

Arise Shine

MotherHen
Things Present

CHORUS

D
Arise! Shine!

For your light has come.

Em A D
Lift up your voice and sing.

Verse 1

Em A
For the darkness comes

D D/C# D/B D/A
But there's no need to run

Em A D
As you lift your eyes to see
Em A
That the world evolves
D D/C# D/B D/A
With miracles of Love
Em7 A7
And now's your chance to see

[CHORUS 2x]

Verse 2

Em A
For the World's undone
D D/C# D/B D/A
And your savior's gone
Em A D
There's no way to now proceed.
Em A
But God has faith
D D/C# D/B D/A
You can change this place
Em7 A7
And now's your chance to be

[CHORUS 4x]

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

This song is inspired by the Epiphany passage Isaiah 60. It's meant to capture that sense of hard times all around, but still finding that faint hope of promised salvation. It's that being surrounded by bad news, while holding onto a hidden gem of possibility.

There's a painting hanging in my bedroom by Layla Hamdieh from Jerusalem. It's called "A Light Over the Darkness." It features a light blue circle surrounded by a sea of thick red and blue cross hatching. That art in the midst of all of that war. That hope in the midst of continual mistrust.

That was the climate surrounding these Biblical stories. It's not unlike the sorrow-filled headline drama of today. How do we face such constant trauma and injustice in the world with any amount of optimism?

It's a combined effort. God and humanity both have work to do. We have more light and power than we realize. Our faith in God should be fortified in the knowledge that God has faith in us. God works through us to right the wrongs of an unjust society.

Isaiah 60:1

Both/And

MotherHen
Things Present

CHORDS II: G - - - C - - - :||

WORDS

I can be a rock'n'roll superstar
I can be a nobody sitting in the nose bleeds
I can be a preacher shoutin' loud
I can sit in back and softly disagree

I can be
I can be
I can be a Both/And

I can be everything
I can be nothing
Alpha and Omega
and everything between
I can sing the song and
I can do the beatbox
I believe it all and question everything

Skeptical Inquirer, Faithful in denial.
Scientific researcher, loving mystery.
Open-minded, we define it
Can't divide it, we can try it
We can stand for God
And stand for liberty

Christian and Progressive
Socially contested
Ethically invested
Living responsibly

A little bit rebellious
Swearing fucking hell yes
Nobody can tell us
What our faith should be

G, L, B, and T, and
Don't forget the Q
God won't turn you away
'Cause God a bit like you

Male and yet a feminist
Just add it to the long list
They can't stop us now from
Making all things new.

I can be
I can be
I can be a Both/And

Biblically grounded
Open to what's around it
Drawing on all religions to fortify my own.

Don't box me into one thing
Hark! the herald angel sings
Hear the word in every mouth
And in every stone

Fully Human and Divine
Drawing in the Sand a line
"You without sin, please throw the first stone!"

God is many, God is one,
Everything beneath the sun
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost
You're never on your own.

ROUND

CHORDS II: G7 - - - CM7add9 - - - :||

Voice 1

I can be, I can be, I can be a Both/And

Voice 2

I can be Both/And

Voice 3

You don't have choose

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

Too many churches tell people they have to choose between their God-given identity and their Church membership. Too many students tell me they have trouble accepting Christianity because they don't think they can be scientists and Christians. Too many people in the LGBTQA community are scarred by the black and white nature of conservative churches. I want to make sure people know that they don't have to choose between one half of themselves and the other half. You can be BOTH a Christian AND study evolution. You can be BOTH a Christian AND Queer. You can be BOTH a Christian AND a skeptic. You be BOTH a Christian AND a liberal. After all, Jesus was Both/And. Colossians 3:11

The Empty Tomb Song

MotherHen
Things Present

Verse 1

CHORDS II: C | Dm9/A | G7 sus4 | FM7 sus6 :||

I came into this world
Through my mother's Pain
Through my mother's Pain
Through her birthing pangs

I came into this world
As a living word
As a living word
As a living word

I spoke into this world
Like the prophets spoke to me
Like the Law was taught to me
Like a slave to be set free

CHORUS

CHORDS II: C | Dm9/A :||

Now I ask
who-----
who are you lookin' for?

