I couldn't even relate to, but I found it fascinating how he boldly and fearlessly expressed emotions in his poems. He was the first poet to ever catch my eye because of his poem, *Annabel Lee*. He wrote about epic love, death, and loss in such a way that pulled at my heart in the same way a novel can that I have been reading for weeks.

I want to write poetry books that pull readers in the same way Poe did- with bold, fearless, and raw emotions. However, I know that my poems must take a different approach because of my faith. Poe's answers to death, love, and heartbreak are different than the approaches I have learned that honor the Lord. Instead, I have dedicated this collection to

grappling with these hard, human faults with an uplifting and inspirational hope of Christ's gift of salvation. Poe might have been my first introduction to poetry, but I have learned how the Lord can work through this art form to bring us closer to Him instead of the world's tactics for dealing with the trials of life.

In my book of inspirational poetry, I will be able to speak about how being in nature has brought me closer to the Lord. I want my readers to go outdoors and see more than nature's beauty- the Lord's hand is still in nature and His voice can be heard when the time is taken to rest in His presence. Nature has become my place for connecting with the Lord, and I want to show that to my readers through inspirational, relatable, and emotional poetry.

Vision for the Work

In the pines and the sands is an emotional poetry collection based on the travels I have experienced, and the way Christ has impacted my life in those different places. More than that, this book is an autobiographical journey through my faith journey and how God has spoken to me through my experiences in nature. There have been times in my life when I am overwhelmed by how magnificently I see Him; there have been other times when I am staring out in nature, trying to listen to the Lord and I don't hear anything. God has worked in my life in many ways, and so many places, and I can't wait to show that to my readers.

Growing up, my family spent our entire summer season outdoors. Whether we were farming with my grandfather in our hometown, traveling to the mountains to hike, or road-tripping to the Pacific Northwest, my parents made sure we could see the beauty and magnitude of the Lord's power in His creation. Because of that integration, I have always found that when immersed in nature I feel closest to Christ. In all the places I have lived, I have worked

to find the Lord's beauty, even when I wasn't sure the place I was in was what I found the most connection to.

As I grew up, I started turning to poetry and books to help me understand the emotions that I was experiencing. However, most of the poetry books I found used methods that did not align with what I knew my Christian life should look like. The methods presented used worldly motives to give a temporary solution to issues that everyone faces. I was tired of reading how I needed to "be myself, lean on my own power, and that I am enough" because I knew that leaning on my own power was not the answer. I needed to lean on the Lord instead. The ultimate motivation for my poetry collection became to create a collection of poems that used my experiences connecting with God through nature to give comfort and inspiration to my readers, that God is present in the stillness of His creation.

There is a reason that even the secular cultures try and encourage people to get out in nature and surround themselves with plants, or take scenic walks, and take vacations that get them out of the office and immerse them in nature. They understand that there is a part of human nature that feels serenity when it is surrounded by creation. I want to write this poetry collection for the people who know they sense something in nature but can't place what it is yet. They feel the peace that comes when they slow down in these places, but they want more of that and they want to know where that comes from.

Impetus

People often turn to poetry to help them find comfort that people feel the same things they do, and to then see how those people have dealt with these feelings. Christians have an untapped well of evangelistic tools in the genre of poetry. In my undergraduate degree, I focused on writing poetry about feelings of insecurity and emotions I felt as a girl growing up. There

were poems where I was confused, there were poems I was learning about the Lord and how I saw him working in my life, and there were poems praising him for saving me and changing the trajectory of my childhood.

This poetry book will be structured geographically through all the different places I have lived in and traveled to with my family. From the different stages of childhood to becoming a young adult, the Lord has spoken to me through nature in many ways. The geographical changes I have traveled through also coincide with the highs and lows of my faith.

Starting in California, where I made huge strides in growing closer to the Lord growing up, and ending in Michigan, where I struggled with my faith for a long time and finding God in the nature around me, but the Lord spoke to me in quieter moments through nature like the dusk snow on the trees or the autumn leaves falling. It wasn't the grand, magnificent beauty I was used to, but the quiet, still beauty of Christ that I needed to learn to rest in with the Lord.

The poems will be organized by my journey of faith, and how I've learned that the Lord shows himself in many different places as I've visited around the United States. California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Michigan, Boston, New Hampshire, and Upstate New York have all shown me different sides of my faith and also taught me different lessons about how I see the Lord in nature. These are such different areas, but the Lord has shown me how I am supposed to rest in Him wherever I am, and that I can find His beauty in nature, even if the area is not what makes me feel the most comfortable.

I believe a poem can draw a reader in by showing them a picture of a beautiful place, and then also apply a lesson where they can see a new outlook on how to see these places. They're not just beautiful places, they're intentionally created and sustained by God, and I want my readers to learn this in my poems.

From a marketability perspective, topics of nature and traveling around the United States give me the chance to relate to more than just Californians or a niche group of avid hikers. By bringing in nature, I also can reach more than just a Christian audience. I want to write about these same struggles; trying to be still with the Lord and my trials with my faith. With the perspective of my experiences with Christ in nature, I can reach more than just the Christian community.

Literary Context for the Work

Poetry is a genre that has changed tremendously through the decades to fit the needs of its consumers. Therefore, researching which styles, themes, and motives in modern, popular poetry collections are important to my audience is crucial to writing a collection that can reach them. I have collected the top-rated titles and collections of 2024 from both secular and Christian poetry. Love is often presented more as lust, the remedies for depression or breakups are alcohol, sleeping with someone else, or ‘finding oneself’ in the way of the world.

As a Christian, this was hard for me to read, and it made me sad to think that people were finding peace and temporary fulfillment in pieces like this. Instead, I have always wanted to help bring poetry into the genre that relies on faith and admires the work of the Lord instead of the ways of the world. My goal for my readers is to show them how I have found contentment in sitting with the Lord in nature instead of indulging in this dark world.

The classic poems of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Coleridge during the Romanticism period are some of the poems I learned a lot from and have grown to respect. These poems focused on reflecting how nature affected the authors’ perceptions of life. They attributed aspects of nature to lessons for their lives. Studying these poems helped me learn how I can balance admiring the beauty of nature and applying a life lesson in one poem. These poets made catalyst moves in the

art form by boldly creating poetry for all people, not just the upper class, showing their courage and ingenuity for their time. Studying these poets' admiring tones in their approaches to nature inspired me to use romantic and emotional language in my own poems.

The most popular secular influences in poetry from the top-rated titles from both GoodReads and Amazon are *To Be Honest*, by Nelle Starling, *Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*, by Mary Oliver, and *Homebody* by Rupi Kaur. All these collections of poetry have a focus on self-reflection and offering answers to "the potential of the self" (Kaur). These authors can grapple with difficult emotions and relate to their readers dealing with the same emotions.

Each book has a different approach to emotions and nature than I would, even though we are discussing the same topic. Rupi Kaur in *Honebody*, focuses on nature, but her focus is centered on how nature is controlled by us. She also has multiple poems where she refers to God as a 'she' or with a lowercase g, even referring to herself as a god.

In *to be honest* the focus is on coping in relationships or times of grieving and depression. Starling romanticizes life in her poetry, offering shallow and temporary solutions to grief and losing important relationships. Romantic relationships are idolized and then her solution to losing these relationships is to idolize herself and obsess over her own power. As Christians, our approach to relationships and our value of ourselves look different because we put the Lord above everything else. We might struggle with the same losses or insecurities, but our response as Christians is different from Starling's approach.

Mary Oliver takes the most intriguing approach to nature and religion. She talks about God, and many of her morals and ideologies in these poems are based on Christianity's beliefs. Her viewpoints line up with universalism or new age beliefs rather than Christianity, making

them misleading for Christians to approach and offering incorrect beliefs to people who are not Christians. *Devotions* is a full collection of her best works from all of her books, including her poetry book that won a Pulitzer Prize in 1984. Oliver had a huge audience, but the works she was writing skewed readers' beliefs and brought a misunderstanding of how faith is understood.

