

Oaks of Righteousness

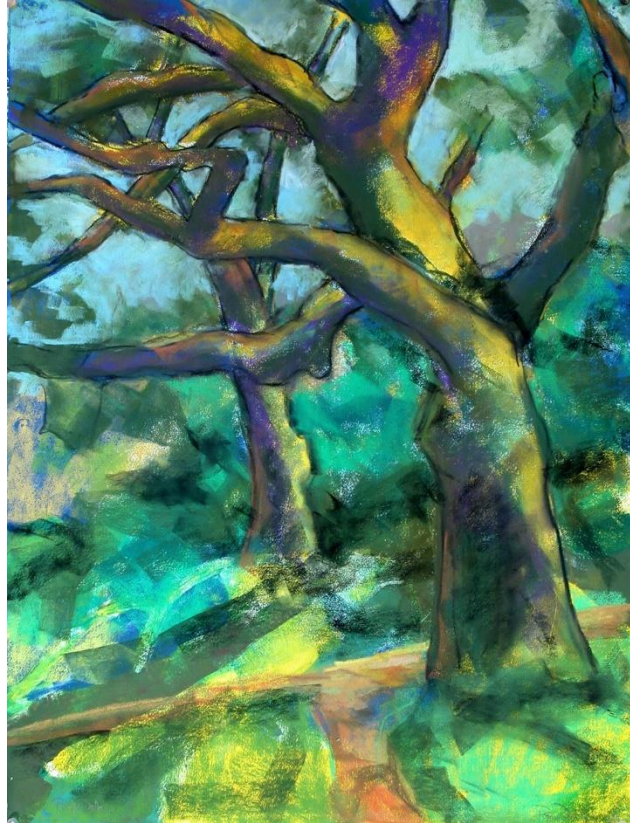
Advent: Year B, Week 3

As the exiled Israelites journey back to their homeland after the [Babylonian captivity](#), all eyes are drawn to the cloud of God's glory, which rests on these fully redeemed people.

The rebuilding of Israel is structured and focused: cities in ruin will be reconstructed; justice will prevail; the wicked will be indicted, and punishing yokes will be unfastened. Israel, clothed with robes of deliverance, will be like oaks of righteousness, planted by YHWH to display God's glory.

The allusion to mighty oaks, seeded by tiny acorns, conveys unbounded potential. Moreover, the magnificence of oak and its associations with life, strength, wisdom, nobility, loyalty, longevity, heritage and honor, symbolizes a God who delights in extravagant blessing.

As LGBTQ members who descend from the House of Israel, may we always cling to the promise of extravagant blessing in the coming of the Chosen One. However, if we still feel like tiny acorns, disseminated on the forest floor, we should also bear in mind that "*the One who calls us is faithful and God will make sure it comes to pass*" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).



SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8, 10-11

The spirit of the exalted GOD is upon me, for YHWH has anointed me:
God has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners -
to announce a year of favor from YHWH, and the day of vengeance of our God -
to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve in Zion -

to give them a garland of flowers instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of tears, a mantle of praise instead of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, planted by YHWH to display God's glory. They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

For I, YHWH, love justice.

I hate robbery and wrongdoing;

I will faithfully recompense you and make an everlasting covenant with you.

I will joyfully exult in YHWH, who is the joy of my soul!

My God has clothed me with a robe of deliverance and wrapped me in a mantle of justice -

the way a bridegroom puts on a turban and a bride bedecks herself with jewels.

For as the earth puts forth its shoots and a garden brings its seeds to blossom - so also will the exalted GOD make justice sprout and praise spring up before all nations.

For all the readings for the Third Sunday of Advent click [here](#).

FOR REFLECTION

1. How has the Spirit of God anointed people you know in the LGBTQ/ally community? Who have been your "*oaks of righteousness*," displaying God's glory in their efforts to gather the tribes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and ally people and bring them home?
2. Do you feel that parts of the LGBTQ/ally community are still in "*ruins*" and continue to experience the "*devastations of many generations*?" Where do you see a need for healing and restoration?
3. "*For I, YHWH, love justice. I will faithfully recompense you and make an everlasting covenant with you.*" Where do you see such divine justice and recompense in LGBTQ/ally history? Where do you perceive God's everlasting covenant and favor in your own life?
4. As an LGBTQ person/ally, how do you experience "*garlands of flowers*," "*the oil of gladness*" and the "*mantle of praise*" in the sacramental/social life of your church or faith community? How can you be an oak of righteousness to those who still experience "*ashes*," "*tears*" and "*despair*?"
5. "*My God has clothed me with a robe of deliverance and wrapped me in a mantle of justice.*" Robes are a frequent motif in the Bible. From Joseph's coat of many colors to the white robes of the saints in the Book of Revelation, this garment has come to symbolize many different things. How do you imagine God's "*robe of deliverance*" for you? Given your spiritual journey this Advent, what type of robe best suits you at this time?

AN EXTRAVAGANT BLESSING

1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24



Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.
Give thanks for everything -
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
Do not stifle the Spirit.
Do not despise prophetic gifts.
Test everything; retain what is good.
Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness.
May you be preserved whole and complete - spirit, soul, and body -
blameless for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ.
The One who calls you is faithful:
God will make sure it comes to pass.