Verse 2

I died into this world
Like my mother's pain
The live-giving strain
Of her birthing pangs

I rose into this world
Like an empty tomb
Like an empty tomb
Like my mother's womb

I rose into this world
In solidarity
The suffering to relieve
The suffering to believe

That I'll come back to this world
In everyone you see
So everyone you meet
Treat them like you would treat me.

CHORUS

And don't ask
who-----
who are you lookin' for?

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

This song was inspired by a quote I really like:

During my first pregnancy, I had the distinct feeling that my body was betraying me. To my acute sorrow, my belly became a purple-and-white-striped watermelon, tightening and ripening in the brilliant summer sunshine. Handel's chorus rang in my head: "By his stripes we are healed," layered over and over in successive parts. That glorious of compositions rang with personal meaning: I wanted to shout, "No! By *my* stripes there is life. By the sacrifice of my body has new life been possible."

Mary J. Streufert
"Maternal Sacrifice as a
Hermeneutics of the Cross"
from the book *Cross Examinations:
Readings on the Meaning of the Cross Today*

Having lost my mother at an early age, having had many maternal mentors throughout my life, having an amazing step-mother, having four loving sisters, I've always seen God through a female lens.

I like the idea of looking at the Jesus story through the experience of his mother, Mary, a figure deeply embraced by Catholics, but often under-represented in my Liberal Protestant Tradition.
John 18:7

Isaiah 58

MotherHen
Things Present

Verse 1

II: C - - Em G | C - - Em G :II C

Shout out! Do not hold back.

Lift up your voice like a trumpet.

F - - - | Dm - - -II: C - - Em G | C - - Em G :II C

How can you fast and complain
While your workers are working
working away, work without pay?

Piety comes with a price.
Ritual traditions won't suffice
It's not about your sacrifice.

CHORUS A

F | C - - Em G | C - C7 - I

Is this not the fast that I choose?

F | C - - Em G | C - C C/B I

To break the bonds of the abused.

BRIDGE

Am

God wants to set Her people free.

F

We fast to feed those who are hungry.

Dm

And shelter the homeless in our sanctuary.

G7

We're here do justice and love mercy.

CHORUS B

F | C - - Em G | C - C7 - I

Is this not the fast that I choose?

F Dm II: C - - Em G :II

To set the yoke of all our burdens loose.

Verse 2

You quarrel and you fight.

You use religion to say you're right.

God will not sow such spite.

Stop pointing fingers to blame

The evil that is to blame.

Instead start working towards the aim

Of healing the blind and lame.

In blessing you will be blessed

In serving God you must serve the rest.

Your neighbor needs your best.

CHORUS AB

F | C - - Em G | C - C7 - I

Is this not the fast I choose?

To break the bonds of the abused.

Is this not the fast I choose?

To serve the weak, the oppressed, and the used.

Is this not the fast I choose?

F Dm II: C - - Em G :II

To set the yoke of all our burdens loose.

Verse 3

In blessing you will be blessed

In serving God you must serve the rest.

Your neighbor needs your best.

So let your light so shine

And let your garden grow

'Cause God needs you now

To work a miracle.

CHORUS A

BRIDGE

CHORUS AB

END

F Dm

To set the yoke of all our burdens loose.

F Dm

To set the yoke of all our burdens loose.

II: C - - Em G | C - - Em G :II C

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

Isaiah 58 is my favorite scripture.

It's God saying, don't fast just so you can complain about your own discomfort, don't perform religious ritual for your own benefit. Fast to understand more deeply the hunger pangs of the impoverished. Let it inspire you to do justice. Practice your religion in a way that inspires you to reach out beyond your walls to those in need.