I have mentioned Edgar Allen Poe as one of my first inspirations in poetry. I think a big part of that inspiration came not from the content of his poetry, but the way he wrote fearlessly and boldly in what he was feeling. Poe wrote in a way that people of his time thought was crass, dark, and unnecessary. I am not writing poetry that will appeal to most of the culture we live in. However, I don't want that to stop me from putting out the poems I believe the Lord has put in my heart. Edgar Allen Poe was not afraid to write his art the way he felt it needed to be written and I want that to be seen in my own poems.

The Christian poetry collections that are influential and meaningful to current readers are *To Bless This Space Between Us*, by John O'Donohue and *Healing is a Gift*, by Alexandra Vasiliu. These are the top two Amazon sellers in Christian Poetry for the beginning of 2024. These poems address contemporary problems and everyday struggles with Christian solutions. I felt connected to these authors because they were able to relate to how I see the world and express their love for the world using beautiful language and emotive writing styles that I want to implement similarly. Through these, I can learn how they have related their problems to their readers and how they have honored God in their lives.

All these poetry collections have one thing in common. They are trying to give humanity solutions to the everyday worries and problems we face. The solution to our worries and problems we all face is the answer I want to help reach in my own poetry book. How can we work to lean on God instead of these worldly mechanisms in times of confusion, or in the good

times? Humanity is constantly searching for an answer to the philosophical questions in life and we often come up short. Using these sources, my travel experiences, and my personal testament to God's presence in nature, I hope to create a collection of poems that can inspire and connect to the emotions that we all feel in our fallen world.

Significance of the Work as a Christian Scholar

Readers have turned to secular works to answer their burning questions and confusions in their lives. I began searching for poetry that could evoke emotions like that for me. However, with modern secular poets, there was a missing key. My morals and Christian beliefs hardly ever lined up with the viewpoints of these artists. Many readers are lost trying to implement the lessons from these poets and are still left unsatisfied with their lives. My goal is to help these readers search for a different perspective through my thesis. In the same way, the top charted authors I studied related to their readers' feelings of loss and love, I want to relate to my readers' feelings of both doubt and worry as well as praise and overwhelming love for Christ.

Christians deal with the same heavy emotions and burdens as the rest of the world; however, we offer different approaches and reactions to situations. So, why aren't we writing more books that help all people understand these emotions and grapple with how the Lord is still amongst us? The Christian significance is simple- we know that we are human, and we must learn to lean on Christ in our highs and lows in life and in turn, we need to equip the secular world with those same tools to grow them closer to Christ. My poetry book, along with the other Christian books studied to write this, is the perfect tool to help humanity understand how to find the Lord's presence in the darkness of this world.

Critical Paper

Writing Poetry in Modern Culture

Poetry is a unique art form that allows readers to see a new perspective or teach introspective lessons to cope with life. Eighteenth Century Romantic poetry has been introspective and offers a balance of inner reflection and admiring nature. Percy Bysshe Shelley, who made significant advancements to the art of poetry during the Romantic period, describes poetry by saying, "Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed" (6). The standards of beauty that Shelley described were foundational truths the art form upheld for centuries. However, since the era of Romantics, poetry has steadily declined in its use of creative, artistic language and methods that made classic poetry into the artistry that it still is today. Much of mainstream poetry focuses on teaching a lesson and is willing to approach important topics in a blunt, problem-solving approach, but they are missing the melody and the artistry that it should have upheld from the classic poetry forms. Much of mainstream poetry defined here is poetry that is most marketed in the media because it follows the cultural norms that people are living by, and does not follow traditional methods of cadence, allegory, imagery, and tone. Mainstream poetry has not utilized the tools of classic poetry, blending that art form with the messages that the author's readers needed to hear instead of omitting the beauty of the classic poets and losing what the foundations of poetry were built on. The goal of mainstream poetry needs to shift to blending the depth and beauty of classic poetry with showing a direct and insightful message to the reader by studying and utilizing the tools of imagery, cadence, and emotional language from the great poets of the 18th century- without this, poetry will not hold its validity as an art form.

Romanticism and Artistry

During the Age of Enlightenment, poetry was an art form created only for the upper class. Poets only used themes and language that the upper class could understand. It was considered prestigious and certainly above the literary understanding of the middle and lower class. Wordsworth wanted to change that, launching radical changes in the poetry of the Romantic period. In regards to the upper class, Wordsworth proudly said, “They should ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents; and if the answer be favorable to the author’s wishes, that they should consent to be pleased despite that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision” (1). He wrote poetry that related to the topics and language of the lower classes was going to upset his readers who were used to a different style of work, but he asked them to search for some specific elements. Wordsworth asked them if the art could pinpoint “human passions, human characters, and human incidents” and if it had, he had accomplished his goal (1). He defined poetry the day he wrote that in a new way. Currently, Wordsworth’s definition is still what modern poets strive to utilize. Wordsworth was able to stand and switch the structure that was holding back such an interpretive and enticing art form.

What modern poets miss is that Wordsworth already did the work to make poetry a medium available to all people. It was already considered simplified when they made the changes they had in the Romantic period. Studying poetry of the Romantic period confirms that the poets deliberately created poems that were comprehensible and applicable to all people, not just the upper class. Access to poetry was a new privilege and standard for poetry that should still be upheld through the coming centuries. Cazamian defined the Romantic period of poetry saying, “The Romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life,

provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision, and in its turn stimulating or directing such exercise” (qtd. in Narian). The foundation of Romantic poetry is expanding the imagination. The motivation is to make the reader truly ponder. The Romantic poets were known for their beautiful language and innovative uses of literary devices, but even more importantly, they capitalized on bringing new ideas and deeper thought to their readers.

When the Romantics shifted the audience of poetry, they also had to redefine what poetry is and its purpose. Shelley describes poetry saying, “Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be —the expression of the imagination: and poetry is connate with the origin of man.” (1). One of the most famous poetry eras took place in the 18th-century Romanticism period. At this time, poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley made a huge impact on making poetry a powerful force in the art and literature community. These poets were some of the first to live out Shelley’s statement: “But poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought” (6). The concept of changing and expanding people’s thoughts through poetry is the kind of definition that poets can cling to. Shelley’s statement validates that poetry can be used to further the name of God.

Shelley’s poems used vivid imagery and emotional allegories to express his thoughts to his readers. In his poem *The Waning Moon*, Shelley catches the reader through his rhyme scheme and his use of personification. Shelley writes, “And like a dying lady, lean and pale,/ Who totters forth, wrapp'd in a gauzy veil” (lines 1-2). Shelley describes the moon in this poem as dying and frail. His poem flows like a melody using the rhyme scheme, to where the reader almost misses that they are reading about the dead, cold, white corpse of a woman that he sees when he looks at the moon. He perceives the moon which makes people think deeply about what they see when

they look around at nature. The key here is the multi-layered imagery that Shelley creates in his poem. He uses a rhyme scheme, proper stanzas, punctuation, and a cadence that creates an experience for the reader past the lesson. Shelley is showing his readers that the moon is a symbol of the human experience. In the same way the moon is waning, fading, humanity is dying with it. The woman, a corpse, is the same as the waning moon. Shelley is showing his readers to both appreciate the beauty in nature, as well as value the life that's fading away the same as the moon. These layers and the gravity of Shelley's words he chose are so important to the art of poetry.

Shelley wasn't the only poet using layers of imagery and strong cadence in his work. Wordsworth was also a huge influence on the art of poetry. Wordsworth was a talented poet partly because of his emotional connection with nature and his moving passion depicted in his poetry. Wordsworth's influence is perfectly described by Herbert Schlossberg who says, "His achievement was that he transformed the whole climate of feeling in the first half of the nineteenth century in England. He was not a source of ideas, but he had a very great effect on the emotional structure which produced and nourished those ideas. His influence is pervasive and diffuse rather than concentrated and specific"(14). Focusing on "the emotional structure which produced and nourished those ideas..." was the goal of Wordsworth's poetry, and it's the same goal that modern poets need to try and achieve in their work. In Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads", he included the poem, *Lines Written in Early Spring*. Wordsworth's poem ties to the themes of nature elements and deeper philosophical ties that mainstream poetry attempts to use.

Wordsworth is writing from the perspective of a man lying in a tree, admiring nature and contemplating where humankind is. Wordsworth describes the beauty of spring by saying:

The budding twigs spread out their fan,

To catch the breezy air;
 And I must think, do all I can,
 That there was pleasure there (17-20).

