

1. JUST TO BE HERE

Isn't it good
Isn't it good
Isn't it good just to be here

Isn't it good
Isn't it good
Isn't it good just to be here

Feeling the wind
Feeling the wind
Isn't it good just to be here

Feeling the wind
Right on your skin
Isn't it good just to be here

Doo . . . just to be here
La . . . just to be here

Seeing the sky
Beautiful sky
Isn't it good just to be here

Seeing the sky
So blue and so high
Isn't it good just to be here

Isn't it good
Isn't it good
Isn't it good just to be here

Isn't it good
Isn't it good
Isn't it good just to be here
. . . just to be here
. . . just to be here

2. MAYBE I WAS DREAMING

I remember how the sun looked
On a Lake Superior shore
With a wind too cold for August
Anywhere

And the pine trees stood like old men
Remembering a war, their
Bareness like a badge that said:
You should have seen the winters
We have known—but

Maybe I was dreaming
Maybe I was dreaming

I still can see the island
In a little inland lake
On a moonlit night in winter's
Magic hold

How it glistened with more diamonds
Than this world could ever make
And I found myself asking if they
Came from some mine
Beyond the snow—but

Maybe I was dreaming
Maybe I was dreaming—or
Maybe that was a waking
In a long, long sleep
Maybe that was a waking
In a long, long sleep

3. LAKE WATERS

Lake waters are dusky brown
Because of all the wind that we've been having
Then comes a message of another one down,
Another life too soon passing

And I'm here standing on the shore
Above, it's grey to the horizon
Trying to remember all the light in
The sky above these clouds

Lake waters churn and pound
Wave after wave against the rocks at shoreline
Three thousand people is the new daily count
Three thousand lost not in war-time

And Nero plays his violin
Wants not to know the city's burning
Wants not to know it'll all keep turning
Whether he's there at all

(Instrumental)

And I'm here standing on the shore
Above, it's grey to the horizon
Trying to remember all the light in
The sky above these clouds

4. ALABAMA SKIES

She said she saw the sky
It seemed so very strange
The way the clouds were forming
How rapidly they changed

And then they came together
And she thought it so odd
That she found herself thinking
Looked like the arms of God

And I don't understand
So much of what I've seen
One moment there's such beauty
And all seems so serene
And then it comes with such fury
That it's hard to visualize
How it was before the storms came
Out of Alabama skies

It's hard to comprehend
When someone has lost
A sister and her grandkids
How you count the cost

Clinging to an image
So deep and so broad
That somehow they're flying
Into the arms of God

And I don't understand
So much of what I've seen
How it comes out of nowhere
And changes everything
But I will remember
And try to see with Sadie's eyes
How it was before the storms came
(What she saw before . . .)
Out of Alabama skies

5. LIKE A TREE

(Lyrics based on Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Blessed is the one
Who trusts in the Lord
Blessed is the one
Whose hope is the Lord

Blessed is the one
Who trusts in the Lord
Whose hope is the Lord
The Lord

(Refrain)

(S)he is like a tree
Planted beside the water
Like a tree
Planted beside the water

Sending its roots out to the stream
Fearing not the heat when it comes
Leaves stay green
Bearing fruit
Even so
Even so

6. HIROSHIMA

It was late at night
When I walked outside
Where I stood I could see the city lights
How they did shine

And I thought of that day
In a place far away
Where the morning light flashed with
another light
In a city like mine

And I heard the cries of the children
Their bodies all burned and broken
And their skin hanging down
like rags—I wanted to cry out
Never again
Never again

(Refrain)

Hiroshima
In your wounds and in your burns
Are warnings we must not ignore
And lessons we must learn
May our Father
Who created us and you
Both forgive us for the wrong we did
And shield us from a new
Hiroshima

It was afternoon
In a high school room
When the principal made
the announcement
We were frozen in time

And it came quite clear
It could happen right here
When fear and mistrust come to govern
Over reason and rhyme

And I know we were close to
the edge then
We're walking mighty close to
the edge now
And the chance to turn around might
be a brief one
Let it begin
Let it begin

(Refrain)

7. NOT ALONE

We are huddled, hidden, harbored
Hunkered in our homes
We walk out into the sunlight that bears
Healing to our bones
Though we walk without the choices
That we have always known
We're reminded; believing
We do not walk alone
In the sunlight, in the grieving
We are not alone

