

ISAIAH'S FIRST  
SERVANT  
SONG



# THE SERVANT SONG: Isaiah 42:1-9

Look here, let Me present My servant; **I have** taken hold of him. He is My chosen, and I delight in him. **I have** put My Spirit on him; by this **he will** bring justice to the nations.

**He will** not scream or yell, crying out for all to hear.  
What is bruised and bent, **he will** not break; **he will** not blow out a flickering candle.  
Rather, **he will** faithfully turn his attention to doing justice.  
And though he faces obstacles, resistance, and great pressure, **he will** not crack;  
**he will** not give up until things are set right.  
Even the coastlands wait patiently for his instruction.  
God, the Eternal One, who made the starry skies, stretched them tight above and around;  
Who cast the shimmering globe of earth and filled it with life;  
who gives breath and animates the people;  
Who walks and talks with life-giving spirit has this to say:

**I Am** the Eternal One. By righteousness **I have** called you. **I will** take you by the hand and keep you safe.

**You are** given as a covenant between Me and the people:  
a light for the nations, a shining beacon to the world. **You will** open blind eyes so they will see again.

**You will** lead prisoners, blinking, out from caverns of captivity,  
from cells pitch black with despair.

**I Am** the Eternal One. **I Am** is My name.

My beauty is unique, a weighty splendour all My own.

And nothing else—no idols could possibly gain My praise.

Look here, what's done is done and gone. The now is new, and there's hope in the not-yet.

I will tell you what's to come, even before the events are brand-new.



## DIVINELY & LOVINGLY INSPIRED

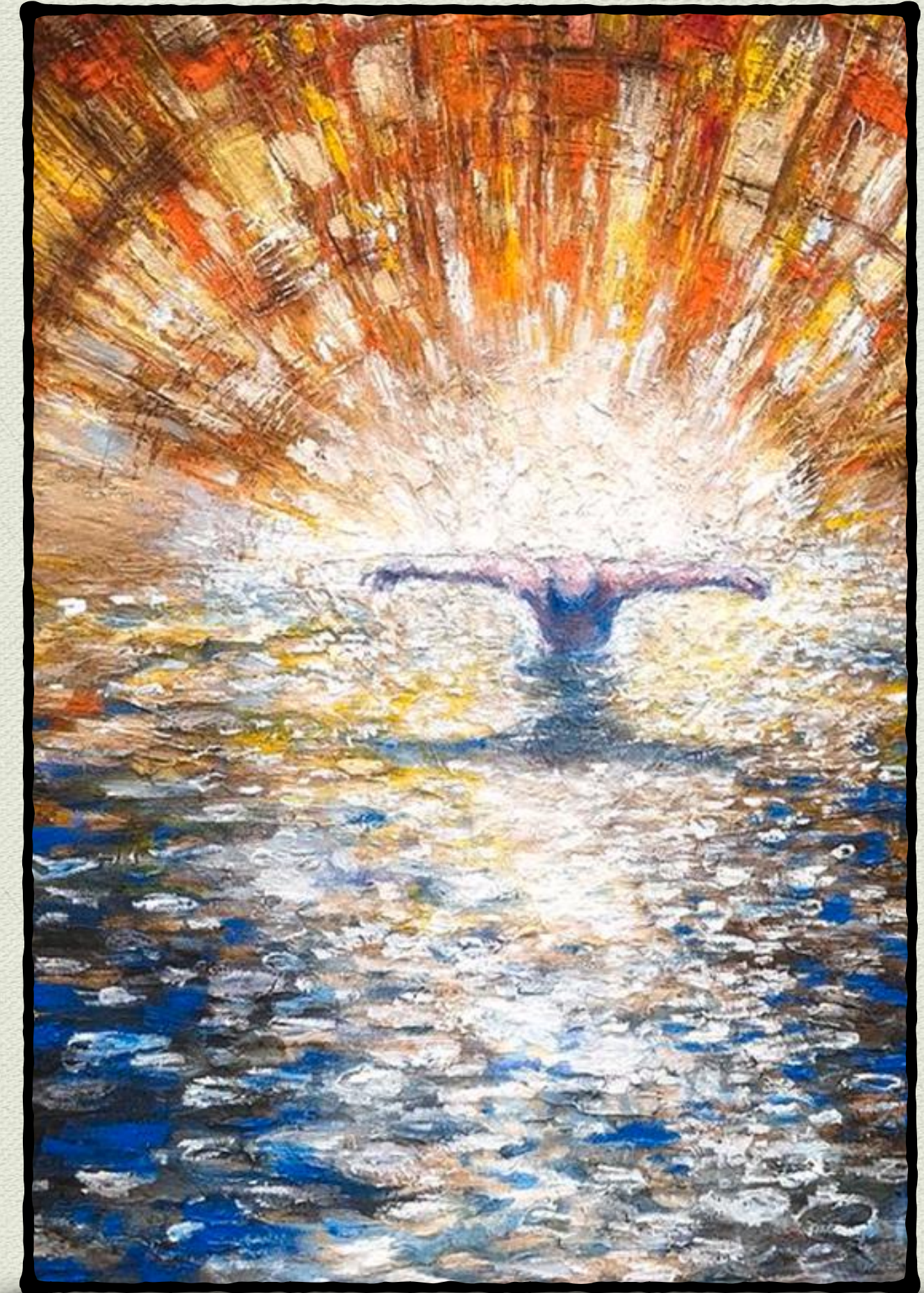
And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