The stanza above is the second to last stanza and every one before this one has the same pattern of describing the beauty of nature he is observing and how he hopes to preserve it and help it grow. In the last stanza, Wordsworth says:

If I these thoughts may not prevent,
 If such be of my creed the plan,
 Have I not reason to lament
 What man has made of man? (21-24).

Wordsworth has spent all this time talking about how beautiful the nature surrounding him is and how he wishes to preserve it, but then, he thinks about humanity, and he grieves for what mankind has done to itself. It is a beautiful juxtaposition that he has created that shows a clear depth in artistry that is more than just describing the beauty around him. It makes the reader consider how they will leave humanity. Will they choose to try and preserve it or improve it? Both the language he uses and the melody he creates make it into an art piece, but then, he leaves a morsel of human dilemma for the reader to also learn from his work. The deeper message is delivered directly because of the layers of imagery and word choices he has presented. Without these layers, there would be a missing emotional tie that's emphasized in Wordsworth's poetry. This combination of imagery and meaningful word choice is a key feature in setting Wordsworth's poetry apart from mainstream poetry.

Along with layering imagery and lyrical language like Wordsworth emphasized, the Romantic period focused heavily on reflecting on nature, and John Keats was one of the big

influences. Keats wrote many poems about nature, but one of his most famous odes about nature is *To Autumn*. *To Autumn* is written as a love letter to autumn which is clear when Keats says,

Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Of by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.
Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,---
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue; (20-26).

In these verses, Keats shows how he studies the simplicity of nature around him, but also alludes to his themes of living in the present. In lines 23 and 24 Keats talks about how people long for spring, but they are missing the music of autumn. Keats had a unique way of personifying nature and making his readers stop to admire the simple beauty in nature that surrounds him. On another level, Keats also taught his readers about living in the present. Creating such a vivid image of the turning seasons, and pinpointing a moment that repeats year after year was a genius theme for Keats. Keats is bringing gravity and dramatic language to a moment that has repeated every year, and the important message he is getting to his readers is the importance of slowing down and living in the current season. Yes, the seasons repeat every year, and often humanity finds itself looking to the next, and not the season they're in, and Keats is letting his readers know that's a problem. The seasons changing is such a simple, and consistent occurrence, but Keats recognizes how important and beautiful it really is if we take the time to slow down and realize the beauty in the seasons.

Along with these poets, William Blake played a pivotal role in setting the standard for Romantic poetry. In Blake's famous poem, *The Tyger* he creates vivid imagery by using dramatic language and breaking down the balance of nature. Along with the dramatic observations about the dark sides of creation, Blake presents a clear question for his readers to grapple with; how did the same God who created something as powerful and dangerous as a tiger also create something as gentle as a lamb? Blake writes "Did he smile his work to see? /Did he who made the Lamb make thee?/ Tyger Tyger burning bright,/In the forests of the night:/What immortal hand or eye,/Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?" (lines 19-24). *The Tyger* is a prime example of how the Romantic poets were able to create beautiful images of nature for their readers while exploring complicated questions about God. Blake's structure in *The Tyger* creates the same symmetry that he's asking his readers about, creating a multilayered symbolism to make the reader think about what they believe about God. Blake's poems bring his readers to deep theological questions, and *The Tyger* is no exception. Blake grapples with how the same God that created a creature as powerful and dangerous as a tiger also created a gentle, defenseless lamb. This message brings up a question humanity has asked for centuries. How can the same God that created so much good also let evil spread across the world? Blake's imagery is a prime example of how beautiful, lyrical poetry can also ask the deepest questions.

All these poets were working toward a common goal of making poetry accessible to all. That work has been done, and modern poets can look back on these works and learn from them. The artistry that they upheld should still be matched today, but at this point, it is not. To bridge the gap between the classic poet's beauty and rhythm and the modern poet's raw and honest reflections, mainstream poetry needs to make a dramatic shift.

Mainstream Poetry and the Lack of Beauty

First and foremost, it must be said that this paper is no where near long enough to explore every piece from the Romantics to now. There have been many great works since the Romantics, and to this day there are exceptions to the themes and styles often seen in mainstream poetry, and many great poets could not be included in this paper. But in 2024, the top headlines and ranking poets are often falling into a pattern of declining styles and lack of ingenuity, and that's something that must be redefined.

After the Romantics, poetry continued to change, but it is arguable whether mainstream poets progressed in the art form. The themes and the styles that authors use now are not the same as the Romantic period. There is a new simplification to both the messages and the styles of mainstream poetry. Modern poets have found a new way to directly encounter human dilemmas, but the way they have disregarded structure and melody in their poetry has digressed poetry significantly.

Rupi Kaur released her book, *Homebody*, in November 2020. This was a time when the world was searching for answers and comfort, and often, poetry is an avenue people turn to for solutions. For many readers, Kaur's poetry that focused on finding power and control in oneself would have brought great comfort. Rupi Kaur, in *Homebody*, writes poems that are about sex, abusive relationships, and seeing herself as a god. Kaur is fully aware of the state of modern culture and the common struggles that humanity faces, and in her poems, she's able to relate to how many people are feeling. She takes the struggles people face in relationships and self-imagery and empowers them with what they want to hear. People want to hear they're strong enough, they can do it all on their own, and they are in control of their own destiny. She also included themes of nature, but her perception of nature was not as admiring or romantic as the

classic poets. Though she does bring a different perspective than the classic poets would have been able to speak to in their time, simplicity is not a stylistic art form, it's a lack thereof. Even with the difference in beliefs, Kaur would be able to earn respect if she was able to implement the imagery, layered depth, and emotional word choices that the Romanticism era had perfected, but she keeps her poetry one noted and fails to bring the complexity poetry deserves.

Rupi Kaur keeps a structure in her poems far from the standard Wordsworth and Shelley established. She addresses nature to teach a lesson to humanity that the earth needs to be cared for in the straightforward, blunt style that mainstream poetry has fallen into always using to address issues. There is nothing wrong with confronting issues head-on the way mainstream poetry has, but there is a problem with the lack of creativity in creating a melody and image for the poems being written. Rupi Kaur writes:

We've ruined
 our only home for
 convenience and profit
 neither of which will be
 useful once the earth
 can't breathe (lines 1-6).

Kaur's message that we are destroying the earth is clear, but for most contemporary readers, it is difficult to find an emotion or image. Without developing more complex imagery or an experience for the reader, her message becomes flat. Wordsworth in *Lines Written in Early Spring* also wants to preserve nature and he is telling humanity to care for the earth, but the clear difference is seen in their structure and their cadence. Wordsworth created an image for his readers by showing the aspects of spring that he thought were beautiful, and how those beautiful

moments can be destroyed by humanity's carelessness. Kaur has the same message in her poems, but she's missing that imagery and rhythm to her work that makes her work more than just a sentence on a page. The only differentiation from a sentence in an essay that Kaur creates is a lack of solution or explanation to her statement. She acknowledges we're destroying the earth, and that's it; no explanation, no solution, and no action or passion explained to her readers.

Sun Paik, a poet and poetry critic read through Kaur's poems herself, and her observations gave a clear distinction to why Kaur's writings are not poetry. When fans are trying to defend Rupi Kaur's simplistic and blunt style, she is often compared to William Carlos Williams', who is infamously known for his poem, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, "so much depends upon//a red wheel/barrow//glazed with rain/water//beside the white/chickens" (Williams lines 1-8). However, Paik states, "My answer is this: poetry always leaves a question for the reader to answer. In "The Red Wheelbarrow" we are left with a multitude of questions. Why do objects hold so much importance? The writer never intends to give us the answer but places us in a situation where we are eager to solve it. We become intellectually curious, asking for more. We become hungry for language, ravenous for thoughts. And isn't that beautiful? Isn't that poetic?"

(1) The truth is that Kaur's poems are straightforward, and blunt, leaving no room for questioning or layering of belief. Williams' is studied because he mastered the art of simplicity without losing the curiosity of poetry. Paik plainly says, "Kaur's work provided all of the answers for us: her intentions were clear, her issues clarified, her answers determined. I felt like I was reading a universal manifesto, a relatable diary, a set of rules and realizations and epiphanies." (1) Even when poetry is simple, seemingly one layered, like Williams' is there has to be a thought left for the reader. Poetry is an art of interpretation of beauty, and if that interpretation is done, then what's left looks a lot like the "rules and realizations" Kaur writes.