Isaiah 58:6

One Body

MotherHen
Things Present

One Body in Christ are We
One Body in Christ are We
Though we all may disagree
We're all nailed to the same tree
One Body in Christ are We

Uniters in Christ are We
Uniters in Christ are We
We've fought oh so many wars
And we just won't fight no more
Uniters in Christ are We

Betrayers in Christ are We
Betrayers in Christ are We
Through our inequalities
We still nail him to the tree
Betrayers in Christ are We

CHORDS

C | G | C | C
C | F | G | G7
C | C | F | Fm
C | G | C | C

Redeemers of Christ are We
Redeemers of Christ are We
Though a bloody past indeed
Preaching Peace we shall proceed
Redeemers of Christ are We

Beloved of God are We
Beloved of God are We
Even with our endless flaws
God still loves us like the dawn
Beloved of God are We

One Body in Christ are We
One Body in Christ are We
Though we all may disagree
We're all nailed to the same tree
One Body in Christ are We

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

At my church, we pass around the bread first.
People are invited to consume the bread
whenever they so choose as a sign that we all
have our own personal experiences of God and
our own unique perspectives on faith.

Then we pass out the little shot glasses of grape
juice.

People are asked to wait until everyone is
served before we all drink at the same time.
It is a reminder that despite our many diversities
and our varying backgrounds and our spectrum
of faith, we are still united in a single covenant,
bound together in our commitment to be in
relationship together, sharing our faith journeys
with one another.

This comes with great joy and great challenge.
For instance, how do we reconcile with the
Church's long history of violence and abuse?
How do reconcile with the ongoing injustice and
social inequities, sometimes even perpetrated in
the name of Jesus?

Racism, sexism, homophobia, lynchings, hate
crimes, Islamaphobia, mass gun violence,
income gaps, pollution, etc. etc. etc.

It is our job as the Church to right these wrongs.
To hold onto the beauty of our past, while forging
a new path away from our former social ills.
For we are Beloved of God, and we must treat
each other as such.

Ephesians 2: 11-22

Pilgrimed Soul

MotherHen
Things Present

I am just a pilgrimed soul
I'm passing through the ages
I wonder through this labyrinth land
I'm passing through the pages
These books that have been so far removed
From the world in which they were created
And yet their stories still speak to me
In all their interpreted stages

I've seen Tamar on the ancient roads
All gussied up in roses
A wily guise to set things straight
With teary eyes she poses
And you my sir, what have you done
To treat this woman gently
And you my sir, what have you done
To put her need in focus

I walked with Moses and Miriam
In the deserts we were a'wandering
God led with fire and with smoke
But we just kept on blundering
Forgive us, Lord, we did our best
But it's hard to wait for oh this long
For answered prayers and promised land
Where is this God, we're wondering

I ran from you on a ship set sail
Like Jonah adrift at sea
You swallowed me whole to ease the gail
To Nineveh, you carried me
This land so strange, this task so fierce
This people don't even know me
But you have sent me here oh God
With a strength to meet the need

I've seen him heal, I've seen him preach
I've seen him protect the widow
I've seen him upset the social norms
This revolutionaries' hero
We've walked the roads, this rag-tag crew
Proclaiming Good News is coming
I've seen him weep, along with you
This Jesus is now to go
This Jesus must now to go
This Jesus is now

CHORDS

A I D I G I A
A I D I G I A
A I C#m/A I A9 I A
A I D I G I A
G I A I G I A

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

Progressive Christians are often accused of being "unBiblical." Sometimes we wear that badge with honor. But the Bible is a rich canon of challenging and encouraging scriptures for Progressives of all kinds.

Like the story of Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, who challenged the unjust patriarchy of her day.

Like the story of Moses and Miriam, who led a revolution against a brutal dictator, and helped free the enslaved and the oppressed.

Like the story of Jonah, who although afraid at first, found the courage to cross borders and speak out against the injustices of his day.

Like the story of Jesus, who led a movement of peaceful resistance, who stood up for oppressed women, who built his church with the outcast and the marginalized, who challenged religious authority, who always did the unexpected in order to preach a message of Love.