“In times when discipleship weighs heavily and the joy of living true to God’s compassionate justice dims, remembering that the source of the vocation of those who love God is in God’s delight can have an uplifting and empowering affect.”

Paul Hanson

“The reason the servant can traffic in covenant is that Yahweh wills covenant; the reason the servant can bring light is that Yahweh is against the darkness. The reason debts are cancelled and the poor are liberated is that Yahweh is attentive to the vulnerable and wills none to live in hock.... the work of the Servant is the work of “new things” whereby Israel is brought to a new place, ... the nations are brought to a way of life intended by the creator. The people Israel now figures decisively in God’s newness in the world”.

Brueggeman



# THE MANY FACES OF THE SERVANT

## The Servant is:

- ◆ Isa. 42:1-9: one who faithfully establishes justice in the world and serves as a light for the nations
- ◆ Isa. 49:1-13: called from the womb and ordained to restore the nation of Israel and take salvation to the ends of the earth.
- ◆ Isa. 50:4-9: portrayed as a teacher, intimately in touch with God, yet brutally beaten and disgraced by his enemies
- ◆ Isa. 52:13 - 53:12: seen as a figure of suffering and rejection. This takes priority over his other tasks.



# THE SERVANT AS A PEOPLE

“The Servant Songs ... are an invitation to reflect on the calling and vocation of all those who acknowledge God’s sovereignty and who recognize the dependence of all creation on God’s heart for justice... at times godly individuals became the focus, at other times the vocation of groups within the community or even on the ultimate purpose of the entire nation became central. ... Ultimately the Servant describes those who love God.

Each in our own way we are also invited to become a devoted player in a world of hope and justice, both present and future.”

Paul Hanson



“all the foundations of the earth are  
shaken. ... Rise up, O God, judge the  
earth; for all the nations  
belong to you”  
Psalm 82:5,8



## BEYOND BORDERS: From Tribal to Universal

“... the chaos or harmony that results from disobedience or obedience affects the entire universe, inclusive of human history and natural phenomena alike. The domain of God is not circumscribed by the borders of Israel but extends to the surrounding nations and beyond. ... the biblical concept of divine justice bears universal connotations.”