Some mainstream authors have attempted to maintain some structure in their poetry that could resemble the literary devices used in the Romantic period. Mary Oliver is one of the most inspirational authors of mainstream poetry. She has released more books than any of the other top charting authors in the past three years. Her structure is particularly intriguing because of the conversational style in which she writes her pieces. Oliver writes, in her poem, *Drifting*, saying:

I didn't intend to start thinking about God
 it just happened.
 How God, or the gods, are invisible,
 quite understandable.
 but holiness is visible, entirely (lines 4-8).

There is a blend of messages here that reflects the blend that Wordsworth and Shelley used. In *Drifting* Oliver said:

It's wonderful to walk along like that,
 thought not the usual intention to reach an answer
 but merely drifting
 like clouds that only seem weightless
 but of course, are not (9-14).

Oliver's verse provides a deeper message than just an image of clouds. There is an underlying message of how powerful spirituality is. This use of cadence and imagery mirrors the tools that the Romanticism period tried to emphasize. Oliver is one of the few modern poets who has followed the styles that make poetry great by using deep imagery and layered meaning in her poems. Although she knows that holiness is directly seen in nature, she doesn't understand what that spirituality is. Oliver is one of the closest modern poets to maintaining the styles and

cadence that Wordsworth and Shelley set as the standard. She has the depth of layering her message in an image of nature, leaving her only missing factor in the tone of her poetry. Shelley mastered this in his poems, especially in *The Waning Moon*. He uses a rhyme scheme, proper stanzas, punctuation, and a cadence that creates an experience for the reader past the lesson. Oliver presents a similar message, but she doesn't transport the reader into the image that her poem is speaking to because she does not utilize the foundations that create a real emotional connection with the reader.

The modern Christian poets had the same style in their writing. Their simplistic language, blunt messages, and shallow imagery lose the keys that make poetry a moving artistic medium. As Shelley said, poetry should reflect the imagination of man; and the origin of man. God created humanity with a complex and imaginative mind. To serve Him, poetry must be as imaginative, complex, and beautiful as He has made His creation to be. Christians, even more than secular artists, have a duty to the Lord first, and then to the way poetry has developed at its foundation.

Alexandria Vasiliu, who is a top-selling contemporary poet wrote, *Healing is a Gift* and published it in 2021, as a collection of inspirational poetry that aligns with Christian viewpoints when presenting ways to heal from difficult emotions. The concept of this is right on track with what Christian poets need to be doing, and she does exercise her right to speak freely about her faith in a way that Wordsworth and Shelley would never do, but again, just as the secular poets had, she falls short when it comes to the structural integrity of her work. Vasiliu's poem, *Never Alone* portrays her style perfectly:

take a short way back home

back to yourself

and seed these words
deep down into your heart
you are never alone
look up at the sky
there are millions of stars
spreading hope
every night
look up at the sky
and remind yourself

I am never alone (lines 1-12).

Again, the concept in this poem is not the problem, it is the lack of a deeper image created or a melody to the flow of the poem. These aspects are what made poetry more than a sentence on a page, and it's missing. Wordsworth and Shelley would have most likely described the stars, the sky, and the night. If they followed the methods that they valued, they would try to tell the readers what they would see and the way that beauty would overwhelm them into seeing the beauty the Lord has to offer. The style of Wordsworth and Shelley is the depth in language and imagery that mainstream poetry is missing. Everything has been simplified to serve what modern culture has decided poetry should look like, but that does not mean that is what is correct. Poetry needs to blend the beauty of traditional poetry practices with the vulnerability of mainstream poetry to make it into the beautiful art form it can be.

Despite modern culture's inclination to follow the pack in their styles of poetry, there are a few modern poets who have done their best to maintain the foundations that the Romantics had set. John O'Donohue is a modern poet who has pushed against modern culture in both his

structural and language choices. He holds a standard stanza structure and cadence to his poems in a way that reflects the Romantic period. He balances between keeping the modern style of confrontation to difficult topics and maintaining a rhythm in how he presents those topics. In his book, *To Bless the Space Between Us* which was published in 2007, he provides encouraging poems that give solutions to everyday problems that humanity is faced with. In these poems, he encapsulates the heaviness of the emotions he is grappling with by using imagery and language that helps the reader discover what it is they are struggling with. In his poem, *For an Addict*, he uses imagery and alliteration to intensify the severity of addiction by writing:

On its way through the innocent night
 the moth is ambushed by the light,
 becomes glued to a window,
 where a candle burns; its whole self,
 its dreams of flight and all desire
 trapped in one glazed gaze;
 now nothing else can satisfy
 but the deadly beauty of flame (lines 1-9).

This first stanza instantly creates the image of going back to the same painful object repeatedly. The imagery of the poem was used in the Romantic period to help readers compare the story to their real lives, and O'Donohue uses that tool well. Mainstream poetry tends to skip the story and just emphasize that addiction is wrong, but the story can help a reader realize the redundancy of addiction. O'Donohue also uses alliteration and dramatic word choices that catch a reader's eye by saying:

What is truly near

becomes distant and ghostly
 and you are visited
 and claimed by a simplicity
 sinister in its singularity (lines 12-16).

Distant, ghostly, and sinister are all words that emphasize the danger of addiction and how drastically it can affect someone's life. O'Donohue concludes all this darkness by shifting his language to show the relief that comes from overcoming addiction by writing:

That your lost lonesome heart
 might learn to cry out
 for the true intimacy
 of love that waits
 to take you home
 to where you are known
 and seen and where
 your life is treasured
 beyond every frontier
 of despair you have crossed (lines 41-48).

The entire poem paints a picture of the journey of overcoming addiction, much like the poems of Shelley did in the Romantic period. Shelley states, "Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed" (6). Shelley's quote is seen in O'Donohue's poems in how he brings beauty into addiction, which is a deformed and broken state of humanity. What makes it maintain the original beauty of poetry

is the depth of the language and images that O'Donohue presents. Without these, he would fall in line with the normalities of mainstream poetry that disregard the foundations of the art form.

The Perception of Christ in Poetry

Poetry has more issues than the lack of traditional structure and artistic language. Past that, for the Christian community, there is a lack of truth in the messages that poetry is giving to its readers. Poetry has always been an art form that helps readers grapple with difficult topics, speak to deeper thoughts and beliefs, and influence people's lives. The Romantics established poetry as a way to connect to a higher spiritual power, and to ponder the spirituality in the beauty that surrounds humanity. Andrew Roberts says, "In tradition, not only is poetry held to be an art which (like other arts) embodies some form of transcendent value, but the term 'poetry' is at times used to refer to the essence of truth and knowledge, so that poetry comes to stand for transcendent value itself, in the aesthetic sphere and even beyond" (3) The purpose of poetry used to be rooted in the question of spirituality, and that can be seen in the Romantics' work. Therefore, poetry is a tool for Christianity to share the message of Christ with humanity. Poetry becomes a tool when using classic poets' methods, and blends with mainstream poetry's directness. In looking at the most popular modern poets, there is a clear lack of the true identity of Christ.

Rupi Kaur has influenced many of her readers to think of themselves as spiritual beings themselves and tries to communicate how powerful humanity is. The perspective that humanity is in control of the world is a mainstream cultural skew that has greatly manipulated modern culture, but Kaur knew how to appeal to mainstream culture, and it shows in the themes of her poetry. Rupi Kaur writes about her perception of self saying:

silly girl
 little angel
 little devil
 so oblivious to
 being the miracle worker
 you are the mother
 the magician
 the master of life (lines 1-8).

Her poem, along with many others that she has written portrays herself as all-powerful and in complete control of her life. She refers to herself as a miracle worker, an angel, a devil, and the master of her life. These are very secular ways of thinking. This theme and this poem specifically support her introduction that said her work would reflect, “the potential of the self” (Kaur). Now, even though there is a definite belief being portrayed in Kaur’s poems, more so, she has lost all form of ingenuity and artistry her poems could have.

