

As I've walked through my life's hardest times, the poppies have been there with me.

Two years ago, I took my first hike into the orange-clad hills behind my home. My body and soul were recovering from the hardest year I had ever experienced. The hike was strenuous, but the beauty around me beckoned my feet to climb and my heart to sing. God scatters beauty into His creation in abundance. Who could examine every petal of every flower in these hills? Yet each is a perfect work of art, waiting to be beheld by us, the finest of his creatures.

The beauty that surrounded me was a salve for my soul. It filled me in a way that healed and hurt. John Piper writes of the ache we feel when we stand at the edge of the chasm between the splendor of reality and the finitude of our own minds. One way to treat that ache is to write a poem. For the first time since my childhood, that night, I did.

In a year, the next poppy season came. This time, I viewed the blooms from a distance, riding along the freeway. Their new life was writ large across the Southern California landscape. Mine was evident in a heart that grew from pain to love more deeply. New life also sat beside me in a car seat, incarnate as a newborn boy.

Yesterday, I climbed the hills in search of my poppies yet again. My husband climbed beside me, our son strapped to his chest. Another year has turned him into a little boy with things to do and words to say. His voice cut the quietness of wind on grass, reminding me that the beauty of life isn't just in the hills, but in my home.

The Bible talks about signposts. These are places, things, or people that serve as a marker of God's faithfulness to us. For me, the poppies are a signpost. Every year, no matter how bleak the winter was, the spring comes and life can start again. In the same way, even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I don't need to fear. My Savior is with me, to comfort and guide me.

Because I walk with Him, new life is always in me—and the first bloom of spring is always just around the corner.