Paul Hanson



## THE SERVANT IS NOT...

“What sort of agent can this be, described not as a conqueror but a servant who suffers! Is it possible that the reign of justice can be promoted by submission and the overt renunciation of force, who goes above and beyond to pay special attention and care to fellow victims who are on the edge of collapse and death?” Paul Hanson

# “A covenant to the people ... all the inhabitants of the earth”

- ◆ “The Servant points to the reality that transcends all flesh. To live consistently in the service of the justice of God is to pattern one’s life on the nature of God and his covenant. This covenant took shape in the form of God’s actively getting involved in the plight of the slaves in Egypt. Evoking visions of universal restoration and new creation are rooted in early Yahwistic notions such as Sabbath ... the restoration of merciful social structures in the Jubilee Year extended to all and the choice to study war and violence no more ... creating an imagination of future hope and ‘mispat’.” Paul Hanson

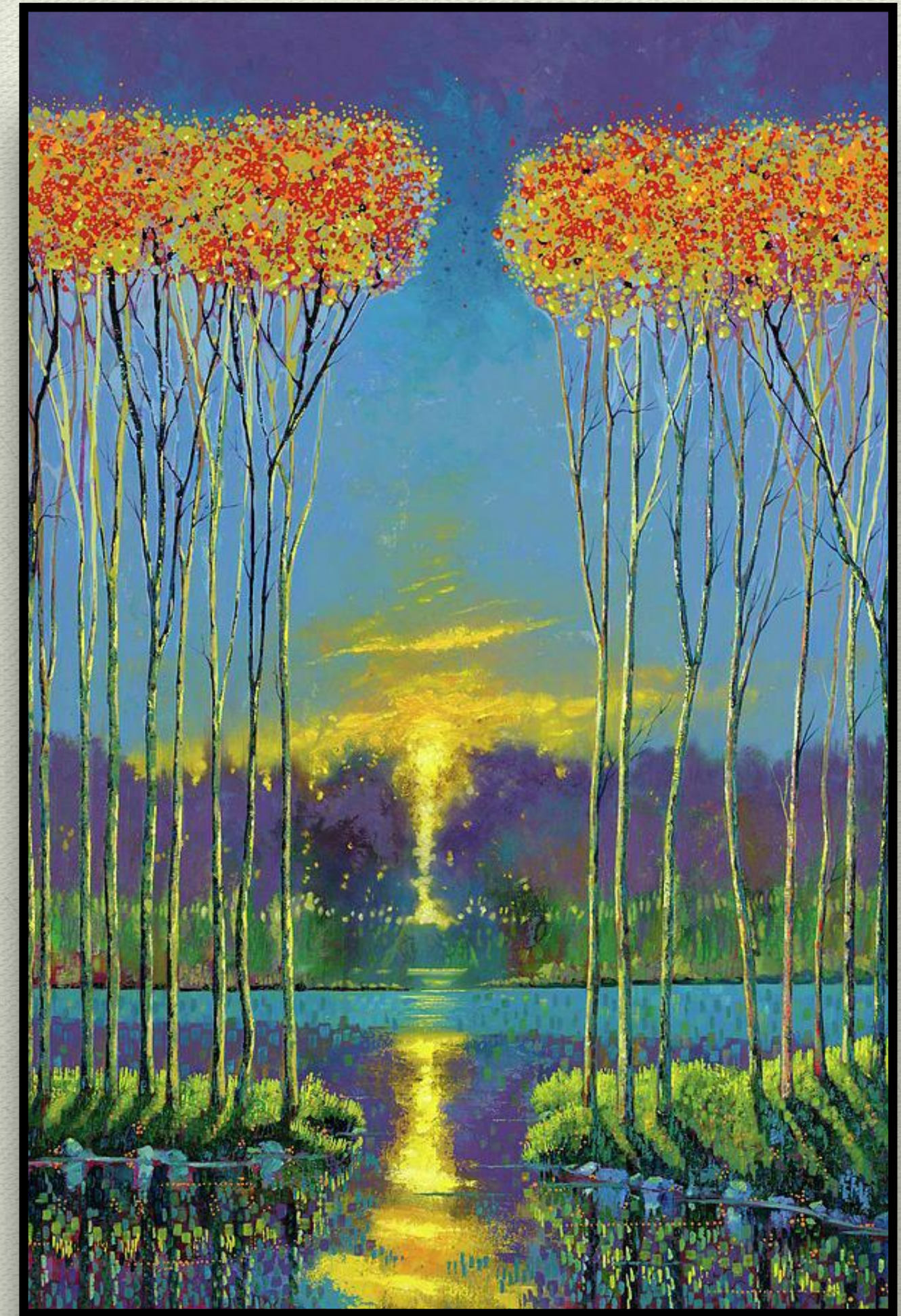