People failing, falling, frightened
Frantic just to breathe
Visited by an unwelcome guest
They cannot get to leave and who wants to
Take them to a dangerous shore
But standing in between
Are the people working bravely
To keep them from the sea
Working hard and trying bravely
To keep them from the sea

(Refrain)

Come, oh come now
Come, oh come now
Come, oh come
Come, oh come now
Come, oh come now
Come, oh come

Though we walk without the choices
That we have always known
We're reminded; believing
We do not walk alone
In the sunlight, in the grieving
We are not alone

(Refrain)

8. OKLAHOMA

Don't you cry for me now
Don't cry for me
I'll be all right in time
You'll see

These winds that have torn us
They do leave their scars
But we've always come back
So far

Oklahoma—all right
Oklahoma—okay
But I know that you won't mind
If we pray for you, Oklahoma

Don't you cry for me now
Don't cry for me
We'll find our way somehow
Maybe

To some better place where
The wind and the rain
Again sweep more gently
Our plain

Oklahoma—all right
Oklahoma—okay
But I know that you won't mind
If we pray for you, Oklahoma

9. PRAYING ON THE PORCH

A son whose life ended much too early
No way to make sense of or explain
A mother's grief is its own journey
Down corridors of numbing pain
But then she gathers people with her
Some bound by blood but all by love
With prayer and song in all kinds
of weather

Glimpses of
What love does

(Refrain)

Praying on the porch
Cars going by on Ridge Avenue
Praying on the porch
In the morning
People come by ones or two's
You would not think but it's a holy crew
Oh, praying on the porch
Oh, praying on the porch

We see in a mirror dimly
But some day face to face
We know in part in the mystery
As we learn to embrace
And then to refrain from embracing
Holding on and letting go
While faith and hope and love are
tracing
In our soul
In our soul

(Refrain)

10. SIT HERE BESIDE ME

Come and sit here beside me
I know there's much yet to do
But there's the setting sun
Touching the colors with
Something like velvet
And then gone

Come—the cicadas are singing
Bathing the world in sound
And there's the faintest breeze
Brushing the trees under
Swallows like dancers
Taking bows

(Refrain)

Oh, late summer's own
sweetness

Oh, moving on toward
completeness now

Come and sit, then we'll wander
Up 'neath the open sky
Watching the clouds as they
Mystically change
In a movement so subtle
Night from day

(Refrain)

Oh, let us savor the
sweetness

Oh, moving on toward
completeness now

Come and sit here beside me . . .

11. TWO PILGRIMS ON THE BEACH

I met him on the beach
In 1971
Nineteen and seventy-one
With the moon on the water
And we talked about the world
And I told him how I'd come
I told him how I'd come
No more to wander

He had come to Lauderdale
Looking for his son
Looking for his son
Who was my age or younger
Who had drifted away
To a strange and distant drum
And I thought I knew the drum
And I knew the drummer

(Refrain)

We sat and watched the waves
Two pilgrims on the beach
Two pilgrims on the beach
And the moon filled the water
And I told him what I could
But there was much beyond my reach
And I saw a different piece
To being a father

And I saw he blamed himself
And his pain was running deep
His pain was running deep
But he was not running from it
And he saw that all he had
Was hardly worth the keep
To give it all would be cheap
And he'd have done it

(Refrain)

We sat and watched the waves
Two pilgrims on the beach
Two pilgrims on the beach
And the moon filled the water
And I hope he found his son
Out there beyond the breach
And I hope that he could reach
And find a father

And I saw a different piece
To being a father

12. COME, HIDDEN WISDOM

(Lyrics by Malcolm Guite)*

I cannot think unless I have been thought,
Nor can I speak unless I have been spoken.
I cannot teach except as I am taught,
Or break the bread except as I am broken.

O Mind behind the mind through which I seek,
O Light within the light by which I see,
O Word beneath the words with which I speak,
O founding, unfound Wisdom, finding me,

O sounding Song whose depth is sounding me,
O Memory of time, reminding me,
My Ground of Being, always grounding me,
My Maker's Bounding Line, defining me,

Come, hidden Wisdom, come with all you bring,
Come to me now, disguised as everything.

* "O Sapientia," from *Sounding the Seasons*, Canterbury Press, 2012. Used by permission of the poet.