Comparing Kaur to the Romantics, there is a shallow and lifeless message in her poems compared to their complete wonder of the spiritual world to Wordsworth and the other Romantics. Wordsworth, Shelley, and the other Romantics had a strong connection to spirituality. Whether they claimed that spirituality was God, or some other higher power, there is no doubt that these men were very aware of a divine power in nature, and they did their best to articulate that to their readers through their work. They knew there was no way that humanity could go without acknowledging the existence of some sort of divine power, whether they understood it or not. Wordsworth was praised for his influence on spirituality by John Keble who wrote a dedication saying,

To William Wordsworth
 True philosopher and inspired poet
 Who by the special gift and calling of Almighty God
 Whether he sang of man or of nature
 Failed not to lift up men's hearts to holy things
 Nor ever ceased to champion the cause of the poor and simple
 And so in perilous times was raised up
 To be a chief minister
 Not only of sweetest poetry
 But also of high and sacred truth. (96)

These words could never be said about Rupi Kaur's work, partly because her poetry's message is far from anything holy, sweet, or about sacred truth. In modern culture, poetry that lifts hearts to holy things is so important, and Rupi Kaur magnifies the issues and peril instead of finding the good or solutions in them.

With Rupi Kaur being one of the top-read poets for the past three years on Amazon, this influence gives a skewed perception of Christ. Kaur's work proves disappointing not only because of the lack of artistry but also because the message that is influencing poetry readers is so far from the truth. Miracle worker, angels, devils, and the master of life are all very serious spiritual terms, but using them to give power to humans, rather than the real spiritual realm is a direct contrast to the truth that Christians are trying to speak to the modern culture that has been so influenced to think as Kaur does. The perception of Christ in mainstream poetry is that God is humanity. Humanity being a god is a belief that modern culture is consumed by. Modern culture says that the solution is found within humanity's own power.

Nelle Starling is another modern poet who has made her way to the top of the charts for her poetry because of how she has fallen into line with what mainstream culture has decided is the way of thinking. Her poetry has always focused on coping with relationships and healing self-image, but in a way that gives all of the power to the individual and omits any cultural themes of caring for others, leaning on Christ, or other biblical coping mechanisms to deal with these issues. In Starling's book, *To be honest*, which was published in 2023, she writes:

This is a reminder to slow down. Enjoy the moment.
 open your eyes. Follow your heart. Live every
 minute with intention and purpose. Listen to the
 music. Dance your heart out. Be present for the late
 night conversations. Eat the ice cream sundae (and
 the cookies), be whoever makes you happy. Wear
 whatever you want. Make mistakes and learn from
 them. Surround yourself with good people. Stay
 curious. Ask questions. Take your time. Don't rush
 through your day just to get to tomorrow
 there is so much that you will miss (lines 1-11).

There is nothing wrong with the things this poem says until the actions become the entire motivation and method of life. Most Christians would agree that these are not horrible messages, but they are not messages that humanity needs to live a fulfilling life. The problem with this, all being the message that is given to humanity, is it becomes the message that its readers think will fulfill their lives. Poetry written with a Christian message that can fulfill people's lives can be used to spread the truth of Christ while preserving the methods that poetry was built on.

Even in the Christian poets, there is a reverence missing for the God that has created us all. The language used to describe such a loving, all-powerful, all-creating God should be praising and honoring the beauty of His grandeur. Vasiliu writes in a way that alludes to some sort of faith, but she does not outright mention that God is the reason for her hope. She still gives credit to humanity as if the power to heal is from within, not from God. In Vasiliu's book, *Healing is a Gift* published in 2021, her poem *The Image of Your Thoughts*, says:

your mind is a battleground
 what kind of thoughts will win
 your inner war?
 fight to have beautiful thoughts
 you will become the image
 of your thoughts

Moreover

your life will reflect your thoughts
 fight to gain a peaceful
 Bright
 positive mindset

you will always look beautiful (lines 1-12).

She is missing that admiration of the power of God. Even Wordsworth and Shelley admired the power of God, even though they did not outrightly name him as the power. They were aware of a spirituality that created the nature they loved.

God's Grandeur by Gerard Manley Hopkins is a poem that encapsulates the awe of God. Although he is not a modern poet, his acknowledgment of the Lord is one modern poets can

learn from. Hopkins' poem creates a beautiful picture of the Holy Spirit's presence on this Earth and the hand of God protecting it. The last stanza speaks to how humanity is demolishing and damaging God's creation, yet, in the second stanza, Hopkins shows the hope that prevails; "Because the Holy Ghost over the bent/World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings" (lines 13-14). Hopkins shows how humanity has fallen and broken the world and the Holy Spirit is the hand of God, prevailing over man's destruction. Hopkins' poem is a beautiful image of God's sacrifice for humanity. Hopkins' word choice made his poem impactful. Hopkins uses language to describe humanity which shows the brutality of sin saying:

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod (lines 5-8).

His harsh word choices make a huge impact on the intensity of his tone. Mainstream poets and Christian poets should use language and tone to reach their audience and honor the Lord by portraying Him with the power He deserves.

Hopkins wrote *God's Grandeur* in 1877. Again, there is a clear difference in tone, language, and structure because this poem was written during the foundational years of poetry. Mainstream poetry next to a poem like this does not give the reader the same emotional, imaginary portrayal that Hopkins knew poetry had to have to call it poetry. Mainstream poets have worked so hard to ensure they have the freedom to speak freely to their messages in a way that classic poets were not allowed to, but they have gone too far in simplifying their styles.

Conclusion

Poetry is a unique genre because of its ability to be interpreted by readers to aid each individual's needs. Shelley described poetry saying, "It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought" (6). Poetry has endless possibilities of depth and ingenuity. Yet, mainstream poets have missed the mark on this. Instead of blending their fearless opportunity to speak to real issues with the rhythmic language and structures that poetry was built on, they disregard this artistry and speak to the issues and feelings they want to present in poetry. Instead, poetry needs to go back to its roots, where cadence and fluidity are at the forefront, blended with the meaningful messages that modern culture allows authors to speak to that were forbidden in the Romantic era. The battle modern poets now have is to work backward in rebuilding what poetry should be and convincing modern culture that this is how it is meant to be written. Modern culture has been taught that the simplistic, conversational poetry style is a progression, instead of a digression of the art form. Paik describes poetry saying, "It requires unanswerable questions and ruminations that haunt. Poetry should not feel like an easy read but an intellectual and emotional journey, one that has checkpoints, setbacks, and riddles. Poetry, through its line breaks and symbols and rhymes, enables us to stretch language to its fullest capacity, to let it enter into realms unfathomable and strange and, ultimately, beautiful" (Paik). Therefore, it is the modern author's job to reestablish poetry in its purest form and remodel it to uphold the beauty and depth that it deserves, blended with the freedom of speech to speak to any emotion, trial, and circumstance the author hopes to evoke to their readers. Poetry is not a completely lost art form, but the current time calls for a revitalization of what was once a transformative and truly imaginative art.

Serenity in His Arms

A Cry To The Lord

My Lord, I fall at Your feet- disheveled, disheartened, disappointed.

My knees bruised from another day of begging for forgiveness

my heart aching with another cry of repentance

I have known You for years-

I have studied Your Word in churches and countries abroad-

watching hundreds cry out Your name, shaking the floor with their love for You.

I have praised Your name as I saw Your presence in this world's beauty-

overwhelmed with the majesty and power in Your creation

I have spoken of Your love to the people You have created-

as I've experienced it fight for me in my darkest moments.

Yet, behind my own walls, my words are lost,

my path doesn't seem as straight and Your plan seems dim, unknown,

my joy is depleted and my faith so small,

Your Word collects dust on my cluttered shelf.

I look back on my years of joy- my years of yearning for You

and I am even more defeated-

How now, can I get back to that?

My Lord, bring me back to Your Spirit.

Open my heart to Your word and the love that flowed from its pages.

Remind me of the beauty and joy I saw in Your Creation.

Overwhelm my soul with the love I found in You,

take me from my knees and give me the strength

to shout Your name for this broken, dying world to hear.

My Lord, once again, I need Your strength.

Broken For His Name

The storm tumbles as it rips through the cypress trees,
the oceans rage against the lost coast with record storms,
the crop's colors fade with the dwindling hope for sun,
hearts race, anxiously awaiting the next looming fate.

