

THIS IS OUR STORY
THIS IS GOD'S SONG



LISTEN... LISTEN... LISTEN

LOOK & LISTEN IN ANTICIPATION

Listen to me,

you who look for righteousness,
you who seek the Lord:

Look to the rock from which you were cut
and to the quarry where you were dug.

² **Look to** Abraham your ancestor,
and to Sarah, who gave you birth.

They were alone when I called them,
but I blessed them and made them many.

³ The Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her ruins.

He will make her desert like Eden
and her wilderness like the Lord's garden.

Happiness and joy will be found in her —
thanks and the sound of singing.

⁴ Pay attention to me, my people;
Listen to me, my nation,
for teaching will go out from me,
my justice, as a light to the nations.

⁵ I will quickly bring my victory.
My salvation is on its way,
and my arm will judge the peoples.
The coastlands hope for me;
they wait for my judgment.

⁶ Look up to the heavens,
and gaze at the earth beneath.
The heavens will disappear like smoke,
the earth will wear out like clothing,
and its inhabitants will die like gnats.
But my salvation will endure forever,
and my righteousness will be unbroken.

⁷ **Listen to me**, you who know what is right,
people who carry my teaching in your heart:
Don't fear human scorn,
and don't be upset when they abuse you.

⁸ The moth will eat them as if they were clothing,
and the worm will eat them like wool,
but my righteousness is forever,
and my salvation for all generations.

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Terror, pit, and trap face you, you people of the earth.

And whoever runs from the sound of terror will only fall into a pit; when he climbs out of the pit,
he'll run and be caught in a trap.

The sky above will open up and the ground below will quake—nothing will be safe.

Isaiah 24:17

“Irony abounds here. First, “rock” is an image of strength and stability.

The exiles, torn from their land, their institutions, and, some no doubt said, from their God, hardly seem strong and stable. Yet the prophet calls them to remember that they come from ancestors of unquestionable resolve and perseverance. They carry the same granite in their spirits, even if they feel as if it has been ground to dust.”

Working Preacher

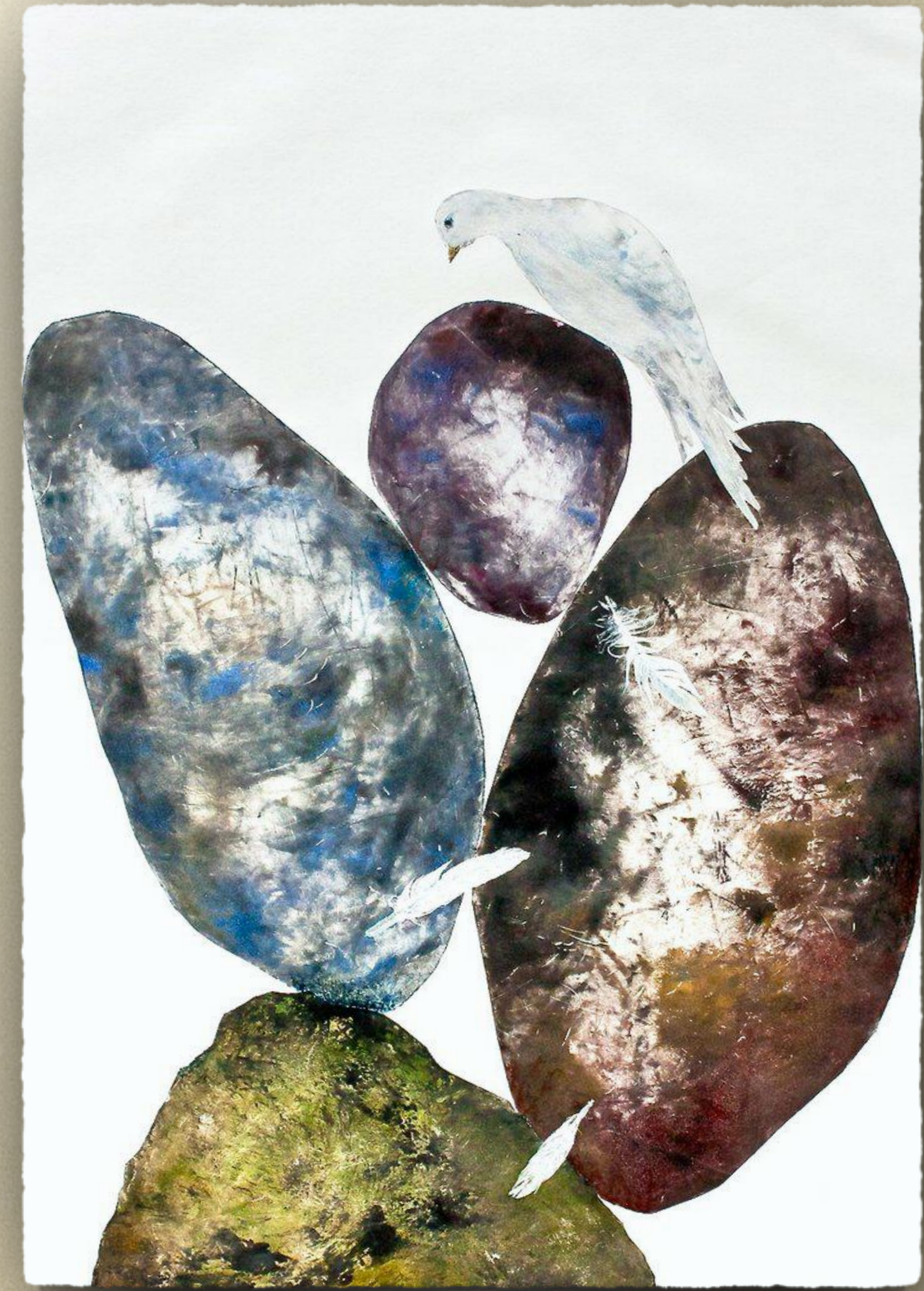
“God’s power is to be trusted like a rock and like the call of Abraham. However, God’s absence, like Sarah’s barren womb and like the hole in the pit, is an impossible chasm... but the pit is not the end of the story. From the impossible, from the disoriented, from suffering ... a great people can be born.”

