

Gleaning In The Fields Of Light

By Ken Woodley

*“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way;
the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.’”*

The alarm sounds early.

Sunrise is nearly two hours away and it’s so cold outside in the darkness
beyond this windowpane that even shivers are frozen solid.

Seven degrees.

Then five.

Three.

Now two.

The electric candle on the window sill shows how busy the cold had been
while I slept. The storm window is filled with jagged, deliriously crooked
strokes of ice that point in every direction.

Were the windowpane a compass, and were I to follow its directions, I’d be
lost.

Hopelessly and forever lost.

Out beyond this pane, where I cannot see, I know that the maples and oaks
are bare in the darkness, their limbs and branches holding tightly to the secret
of spring as if their lives—as if the existence of everyone—depended on it.

I remember last night, standing out in the cold, filling my lungs with its
freezing and the darkness with my breath.

I remember the night before and the night before that.

I remember all of the nights put together as if they were all one long, never-
ending night.

I remember the stars making the night sky look like it was breaking out in a
rash of ice.

And I wondered if one day I would fall through the ice into the sky.

Or somewhere else.

I sit here by the window now, looking at the stained glass cross that is hanging from the window latch; its green and orange, its yellow, blue and purple declare all that the darkness tries to hide in its cold silence.

And I know one thing for certain: when the sun rises, the light will shine toward me, into the frost and through the cross, in the straightest possible line.

With that truth deep in my heart, I suddenly see the miraculous beauty of the frost painted across my windowpane, lit up by the candlelight, the artist all around me, showing me the blooms of winter.