Dedication

Jim:

Life is precious. The making of this album was tragically interrupted by the sudden death of my dear friend and fellow Reunion Vocal Band member, Steve Walker, killed in a random act of gun violence by a stranger. Steve has assisted with his guitar and production skills on many of my recordings extending back into the '90s and was doing so with this one. Our musical and personal interactions and Steve's quirky sense of humor were energizing for me, and I valued his ability to inject a different slant, to hear things I might not hear. When Steve, Dean Clemmer, and I gathered in late 2019 at Dean's home in Lancaster, PA, putting finishing touches on several songs, we had no idea it would be our last time making music together. (Though Dean continued to contribute his fine work throughout the album.)

But I am more grateful than I can say to have Steve present herein, from his playful guitar work on "Just to Be Here" to "Praying on the Porch" and EBow on "Hiroshima" and on and on. Fortunately, Doug Jones, longtime friend and bandmate, was able to help me push this across the finish line, even while fighting personal health battles. He joins me in dedicating this album to Steve's memory.

Doug:

For me, the release of this album is bittersweet. I was supposed to co-produce this with Steve Walker who was taken from us far too soon. I feel cheated. We would have agreed and disagreed passionately over how best to present Jim's music, and I would have emerged the better for it. Still, his artistry is present on many of these tracks, and for that I am grateful. Thank you, Steve.

On a positive note, for me this album was a gift of life. We worked on it during my journey with cancer. Through chemo,

radiation, surgery, more chemo, and all the accompanying physical and emotional side effects, this album gave me a purpose and a focus, and Jim's music reached me like never before. Thank you, Jim, for the gift of your music and the gift of your friendship.

Song Notes

Just to Be Here—Written during a personal retreat at the beautiful Christ in the Wilderness Hermitage and Retreat Center (CITWRetreat.com).

Maybe I Was Dreaming—Memories of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Lake Waters—Along with **Not Alone**, one of my two "Covid" songs.

Alabama Skies—I served with American Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care for several years. This song was written during my deployment to Alabama following the 2011 spring tornadoes, **Oklahoma** during my deployment after 2013 tornadoes.

Like a Tree—I have been blessed with several "Radical Elders" in my life, especially at Reba Place Church, who modeled true Christian life for me.

Hiroshima—John Hersey's book of that title impacted me deeply, plumbing some of the awful consequences of our country's use of the nuclear bomb on civilians.

Verse 2 alludes to my remembrance during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when we came ever so close to nuclear war.

Not Alone—See **Lake Waters**, above.

Oklahoma—I was having a hard time with all the suffering. One day I managed to get some time at a Community College where I was allowed to use one of their practice pianos. This song poured out. See **Alabama Skies**, above.

Praying on the Porch—Some close friends lost their 19-year-old son, youngest of eight, in a tragic accident. But Billy's life continues to reverberate.

Sit Here Beside Me—Janalee and I have

now shared life for more than 50 years; this song offers a reflection.

Two Pilgrims on the Beach—In 1971, HOPE, the band I was in, played in Fort Lauderdale during the "spring break" when thousands of college kids descended on that town. We were the one band allowed to play on the beach. This song tells of an encounter I had.

Come, Hidden Wisdom—I was deeply moved by Malcolm Guite's poem/prayer, and this music came forth and seemed to fit; the poet fortunately agreed.

Credits

Jim Croegaert: all lead vocals, some vocal parts; piano; organ; harmonium; electronic keyboards

Dean Clemmer: steel guitar 3,4,6,10; acoustic guitar 2,3,4,6,10; electric guitar 4

Doug Jones: bass guitar 1,3,4,5,7,9,10; vocal part 11

John Wiebe: guitar quartet 11

Steve Walker: electric guitar 1,3 (with EBow),9

Michael Reece: drums 1; shaker 9

Janalee Croegaert: vocal parts 7,9,10

Josh Croegaert: bass 4

Josh Quirk: drums 4

Robert Guenther: string arrangement 6; violin 6

Nura Aly: violin 6

Steve Leib: cello 6

Produced by: **Doug Jones** and **Steve Walker**
Mixed by: **Doug Jones**

Recorded at / Engineered by:
Steve Yates Recording, Morton Grove IL / **Steve Yates Pogo Studio**, Champaign IL / **Mark Rubel Tone Zone**, Chicago IL / **Roger Heiss**

Photography and design: **Tim Lowly**
Layout and design: **Dave Jackson**

All songs © 2021 Rough Stones Music, 827 Monroe St., Evanston IL 60202 (RoughStonesMusic.com). This record © Rough Stones Music.