Yet, among the turmoil, our hearts grow steady,
the mountains are standing strong in His name,
His oceans are roaring at His command,
His power still overcomes this hate.

Let the darkness come, send your strongest armies
beat us until we break, for we will be shattered;
until we're called home, broken for His name.

The Dark Winters

This world seems so dark.

One day it's full of happiness;

the birds singing,

the sun shining,

the snow glistening.

And then, almost just as fast;

the ice turns black,

life seems to hide away,

waiting for the sun's return,

the people's hope all but fades,

and I wonder how one day,

we all can see the Lord so close,

and the next feel so alone,

all of the sudden-

this world seems so dark.

Lost and Forgotten

I am the empty trail, overgrown and forgotten,
the trees parched and fighting for another day,
the flowers crushed and crying for rain,
the mountains groaning for travelers lost,
the thunder begging for Your sign,

Begging to hear Your voice,
Lord, hear our cries from the mountaintops,
my God, see our battered hearts,
quench our parched souls,
this fight has left me trampled,
and I beg You to come, to see me-
the lost, the forgotten.

Discontent

I've gone coast to coast,
traveled cobblestone streets in Boston,
with overcast skies and autumn's gaze.
Hiked the highest peaks of Yosemite at dawn's break,
with warm sun rays beating against the rocks.
Basked on the warmest beaches of Malibu,
with the waves serenading across the sands.

Yet through it all, my heart was weary,
my mind is searching, and nothing fills my soul.
In the grandest places this Earth could offer,
none could compare to the beauty of my Lord,
and I dream of the home He promises-
that will fill my soul and mend my heart,
more than the streets, peaks, and beaches can ever.

Michigan

I want to see You here.
People speak of the land's beauty,
and the water's pull to You,
but I sit here, crying out,
among the dying trees,
and the smog-filled skies.
the birds even fly from these lands,
the animals bury away,
and I'm stuck here,
wondering what Your plan for me,
could possibly be.
I came here with so much love,
love for the sun, lakes, and pines,
that brought me closer to You.
and I sit here feeling lost,
yearning for the closeness I felt before.
I know You are here,
the same as You always have been,
but Lord, my heart hungers for more,
my soul longs to be somewhere else,
and I must ask You to soften my heart,
and let me see Your hand,
here where I feel so trapped.

Rain From Heaven

The rain patters against
the dead branches,
once filled with beauty,
passion radiating from their lives.

It's seemed to lose it's life
as quickly as it came in spring-
the rain and I, both in mourning,
once again feeling alone, feeling lost.

Maybe it's true;
rain just might be angel's tears;
falling from Heaven;
mourning the fall of man.

Lost in the Woods

I thought for so long I knew where I was going.
I was sure I was meant to triumph the mountains
I was set on claiming the woods and the rivers,
I thought even the trees might utter my name

But my Lord, I was so wrong,
it took turning in circles, seeing the same trees,
following the same broken branches,
no idea what I was doing, where I was going,
crying out for the only one who hears,
blood spilled and hearts broken,
for me to even see that Your name
commands the woods around me.

Waiting on the Sun

Winter clouds have taken over for what feels like forever.

I haven't seen the sun in weeks, and I'm not the only one,
whose colors have dulled and smile faded.

All the colors of nature have dulled to browns and grays,
the flowers hiding away for winter, the leaves gone for the season,

I look to the clouds, waiting for the sun's return,
and praying the Lord will blow the clouds away soon.

I sit in the frigid, dark days, waiting for the sun,
because the Lord has promised the seasons will change,
and soon the sun will return and with it, the life of spring.

My Journey to You

You never promised ease, You never said knowing You
would make life a gentle breeze, I've realized the opposite,
knowing You, meant losing everything the Earth promised me.
Learning to love You meant others would grow to hate me-
and yet, I feel more loved, more known than ever before.

I know now why nature follows Your command,
and why the Earth formed by Your breath.
In the same way the Earth is beaten and bruised,
groaning with pain from humanity's scrutiny,
the grass and flowers withering away in defeat,
my Adonai, You will prevail, and You will reestablish the lands,
And take my tired soul and the withering flowers home to You.

Time Wasted

I spent so much time wishing for more,
I wanted to see more of the world,
I wanted to find the next highest mountain,
the clearer lake that leaves me in awe,
the deeper canyons or the warmer beaches,
and now I see how many moments I've missed,
because I've been wishing for more,
not resting in the place He's provided.

The Next Season

When we're in spring,
I dream of the long summer days,
when we're in summer,
I can't wait for the leaves to change,
when we're in autumn,
I ask for snow and cozy days inside,
and when we're in winter,
I yearn for the first rain and spring flowers.

So, my Lord, keep me here,
in the moment of the season upon us,
and help me notice the good-
the good I prayed for the season before,
for every season holds its wonder,
and every season deserves my contentment-
because You have created every season's colors.

Your Patient Heart

I've taken years to even hear Your voice in the winds,
You've been trying to guide me every time,
when I cry out, pleading for You to hear me,
I was drowning out Your answer,
searching for anything else I could to fill my heart.
I should have heard Your scriptures call,
a call to stillness and peace in You.
Now, my Lord, I no longer cry out, no longer plead,
And will listen to Your quiet call.

Winter Storm

The darkness lingers
the broken branches,
the empty fields,
the wilted flowers,
and the hollow roots
the tired peaks,
weighed with ice and snow.
The whole earth mourns the loss-
loss of warmth,
absence of beauty,
the dejected face of a winter storm.

We trudge the streets,
wishing for days we felt Your warmth,
me, my God, I search the empty earth,
waiting, pining, and searching for You,
somewhere, my God, you must be,
and I'll continue to wait for You.

Be My Rock

I find myself at the bottom of the avalanche again,
everything seems to be falling apart,
the world I created and the planned I forged,
Have crumbled into nothing again,
and all that's left standing is the Lord.

The Lord has always stood above it all,
He has withstood all our betrayal,
every angry burst and confused cry,
and all along, He's been my rock,
let Him stand strong, and continue on,
saving us all from our broken plans.

Rivers of Fear

You never promised perfection,
in fact, You promised fear,
and fear has been consuming.
it rushes through, and over and over,
I tumble through the waves,
drowning and fighting to stay awake.

But somehow, You find a way,
You throw a branch to grab,
or send a friend to pull me out.
the rivers of fear will keep roaring,
but You will fight for my triumph,
and You will always send my Savior.

Seasons Change

I used to dread the season's change after autumn.

I mourned the loss of leaves and blooms,

as the trees sigh a relief after harvest,

and the flowers turn to rest for the winter,

I would fear the darkness that loomed.

Because with the darkness came uncertainty,

the sky's warped to chaos,

and with it, my soul seemed to cry, wishing for

what was here before.

But Lord,

You've promised the seasons will change,

year after year You give back the harvest,

You've never given me any reason to doubt,

You've never wished on my demise,

so the seasons will change,

and with them, so will I, but my God,

He will always be constant through the seasons.

From His Eyes

From His eyes the world is corrupt,
oceans are raging at us- trying to warn us,
mountains are shaking with rage at our insanity,
the sky is crying- mourning the loss of humanity,
and with all the signs, all the destruction,
we carry on, blaming anything but ourselves,
still detached from the severity of our lost souls,
and He watches over, waiting patiently for His time.

From His eyes, our fall is no surprise.
He knows that the oceans calm from His voice,
the mountains will bow to His song,
the sky will part for His return,
and His broken people will finally see,
what the oceans, the mountains, and the sky
have been singing to us all along.

Tears Poured For You

Sitting in the middle of Your valley,
looking around at these peaks-
peaks that have formed beauty for You,
and have modeled Your strength,
despite it all,
even they still call Your name
after centuries,
even they still wait
for Your command.

So what makes me think that my weak soul,
my tear-filled eyes
and salt-stained hands,
my weak knees,
bruised from years of prayers,
my trembling fingers,
I'm lifting to You-
can do anything but give my all to You?

If the mountains still praise Your name for all of time,
I too will continue- but my Lord,
these short years,
collecting my tears,
already broken,
endlessly tired,
how much longer?
Until you take me home?