Genesis 38:19

Still Life of a Bible 2

MotherHen
Things Present

PRELUDE

CHORDS II: Bb | Bb | Eb | Eb :||

Living Water in the well,
I don't care too much for this hell.
Tell you of a God I believe in most
The loving Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost

Living Water in the well,
I'm so sick of this male-centered God they sell
Let's preach a God in which we can boast
The loving Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost

II Gm | Cm | Eb II

Verse 1

II: Bb | Gm Cm | Bb | Bb :||

I said
Mother, you don't have to take this beating.
I said
Father, your fists don't need their bleeding.
There ain't nothing
That gives you the right to hit.
There ain't nothing
In the Bible to justify it.

PRE-CHORUS

II: Gm | Cm | Eb | F :||

You see,
We baptize to realize
That all the world is a Beloved Child.
And we're ordained
To rearrange the unjust order of our day.

CHORUS

II Eb | Eb | Bb | Bb II
So don't you use my Bible
As a billy-club
This ain't your revival
You're just beating us up

II: Gm | Cm | Eb | F :||

Whereas,
God above is full of love
Descending down like a falling dove
on you

Verse 2

I said
Mother, God doesn't need this sacrifice.
Hey
Father, this abuse it ain't the love of Christ.
There ain't nothing, Dad,
That gives you the right to hit.
There ain't nothing, Mom,
In the Bible to justify it.

PRE-CHORUS

You see,
We belong to ancient songs
So sing until your heart is filled

CHORUS

And don't you use my Bible
As a billy-club
This ain't your revival
You're just beating us up
2x

Whereas,
God above is full of love
Descending down like a falling dove
on you

PRELUDE

PRELUDE and **CHORUS** intertwined

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

Considering the way the Bible has been misused to validate violence against women, I believe it is our Christian duty to help undo this great injustice. That was a major part of Jesus' ministry after all, correcting the past and current abuses of scripture.

Ephesians 5:25

clouds in the river

MotherHen
Things Present

Verse 1

CHORDS II: A/E --- | A/E -- B/E | E --- | E --- :||

Clouds in the rive and a broken sky
Curtain of rain on the other side
Bit by a bug, yeah it's sucking my blood
Sunburn's a-burning and I'm crying to God

CHORUS

II: D/A - C/A - | E --- | E --- :||

O God
Save me from this place
Convinced we own the world
As the human race

II B/A | A | Am | Am II

But where we go

Am E
It all looks the same

Verse 2

Working in a building that pretends to be green
Well I don't know what that really means
Working in a corner hunched over in a chair
Sick of that same old blank stare

CHORUS

O God
Save me from this place
Convinced we own the world
As the human race
I'd rather be rain or sunshine
Slapping the bugs and smelling pine

But these buildings
And these people
And these songs

They all sound the same

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

We are stewards of Creation.
In Genesis, God gives humankind the responsibility to care for this world and everything in it.

I've always found community in church. But I've found God most easily in the wilderness.

However, there are a lot of things out in the wilderness that cause great discomfort, distracting us from the beauty of it all.

Similarly, in our daily living, the ho-hum rhythm of our lives often distracts us from what's really feeds our soul.

It gets to the point where whenever we're in nature we're wishing for the comforts of home, and whenever we're home we're wishing for the solace of nature.

Our job is to see the world through God's eyes, realizing that all of it is precious and holy and loving, even that mosquito buzzing around your head.

Genesis 1:26

Good People

MotherHen
Things Present

VERSE

The Bible ain't full of saints, but whores
Thieves and murderers breaking down the doors
These heroes we've placed on a pedestal
Are flawed and flawed but God loves them still

We've idolized and fantasized
Forgot exactly what the whole book's for
We've white-washed and we've kept hush
The gritty details about the poor

flawed and flawed but God loves us still

PRE-CHORUS

These are fables about some prince
No easy answers are found within
No blameless characters
Nor pure innocence

CHORUS

But real life people
With real life problems
Making real life mistakes
again and again

Real life people
With real life problems
Trying to tell a story
About their faith
And how it's always
Changing

VERSE

The Bible ain't full of saints, but whores
Thieves and murderers breaking down the doors
This book ain't meant to answer everything
But to pose a question and to make you think

PRE-CHORUS

Poetic license, not superstition
Metaphor is where God's began
It's striving for Love to be good again

CHORUS

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

You know those churches where people are just putting on a face?

