

The Gospel isn't Written in the Bible Alone

low voice, piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

The Gospel Isn't Written in the Bible Alone

for low voice and piano

"God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees, and flowers, and clouds, and stars." - Anonymous

(♩ = 69-72) With awe

Elizabeth Alexander

5

The

9

1. Gos - pel is writ-ten in the trees and flowers, it's writ - ten in the wind and the rain, ___ re -
 2. Gos - pel is paint-ed on-to fins and scales, it's ruf - fled in - to fea - thers and fur, ___ It's
 3. Gos - pel is mov-ing o-ver dark-ened seas, it's work-ing in the change and the flow. ___ It's

13

cord-ed in the rock and sed - i - ment_ and sand. It's
 spun in - to the sea - shell's deep and sa - cred scroll. Be -
 writ-ten in a tongue we long to un - der - stand. We

17

writ-ten in the glo-ry of the far - off sun, and al - so in the ve - ry near, in -
 - hold it in the voic-es of the birds at dawn, com - pos-ers of the Song of Songs. Dis -
 mar-vel at the beau-ty of the po - e - try en - cod-ed in the chro - mo - some, and

A^b/C *D^{b69}* *A^b/E^b* *D^{b69}/F*

21

- scribed up - on the palm of ev' - ry o - pen hand. _____
 - cern it in the Acts of ev' - ry liv - ing soul. _____
 braid - ed through the length of ev' - ry twist - ed strand. _____

A^b/E^b *A^b/G^b* *G^b* *A^b/G^b* *G^b* *A^b/G^b* *G^b* *A^b/G^b*

26

You can hear it in__ the thun - der, you can read it in__ the stars,__ you can
 Ev' - ry peb - ble holds a Pro - verb, ev' - ry spi - der spins a Psalm,__ ev' - ry
 It is mold - ed in - to mus - cle, it is whis - pered in - to breath,__ it is

D^{b69}/F *A^b/E^b* *D^{b69}/F* *A^b/E^b*

31

find it un - der ev' - ry leaf__ and stone. On a
 seeds a Re - sur - rec - tion of__ its own. On a
 carved in - to__ the curve__ of ev' - ry bone. On a

D^{b9} *A^b/C* *C^{b9}* *G^{b9}/B^b*

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and serum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Pasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hagan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and serum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

**A lot of hard work
and creativity went
into bringing this
music to you...**



**...and some of it
was even mine.**

**This page has been intentionally omitted.
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

Elizabeth Alexander
Seafarer Press
The Music of Elizabeth Alexander
www.seafarerpress.com

54

- lone.

A^b G^b6⁹ A^b G^b6⁹

58

EM⁷9 AM⁷9 G%

61

F⁶9 Im -

65

- a - gine now, if you were_ God._____

Em⁷9

69

Set - ting forth the Gos - pel for all you're worth._____

F⁷9(#11)

73

Why would you set - tle for a sin - gle_ book,_____ when

Em⁷⁹

77

you could write the Gos - pel on the whole wide Earth?_____

F7(#11) EbM7 DbM7 B69

81

85

D.S. al Coda

The

DM7(#11) E69 Gb69(#11)

90 **⊕ CODA**

Gos - pel may be writ - ten in the Bi - ble _____

D^bM⁷9 *D^b9(#11)* *D^b9* *D^b9(#11)*

but it sure - ly is - n't writ - ten in the Bi - ble _____ a -

B^bm⁷9 *A^b9/C* *D^b69* *E^b7⁹sus⁴*

lone. _____

A^b *D^b/A^b* *G^b/A^b* *D^bsus⁴/A^b* *D^b/A^b* *A^b*

D^b/A^b *G^b/A^b* *D^bsus⁴/A^b* *A^b* *G^b69*

A^b *G^bM⁷(13)* *G^b69(#11)*

The Gospel Isn't Written in the Bible Alone

"God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees, and flowers, and clouds, and stars."

Anonymous, often attributed (erroneously) to Martin Luther

The Gospel is written in the trees and flowers, it's written in the wind and the rain,
Recorded in the rock and sediment and sand.
It's written in the glory of the far-off sun, and also in the very near,
Inscribed upon the palm of every open hand.
You can hear it in the thunder, you can read it in the stars, you can find it under every leaf and stone.
On a page wide as a prairie there's a message large as life: The Gospel isn't written in the Bible alone.

The Gospel is painted onto fins and scales, it's ruffled into feathers and fur,
It's spun into the seashell's deep and sacred scroll.
Behold it in the voices of the birds at dawn, composers of the Song of Songs,
Discern it in the Acts of every living soul.
Every pebble holds a Proverb, every spider spins a Psalm, every seed's a Resurrection of its own.
On a page wide as a prairie there's a message large as life: The Gospel isn't written in the Bible alone.

Imagine now, if you were God, setting forth the Gospel for all you're worth,
Why would you settle for a single book when you could write the Gospel on the whole wide Earth?

The Gospel is moving over darkened seas, it's working in the change and the flow,
It's written in a tongue we long to understand.
We marvel at the beauty of the poetry encoded in the chromosome,
And braided through the length of every twisted strand.
It is molded into muscle, it is whispered into breath, it is carved into the curve of every bone.
On a page wide as a prairie there's a message large as life:
The Gospel may be written in the Bible, but it surely isn't written in the Bible alone.

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Composer Note: *"God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees, and flowers, and clouds, and stars."* These words were attributed to Martin Luther as early as the 1950s when it was published in an anthology of religious quotations. In the years that followed, it became a much beloved and reprinted quote, appearing on countless posters, T-shirts, mugs, greeting cards, and (eventually) memes. I too liked it, and even wrote a song based on its core idea!

Curious to know the context of these words, I sought out Bruce Eldevik, reference librarian at Luther College. To my surprise he concluded they were not Martin Luther's words at all! As it turns out, Luther was far less interested in *where the gospel was located* than in *for whom it was written*, as reflected in this passage from his book *Table Talk*: "The gospel belongs to the poor and sorrowful, not to princes and courtiers who live in continual joy and delight, in security, void of all tribulations."

And so it goes. To the true author, whoever you are: Thanks. You gave me a great hook for this generous song.

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