# THE SERVANT: A foreshadowing

“but if this Servant is the corporate person of Israel itself, who suffers for Israel’s redemption? If the people is the redeemer, who redeems the people? In order to conceive of the people’s redemption, we have to think of a future figure, chosen by God from Israel and raised up for this purpose.... The Suffering Servant of God is the image of the messianic completion of Israel’s prophecy.”

Moltmann



# OLD MEMORIES ... NEW MEMORIES

“Since Jerusalem had been destroyed and the people had been driven out of the land of promise, the breach with that ancient exodus tradition could not be bridged. But the remembrance of the earlier tradition was a reason to hope for God’s creative faithfulness in the future.

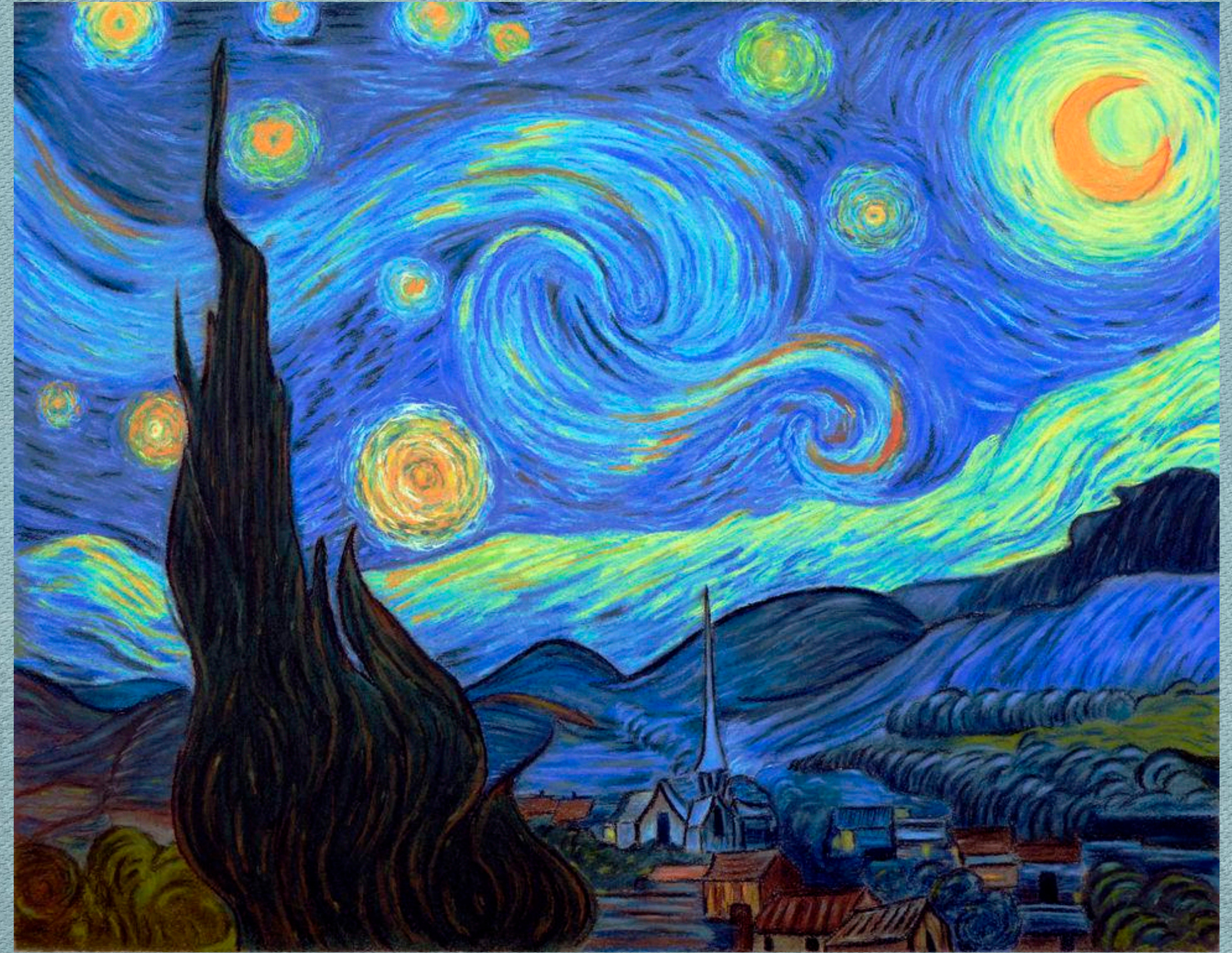
... This is why the new ‘Servant of God’ surpasses even the first prophetic leader, Moses. He is to be at once the prophet of the exodus, the priest of reconciliation, and the sacrifice that will bring about redemption. While in the O.T., the Messiah and the Servant stand side by side, unrelated to each other, (the Messiah is never spoken in suffering terms), Jesus being steeped and formed by this tradition of both Messiah and Servant becomes a figure who embodies both energies as one who suffers in love and is a bringer of hope.”