There's this false idea out there that in order to be a "Christian" you have to perfectly follow some societal script that often has no connection to what God really requires of us in the Bible (Love your God, love your neighbor, love yourself, and to do justice, love kindness, walk humbly).

I think this stems from the way we preachers preach the Bible.

We tend to preach stories as if the Biblical characters are infallible, perfect, unwavering. Then our flock feels unworthy or judged when they don't fall into those scripts.

It's good to remind ourselves that the people God chooses, the people God uses, the people whom we lift up as the heroes of our faith are far from perfect. It is in this way that we remind ourselves that we are all capable of performing miracles, of bringing about a world-changing amount of good.

2 Samuel 11

Excommunicant

MotherHen
Things Present

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

One time when I was riding the subway, I saw one of those reusable grocery bags with these words printed on it, "I used to be a plastic bottle." I loved the existential nature of that declaration.

I started writing this as a love song about being used up and thrown away. Then it transformed into a song about the church. Too often, churches treat you like a plastic bottle, they bring you in, drink you up, and then throw you out when you're empty without looking for the little recycling symbol on your label.

The healthy, growing, vibrant churches are the ones that know how to fill you back up.

On a less metaphorical level, the healthiest churches are also the churches that recycle and actively work to care for God's Creation.

In the New Testament, the word that is often translated as "Hell" is "Gehenna," which was the name of Jerusalem's trash dump. It was a pile of trash that burned day and night. If "hell" is a trash heap, then maybe Heaven is a recycling center. I love the idea that God doesn't throw us away. God recycles us into better versions of ourselves.

Isaiah 64:8

I used to be a plastic bottle
You could fill me up

I used to pollute your ecological model
The toxins would just build up

Now I
Pick myself up
And I'm falling back down

You say Jesus Christ died for my sins.
I say it's probably time
We start recycling

For your plastic waste
Is growing oh so strong
It's ocean's wide
And it's ocean's long

Yes, your plastic waste
Pollutes the earth we trod
And your plastic faith
It pollutes our God

So I Pick myself up
And I'm falling back down

I used to be a plastic bottle
You could fill me up

Now I'm floating down the river
At full throttle
Headed for the ocean or the dump

And you pulled me in
And you said I was loved
Then you threw me out
And said my soul's undone

But neither life nor death
Nor holy breath
Neither heights so great
Nor unseen depth
Neither angels, powers, nor ruling rod
Could ever separate you from the love of God

So don't you fear or fret
When missteps you make
For even Omniscient Gods
Sometimes make mistakes

So don't you fear or fret
When missteps you make
For a Loving God
Would never turn you away

Inquisition

MotherHen
Things Present

WHAT THIS SONG MEANS TO ME

In some Christian circles, there's a lot of military symbolism. The idea is that Christians are soldiers in God's army.

I think this type of imagery that combines violence and faith has led to a lot of suffering in the world.

We need a church that boldly strikes a different path. Jesus is the Prince of Peace after all.

He didn't come riding into Jerusalem on a war steed. He came riding on a donkey. He didn't lead an army to victory against the occupying Roman force. He led a non-violent resistance. And that choice, the choice to not lead with military might, may not have defeated the Romans in the immediate, but it had an even greater impact that has echoed throughout eternity.

We are not a church confined by boundaries, whether political, social, religious, or any other. We are a church of people who find salvation in a man who constantly crossed boundaries, building partnerships with people of all kinds despite social prescriptions against such relations. Luke 10:29-37

VERSE

We've drawn these lines across the world
We've labeled enemies to hurt
We've used our Jesus to conquer the world

But this crusade won't last
Your conquering cross
Is a symbol of the past
The cross I see
Should set you free
to say

CHORUS

I don't wanna lead your inquisition
I won't be a soldier in your war
Christ is not your military mission
Jesus came to love you more and more

BRIDGE

I am not your enemy
Believing different things but we
Can help each other to perceive
Our faith a little differently
Through conversation and debate
Growing in our separate ways
Together we can work to make
A more open-minded kind of faith

Ephesians 2: 11-22

For you are no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints, and also members of the household of God.