Tuesdays in Summer

The sun bursts in the valleys,
the almonds are turning,
farmers anxious for the harvest,
and I sit in the branches,
among the new buds and leaves,
feeling the summer sun,
beat against me and the trees.

As the farmers bustle around,
watching for what the year may bring,
awaiting the answers for harvest,
I sit in the trees, and something changes,
what was just a summer Tuesday,
among the farmers and trees,
became a day I'll never forget.

Your voice broke through
the sun and the buds danced to Your song,
and I kneeled at your feet,
begged for your love;
and without asking for anything,
You promised me forever with You.
It was just another Tuesday in the trees;
until You saved me.

Your Painted Skies

Hues of orange and yellow paint the skies,
running through the clouds in a flash of glory,
one minute, beautiful, the next fallen to night.
and we chase that painting,
trying to catch a moment of beauty,
thinking if just this one time
we can see it,
we'll appreciate it,
we'll honor it's beauty,
and something in us will feel content.
How silly we are, to think chasing painted skies,
isn't a cry for something greater- isn't our cry for You.

Autumn Leaves

I feel like the autumn leaves,
fighting to cling to their branches,
slowly turning their colors,
soon they'll be fallen and forgotten.

Lord, save me from the fate I fear,
give Your promise of a second life,
a life with colors I cannot fathom,
and worship of Your name eternally.

The Orchard

Many look and see rows and rows,
of almond blossoms white as snow,
then harvest coming as autumn shows,
before empty branches rest before spring.

The same cycle year after year,
and all they see is an orchard of
almonds, blossoms, and branches,
rows that are dependent, consistent.

But I see my grandfather's hands,
cheering and proud in the blossoms,
torn and toiled in the harvest,
nervous and tired in the winter.

It was his hand that showed me,
how to thank You in the abundance,
to work hard for You in the harvest,
and to pray to You in the winter.

Beauty Amongst the Broken

We've corrupted His world's beauty-
my once favorite place doesn't look the same.

His tall evergreens are thinned,
making room for another business for this mountain town,
His lake is drained to supply their kayak trails,
His horses are bridled for guided tours of their town,

His air, once filled with the buzz of wildlife and forest silence
now consumed by semi-trucks and loggers,
the smoke of campfires and evergreens
now drowned by the aroma of fresh cement and diesel.

It used to sadden me- and it still does sometimes-
to see what we've done to make His world ours-
drowning the beauty from his masterpiece,
but, I've learned, as we corrupt His creation,

I must climb higher, reach further, and look to the Heavens,
for it is still there- His beautiful creation, how He deemed it.

October's Song

It's song brings leaves dancing to the ground,
the morning frost starts the symphony,
the wind whistles out the melody,
the harvest's rumble the instrument,
the Lord has orchestrated another year,
and the people's bliss testifies,
that October's song is the fall of summer,
but the beginning of another glorious season.

Morning Dew

There's something I love about waking up before the sun.

The morning dew rests on the grass, glistening in the moonlight,
the world fast asleep and the silence of it all is the epitome of peace,

I can hear the whisper of the Lord in the silence,

and I think the morning dew hears it too-

listening on the grass to our Creator's whisper.

On the Coldest Day

I used to hate the cold- these days when no one leaves the house,
The rigid branches break at the weight of frost, and the crops die away,
The birds fly away, the animals hide from the snow, and life itself-
It seems to freeze with the frigid days. It felt empty, it felt lonely.

But now, I fight to see the life in these coldest of days,
The snow still glistens in the dull morning sun,
The Earth seems quiet for once, so I can hear Your voice,
On the coldest day, You warm my heart with Your love.

New Life

The new buds reach out to You,
fighting the morning frost to prevail;
life quivering at the sight of the storm,
early spring threatened by the lingering storms.

Yet they beat on, eyes set on You.
All the branches, begging to grow closer,
one day closer to Your embrace,
fighting to touch the Heavens.

Though wind and rain oppose,
spring's new life persists.
Whatever the day brings,
they'll continue to strive for You.

Boston

Cobblestone streets hold memories,
of lives lived and history made,
the beauty here is different.
the architecture shows Your creativity,
You created us with beautiful minds,
our minds, searching for a way,
to encapsulate Your creativity,
Boston's cobblestone streets,
brick and mortar buildings,
and brownstones are as close,
as humanity gets to matching,
Your magnificent mind.

The Flowers Fade

My mother's garden is full
of every pinkish hue,
blue and vibrant yellow.

The floribunda roses,
and day lilies,
the butterfly bushes,
and lily of the niles.

Every spring she toils,
and cares for them gently,
and I watch in awe-

I pray her flowers never fade,
as long as the Lord prevails.

Quiet Whispers

The morning whispers it's love for You,
and I hear You whisper back. ,
Your Scriptures always said in the quiet,
in the stillness, You would speak,
and only now in the mornings have I realized,
those words mean more than ever,
before the world awakens,
and the chaos ensues, bringing forth more
intrusions, haste, and hurt.
In these quiet whispers of morning,
Your voice is clear, and Your love is pure.
No wonder the world tries to hasten,
and the noise grows louder-
begging for us all to miss Your quiet whispers.

I Love the Rain in Spring

I used to love the rain-I would sit and watch the endless drizzle,
as the petals held the tears of angels on their chests.

The sun would warm my freckled skin, as the summer drops ran down my cheeks.
Soon this season fades- the blossoms wilt and the sun runs from this land's fate.

Now, the cold drops hit the bare branches of the winter corpses of trees.

I sit in my frigid house and envy the birds that can fly toward that warm rain.

My once freckled skin is now pale as I mourn the sun's slumber.

I realize now- I only loved the rain of spring and the sense of home it brought in its embrace.

Morning Ripples

Father always said we had to beat the sunrise,
so before the sun, we're up and soon to the lake,
and the stillness of it all is staggering.

I know we were getting there to beat the tide,
to get the first bite at his fishing spots,
and to beat the other fishermen,
but little did my father know,
he was teaching me the importance of stillness,
the importance of slowing down and accepting moments,
and how the Lord is out among the morning ripples.

Trails Anew

Men have tried to forge their own paths,
they've forged trails, and drawn maps,
they thought knowing all, would bring peace,
their worries would cease to exist,
and their feet finally yearn to rest,
but they still run to the mountains,
thinking maybe this peak holds the answer-
we trudge every path You will allow,
letting rocks blister our heels,
wind bites at our lips, fighting for every breath,
but each new trail shows a new side of You.
And maybe that's why we continue to climb.

Yosemite

At least this land stands uncorrupted,
the peaks still stretch to the heavens,
all of them sculptures carved by Your hand,
the waterfalls gush with more power than,
we could ever fathom to hold ourselves,
the winds howl louder than any cry of man,
crying out and asking for the Lord's return.

So Lord, I stretch my arms out to You,
like the peaks that reach for Your hand.
I fall to my knees in anguish for You,
like the waterfalls gushing to the Earth,
and I cry out with all I have for Your return,
like the winds that howl Your name.

The Lord's Whisper

It's the little things;
the tree's whisper in the faint wind,
season's fighting for the leaves' embrace,
still standing tall through every storm.

The ocean's song through every foe,
still prevailing over the noise we've created,
stronger than any discovery we try to conquer,
vast beyond our imagination, but not His.

The sky's painting of Your beauty,
just a glimpse of what Your Home could be,
a small picture of the beauty that awaits us,
painted above us every dusk.

The little things that make my heart yearn for You,
they make me pause among the chaos,
and chuckle that we think we could control this beauty,
this quiet, strong, ethereal, creation- among it all,
I see You working.

Lands Still Unknown

As long as my legs will let me,
as long as there is air in my lungs,
as long as the Lord allows,
I will search the lands for Him.
Because every new trail,
despite my tired soul,
and my burdened heart,
brings one more chance to learn-
one more chance to see His love.

Fierce Love

We're all searching for the same thing.
Some look for it in people,
others look for it in nature,
or the city streets drowning out us all,
but I've figured out the key-
You, my Lord, with Your fierce love,
stronger than anything this Earth can give.
You, who love everyone through it all.

Let me scream it from the mountains,
and praise it through the streets,
however I can show this empty world,
crumbling in defeat and crying for an answer,
that You are the answer- Your fierce love,
will always be the saving grace for us all.

