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Wild Hope: Prayers and Poems (Book Review)

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Abstract

Reviewed Title: *Wild Hope: Prayers and Poems* by John Terpstra. Toronto, Ontario: The St. Thomas Poetry Series, 2020. 95 pp. ISBN: 9781928095040.

Keywords

book review, Wild Hope, prayers, poems, John Terpstra

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

Online access to book review: <https://reformedjournal.com/wild-hope-prayers-and-poems/>

Wild Hope: Prayers and Poems (Book Review)

Some poetry collections are best read in one sitting so the connections between the poems and the overarching narrative are clear, but that is not the case with John Terpstra's collection *Wild Hope: Prayers and Poems*. This collection functions more like a book of daily prayer than a traditional poetry collection, and in fact, many of the poems included were originally intended for liturgies and worship services. The reader would be best served picking the book up daily to read and pray one of the poems.

Terpstra, a Canadian poet and retired cabinet maker, makes extensive use of the gospels as source material for many of the poems. There is "Martha's Trouble" (Luke 10:40), "A Prayer for Stepping Out of the Boat" (Matthew 14:25), and "Jesus in the Garden Tomb" (Mark 14:51). Further demonstrating this volume's use in liturgy, there are prayers and poems for many points in the church calendar including "Donkey People Prayer" for Palm Sunday, "A Prayer for Easter's Song and Dance," and "In the Manger of our Hearts," which comes with musical notation so it can be prayed or sung in corporate worship. When working in the nebulous area between poem and prayer, there is a danger that the poem will be consumed by the idea and sentiment, and the image will be lost, but time after time Terpstra effectively and efficiently crafts a poem that allows the idea and the image to co-exist in a meaningful way. The poems flow naturally from a life tuned to see God's work in all things, and while the volume includes calls to repentance, songs of lament, and odes to the beauty of creation, it is light on its feet, always ready with a play on words or a clever turn of phrase. And maybe most importantly in the midst of poems about pandemic life, the brokenness of creation, and the abounding love of God, Terpstra never takes himself too seriously—a helpful and humbling reminder for all those who pray these poems.