Working Preacher



QUESTIONS OF A HOPEFUL CYNIC

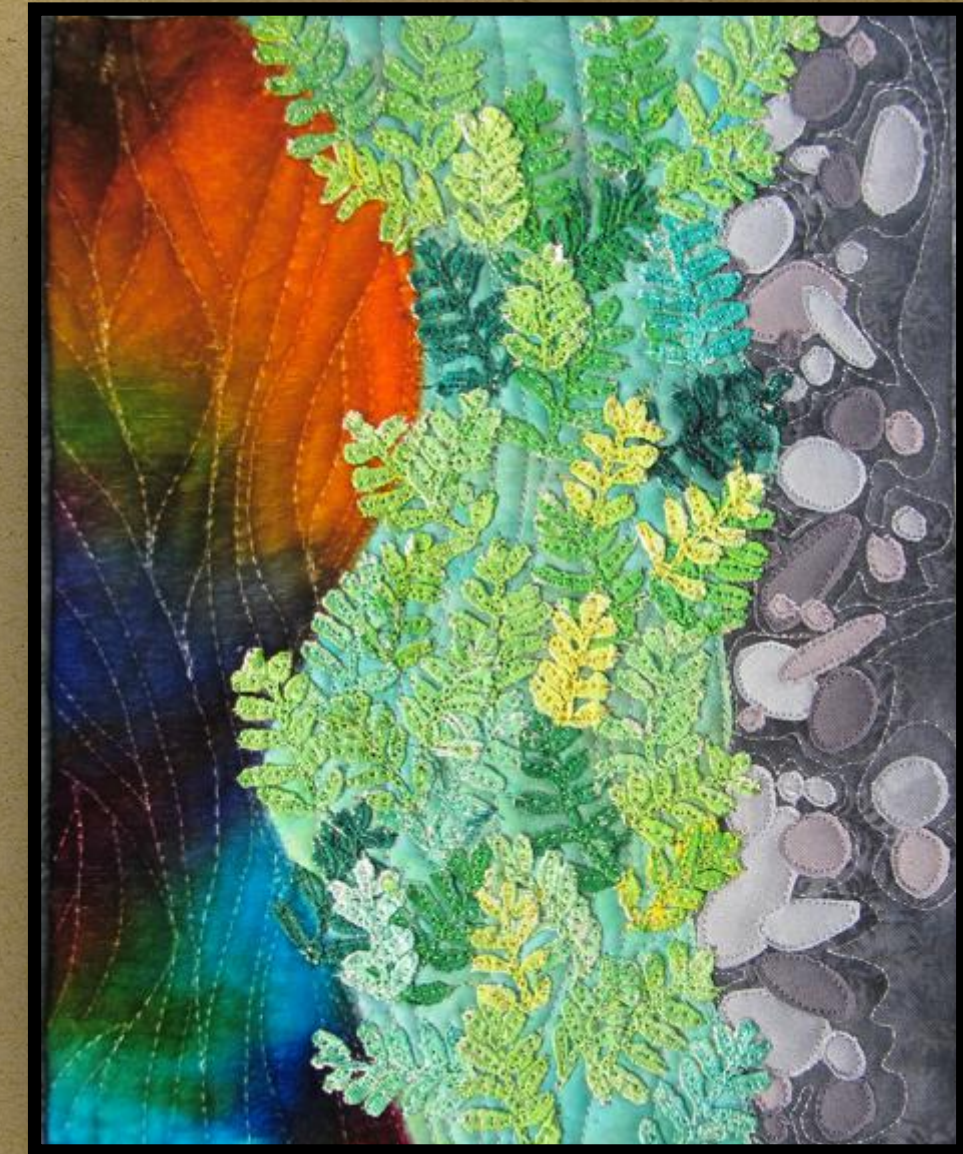
- Is the suffering of disintegration and crumbling the very rubble and rock where new life is found? The quarry we've been cut from?
- Is this our birthplace, is this the pangs of the new?
- East of Eden of all places, a desert, nothing but stony ground. Is this the quarry we've been cut from? Is this the garden plot Yahweh had in mind?
- We will find compassion amongst ruins?
- Joy and Gladness? Compassion ... amongst ruins? Even here? Really?