The River

Rushing through the
mountains and valleys,
the river ebbs and flows,
Proving Your beauty.
The Earth fears its rushing rapids,
running from its power,
but if only we wait along the river,
We see the calm beauty of Your stream.

When I am low;
when it seems impossible;
there You are,
leading me by hand,
to Your endless river of love.
raging when I need You,
and calm when I call,
asking for nothing;
You give me Your everything.

In the Lord's Embrace

The storm is raging all around me,
the land I love being ripped to shreds,
rage is humanity's constant state,
the world is thriving off the pain,
culture is devised in evil.

I sit among the storms, at peace in Your arms,
the wind howling, makes the fields dance,
the lightning near, brilliance in the darkness,
the grounds trembling, awakens the earth for You,
their rage is proof of what You promised,
and I will sit and wait in Your embrace.

My Sister- A Blooming Daisy

She opens her arms to the sun,
blemished white petals reaching out,
beauty that stops the world in its tracks,
she dances in the wind like she's free from pain,
and we all gawk and wonder what she's thinking-
and the truth is, the Lord has touched her heart,
and arms are open to His embrace running to Him,
her once dormant leaves outstretched toward heaven,
her beauty is His work of art on display,
she dances with the joy of the Lord,
and yet,
this blinded world,
just sees a blooming daisy.

Heaven

I've searched the Earth for Your face.
I've seen you across Your creation,
Your beauty bringing me to my knees,
and in each of these places,
I was searching for a sense of home.

As much as I searched the world,
looking for You to fill my cup,
for anything as beautiful as You,
I know the answer isn't here,
Your heavens will be my home.

Your heavens will be more than I know,
grander than every peak I've climbed,
stronger than every river I've traveled,
more beautiful than every land I've lived,
and I can't wait to finally feel at home.

Peaks

I don't know why I forget
the strength Your peaks hold-
until my lungs are fighting,
my legs tired, my heart pounding,
everything in me begging for one more climb-
because one more step, one more fighting breath,
might just bring me close enough to see You-

My God, I see you in the pines, standing strong
against this Earth's tumultuous evil.
I see You in the mountains, rumbling,
moaning, fervently calling for Your return.
This Earth is crying for You.

I see You, my Savior, at this very peak,
when my lungs are wasted away,
my body collapsed, my heart slowed,
looking over Your lakes,
Your broken people, Your lost loves,
fervently calling with the mountains for Your return.

Above the Pines

I reach the staggering peak of Your mountain
and I stand back above the pines.
the lakes below shine their bright blue reflection,
the towering pines stand proud on Your canvas,
each one more intricate than the one before.
the wind bites my skin, bringing me to my knees,
the cliffside falls toward Your beautiful creation,
catapulting me into a small view of Your wonderful,
endlessly creative mind.

Lake Tahoe

Waters so clear and clean,
hitting my skin like ice,
yet I fight to go deeper,
searching, yearning to see,
the depths of its beauty.
I'll never find a more peaceful water,

Yet Your voice speaks loudest here.
these lands seem to live for Your praise,
your mountaintops boast of Your might,
your great pines dance to a song of Your glory,
your creatures fearlessly roam Your lands,
your waters show us the peace we should hold,
and I sit in those tranquil waters,
consumed with love for Your lands.

My Simple Plea

My Savior, I have always dreamed of the day I finally see Your face,
I have dreamed of how Your heavens will be more beautiful-
more beautiful than any flower growing among the hillsides of California,
breathtaking beyond the cliffsides of the Oregon coast,
grander than the crimson sands of Sedona's canyons,
and my simple plea is that You might let me praise You from here,
praying You come soon to gaze at the heavens I dream to see.

The Lord's Promise

We are called to wait, to rest, and to rely on the Lord.

So why do I find myself rushing through these years?

I thought maybe I could run the trail faster, push to the end,
maybe that would make it easier, maybe that would save me,
but my lungs are just as tired, and my knees just as sore.

The Lord was right, of course, when He called us to slow,
when he asked us to wait on His timing instead of our own.

So I'll sit at the peaks and wait for Him, as He's always asked.

Heaven's Call

We're touching Heaven
I look down at the clouds,
the mountains peaking,
above this broken world,
I see it now;
His view.
the beauty in the broken;
as we view from Heaven.

A Writer's Mind

It's amazing to me that the greatest minds,
the most beautiful, eloquent writers,
will never be able to match the mind of my God.

We can pair the perfect words,
and create the most captivating story,
but none will match the Word of my God,
no words we can write will match His glory,
His creation, formed from His uttered word.

Arizona

Sedona is Your painting, and we're your critics.
Its rock flows in shades of sunsets, sands, and fire,
Bursting with beauty, against the blue skies and growing pines.
Even in the winter, Your fire glows below the pure white frost.

Many sense Your presence, and wonder what it could be,
But I know, my God, it's Your hand in the painted rocks,
They'll search the mountains, no idea You're waiting,
among the sands of Sedona.

Homebound

I praise the Lord that I am a homebound traveler,
because as beautiful as His mountains are here,
and as peaceful as His lands have made me,
I've been searching for something that isn't here,
I long for the heavens with Him above it all.
He promises beauty beyond what I can see,
and how amazing will it be to rest above the mountains.

At Your Feet

Here I kneel-
a meer pindrop in Your beautiful creation-
a dot on this stunning canvas.
these monstrous mountains,
these relentless waters,
these monumental pines,
these raging winds,
they all bow to You.

My Lord, so magnificent
looks at me and loves me-
my Lord, with such a complex creation
hears my cries over the winds,
sees my tears amongst His waters,
comforts my falls over the tumbling of His mountains,
and sees my good over His perfect pines.

The Central Valley

Poppies bloom along the hills,
fields burst with new harvest,
one road is lined with redwoods,
and the next with cypress,
aromas of salt, sands, pines,
cypress, camps, and fields,
all blending, all creating,
the beautiful valley I love.

This land is home, and You,
You've blessed these lands,
the crops grow at Your command,
the poppies sprout with joy for You,
the oceans pull toward You,
the trees all grow for you,
and I too, pine to grow closer to You.

Grace Abounding

Silver Falls leap down the mossy cliffsides,
filling the creek with water abounding,
the vibrant firs standing tall from its supply,
and I sit on a rock by the waters edge,
amazed by the life the falls supply.
Our Savior's grace, given freely to me,
abounding more than Silver Falls.

We're Touching Heaven

We're touching Heaven.

I look down on the clouds,

The mountains peaking,

The streams like tears,

Running down the mountain,

Above this broken world.

The pines stand proud,

Strong against the winds,

Reaching for Your gaze.

I see it now- His view.

The beauty in the broken;

As we view from Heaven.

California

There aren't many places
in this corrupt world,
where one can be,
walking the desert,
then skiing a mountain,
before surfing an ocean
in a single day.

Lord, You let Your mind flow,
You let creativity flourish,
You made a land of beauty and joy,
and people can't seem to see,
all this beauty, all this joy,
all a picture of Your hand in this world.

Heaven Come

The vines against the old brownstones
reaching toward the edge of broken bricks,
each day closer to the end, and then what?
Will the vines start growing upward-
reaching further toward Heaven,
or will the Lord see their work is done,
and let Heaven come to bring the vines home?

My Almond Tree

I used to rest in the crevices of his branches.
I would lie on his bristling bark,
watching the bees flurry on the petals of a new harvest.
it felt like home in his gentle arms,
serenaded by the hummingbirds,
comforted by the budding blossoms,
ready to burst into spring at any moment.

His strength never faltered,
as he held me in his arms for hours.
the strong, gentle giant-
still standing, after all these years,
holding the memories of our countless hours.

His brittle limbs crackle at my touch,
the orchard stands quiet now,
still my home, even from afar,
no longer filled with the youth of spring.
but I still rest my head
on his broken, blossomless arms,
always there, his loving arms opened wide.

Through the Open Gates

I dream of the day I see Your open gates,
I know humanity can't fathom the beauty,
but for me, I dream of the warmth,
like a summer day lying in the fields,
as the flowers spread their open arms
I dream they're reaching for You.
the winds sing a song of new seasons,
I dream they're singing a song for You.
The sun envelopes me- my soul seems to fly,
and I dream Your arms are wrapping around,
leading me through the open gates.

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