Moltmann





God, the Eternal One, who made the starry skies,  
stretched them tight above and around;  
Who cast the shimmering globe of earth and filled it  
with life; who gives breath and animates the people...



## LET THERE BE LIGHT

“God’s covenant is birthed from a universal vision of flourishing ecology and unitive energy. It floods the dark barrenness with the light of freedom and restoration. Blindness and the darkness of entrapment is healed, turned around by the goodness of God’s new creation. New things are on the horizon and no one but the “Lord Your God” knows this – only Yahweh the merciful can usher this in. Every other way, system and leader is but withering grass.”

# Isaiah for a different time

- ◆ Luke's audience doesn't divide the world into sacred vs. secular or religious vs. political. For them, life is integrated. And for them, these "religious" words from Isaiah have a powerful and "political" meaning: because they see themselves as oppressed by the Roman occupation, Jesus' words suggest that His "good news" describes a powerful change about to come—a change that will rescue the people from their oppression. His fellow Jews have long been waiting for a saviour to free them from Roman oppression. Jesus tells them their hopes are about to be fulfilled. But then, just as people speak well of Jesus, He lets them know their expectations aren't in line with God's plans. He tells them not to expect God to fit into their old boxes. He suggests the unthinkable: that God's care extends beyond the tribal tent, for all the nations, and creation beyond, enemies included... " THE VOICE

## The Servant of all Servants

He eventually came to His hometown, Nazareth, and did there what He had done elsewhere in Galilee—entered the synagogue and stood up to read from the Hebrew Scriptures.

The synagogue attendant gave Him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and Jesus unrolled it to the place where Isaiah had written these words:

The Spirit of the Lord the Eternal One is on Me.

Why? Because the Eternal designated Me

to be His representative to the poor, to preach good news to them.

He sent Me to tell those who are held captive that they can now be set free, and to tell the blind that they can now see.

He sent Me to liberate those held down by oppression.

In short, the Spirit is upon Me to proclaim that now is the time; this is the jubilee season of the Eternal One's grace.

Jesus rolled up the scroll. Then He sat down, as a teacher would do, and all in the synagogue focused their attention on Jesus, waiting for Him to speak. He told them that these words from the Hebrew Scriptures were being fulfilled then and there, in their hearing.

Luke 4:16-21