In the Land EAST OF EDEN

- “... the poet slays the tyranny of a tragic narrative that ends in exile. The poet defies the seemingly inevitably catastrophic time by pushing the past into the future ... an impossible waste-place becomes the setting for new growth.”

○ The Working Preacher



FROM THE RUBBLE OF EXILE TO EDEN SPRING

- “Those places, bereft of life resources, are not to be ‘comforted’ by a nostalgic return to that first garden ... The news to the exiles is that the force of “new creation” will be enacted in that wounded, desolate but beloved city ... it will be a place of unending joy and gladness - a doxology singing praise for the marvellous gift of new life.”

- Brueggemann



GIVE EAR TO MY WORD

“Listening for a Vision beyond Personal Recovery”



“The prophet is clear in his urgent call. Only when we fall under Yahweh’s law and teaching, rather than our own efforts, cleverness, plans or ingenuity, will we be connected to justice, Yahweh’s victory, salvation and the arm of God whose saving judgement leads to a hope that will satisfy, fulfill and shine a light on all nations.”

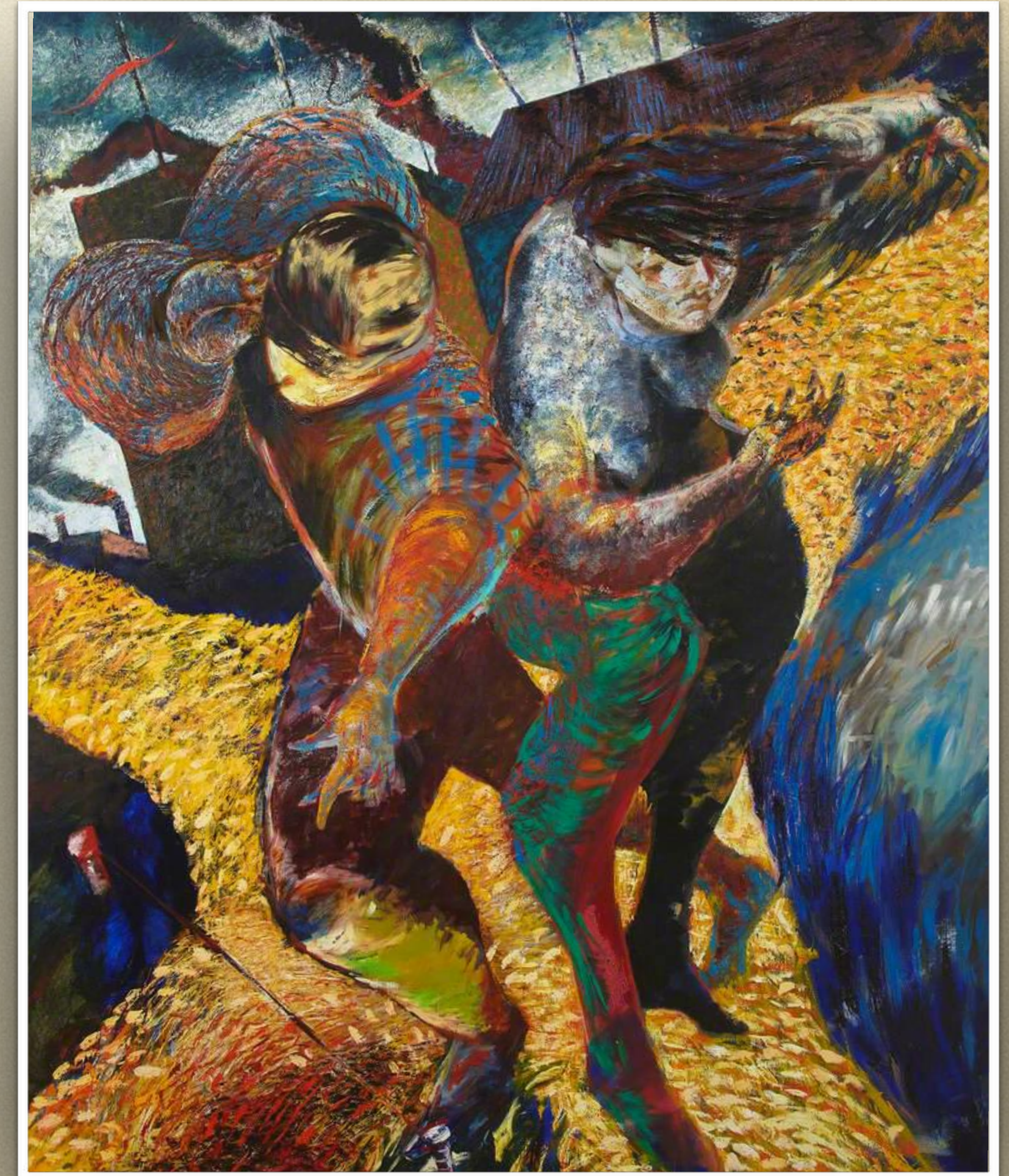
HERE TODAY ... GONE TOMORROW: GOD'S STAYING POWER

THEN

“Second Isaiah witnessed the reduction to dust of all the human institutions and achievements upon which the Jewish community had placed its trust. Gone was the dazzling temple, the imposing Davidic dynasty, the awesome armies, the life of culture and luxury. Where others found reason to despair, however, this prophet recognized the gracious activity of God removing penultimate loyalties from the consciousness of the people as preparation for receiving the only eternal reality, the word of God. Upon this reality they could rebuild their broken lives.” HANSON

AND NOW

“To listen to the words of the messenger, to remember the moments of God’s saving action, and to awake to the new order of blessing that God has created, these are activities that remain valid to our own day. They are activities through which God still seeks to restore sight to human beings in order that they may distinguish between earthly treasures that ‘will wear out like a garment’ and God’s gift of salvation that ‘will be forever’”. HANSON



LISTENING WITH THE INNER EAR

- “Creation and exodus, these are the moments to which the faithful are to return in moments of crisis and doubt, trusting that the God who was faithful to order and justice in the past has not changed holy resolve.
- The blending of myth and history in this portrait of the Creator-Redeemer has the effect of evoking a sense of awesome majesty combined with tender loving care. ... Deliverance from exile shall occur. God has not changed! God will act as God acted in creation and the exodus.!” Hanson



OUR DEFINING MOMENTS WITH GOD: a shared memory

- “This exhortation towards hope and loyalty is meant to “remind a searching people of crucial moments, orienting those who have fallen into lethargy, placing them in the presence of the source of all meaning.
- They are reminded of the moment of creation, the mysterious origin of all that is in God’s incisive move against chaos. They are reminded of the moment of the awakening of destiny, the mysterious stirring of hope in the faithful response of one ancestral couple.
- They are reminded of the moment of deliverance, the mysterious birth of a people in divine deliverance from political bondage. And they are reminded of restoration, the return of the God without whom they are lost. Such moments define the meaning of all human life.” Hanson



ON THE WAY



“Just as the word from God brought creation into being, 2nd Isaiah is encouraging us to use “inspired speech”, words that bring forth abundance and righteousness, words that keep us wandering down the path of God’s future vision. The trek through exile is ultimately meant to be more than just day-to-day survival. Ultimately it awakens in us a vision that expands from our history of origins to the unveiling of a new peoplehood, brought together from all corners, coast to coast.”

MORNING BY MORNING



“Apart from the eyes of faith, the wilderness remains as threatening as ever, the desert as dry and forbidding. But for those ‘that pursue righteousness,’ ‘that seek the Lord’, the wilderness is like Eden, the desert like the garden of the Lord, for from the perspective of faith they see not oppressors and victims living under the domain of evil but a world graciously undergoing transformation into compassion and justice. The assurance that this envisioned transformation is not an illusion but the only true reality rests not on their own wisdom but on the good news delivered from God through the messenger: “Your God reigns.” HANSON

