

Praise for **GLORY, TOO**

“Here are poems that come from within the soul.

Nikki Grimes is not just a disciple and believer, she is the voice of the beloved. Her work points the reader in the direction of salvation. One will shout hallelujah or quietly say amen when turning the pages of *Glory, Too*. After reading the poetry of Nikki Grimes one has a strong desire to go out into the world and spread the good news.”

—E. Ethelbert Miller, writer and literary activist,
2023 Grammy Nominee in the category of spoken word and poetry

“Nikki Grimes’ poems are like a magnifying glass held up to the Scriptures, helping us see more closely and clearly. They are like a prism, revealing colors previously hidden to our busy eyes. They call us to align ourselves with a holy direction. In one poem she invites us to ‘say yes to the jewel that is Jesus,’ and by the end of the collection my heart was overflowing with this yes.”

—Christine Valters Paintner, PhD, Online Abbess of Abbey of the Arts and author of more than 20 books on the contemplative path

“Author C. S. Lewis insisted that a good poet doesn’t say, ‘look at me’; a good poet says ‘look at that’—and points. This is exactly what Nikki Grimes has done in this collection. Get ready to see things in the Scriptures that you’ve never noticed before. Patterns and metaphors, images and insights, the tiny, tiny seed in the fertile soil of your heart. Nikki is a wayfinder, my friends. Don’t miss the invitation to join her on the journey.”

—Sarah Arthur, author of *Between Midnight and Dawn: A Literary Guide to Prayer for Lent, Holy Week, and Eastertide*

“Devotional, emotional and crystalline, the poems of Nikki Grimes’ *Glory, Too* are thoughtful meditations on important Biblical verses. Her poetry will excite young readers still absorbing the beauty and the messages of the Bible, but it will also make longtime students of the Bible see familiar passages with a fresh eye.”

—A. M. Juster, poet, author of *Wonder and Wrath*

Glory, Too

Poems

Nikki Grimes



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For Kendall Buchanan, the brother of my heart

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CONTENTS

SPRING

Worship Walking	9
Allegiance	10
Harmonious	11
Math Mystery	12
X-Ray Vision	13
Rebel Rabbi	15
Kryptonite	17
Where Meaning Resides	18
Conundrum	20
Paradox on Parade	22
Glimpse of Glory	24
Familiar	26
The Dawn of Despair	28
Jewel	30
Cocky	32
Reverence	34
Source	35
Fool's Errand	36
Shadowed Perspective	38
Angel Talk	39
Holy Architecture	40
Trouble Makers	41
Woman Calling	43
Unvarnished Healing	44
Proof	46
Bones to Pick	48
Dark Torches	50
The Problem of Evil	52

SUMMER

Wading In	57
Greed	58
Infinite Surprise	59
Daily Delusions	60
Waiting for the Word	62
Divine Adventure	64
Haiti	66
High Style	68
Fish Fry	70
Road Trip	72
On the Way	74
Summer Blockbuster	75
Renovation	76
Relentless	78
Potter's Business	80
Clever Choices	81
Pursuit of Peace	82
Looking for the Exit	83
Broken	84
Noah Spins	85

FALL

Imaginary Numbers	89
Particular Perfection	91
Hold Hope	93
Words and Will	95
Jenga	96
Eden Tells Us	97
Sound the Trumpet	99
Neighborly	101
In Search of Wiggle Room	102
Flip the Switch	104
Conflicting Comforts	105
The Real	106
Sturdy Steed	107
Ambush	109
Reputation	110
Scarred Service	112
Zacchaeus	114
Abide	116
Attentive	117
To Hear Paul Tell It	118
Whatever	119
Our Hunger Satisfied	121

WINTER

Strength Is Ours	125
Word	126
Weaponry	128
School Is In	130
Heavenly Haute Couture	131
Consequential Choices	132
Mystical Moments	134
A Magi Speaks	136
Nazareth Surprise	137
No Damascus Road	138
The Glory Story	139
Human Wisdom	140
Purpose	141
Seed	143
Priestly Profession	145
Reality Check	147
Under Reconstruction	148
How's My Driving?	150
Unfair Trade	151
No Apology	152
Searching for Amen	154
Tender Mercies	156

SPRING

Worship Walking

The word “worship”
trips so easily off the tongue.
I worship. You worship.
We worship together.
What could be better?
But worship is weightier,
never confined to the harmonies
of hymns wafting in the rafters
of the meeting house,
or swaying to the rhythms of the choir
when the whole congregation
is lost in the lyrics
of grace and salvation.
True worship is
sanctifying ourselves,
sacrificing our bodies,
submitting our hearts and minds
for total transformation,
by God. For God.
He’s the only one able
to perform such
complex conversions.
Our part is to let him,
which is easier said than done.
Our wills always
get in the way.
So where do we begin?
By breathing this in:
Worship is living into
“I surrender all.”

Romans 12:1–2

Allegiance

False gods and false prophets
run rampant in the world,
their tongues comfortably curled
around the latest lies.
Their motives may defy our logic,
but God's truth rests
with those spirits who confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord.
And what is confession?
Words without weight,
or a life lived as witness
to the Son, the Holy one, the Christ?
In today's vernacular,
confession is
the reluctant acknowledgment
of guilt, of sin,
of that for which
we are ashamed.
But we who test the spirits by the Spirit,
who rightly divide the word of truth
lived and spoken by
the Carpenter-King—
we are not ashamed, or reluctant.
We are workmen and women
prepared to give a reason
for the hope that is within us.
We declare our allegiance to the Lord
for we cannot begin
to live or love like him
otherwise.

1 John 4:1-6

Harmonious

John was confounded when the Lord
presented himself at the river Jordan
alongside those whose souls
were desperate for cleansing.
But in one sense, I suppose
it was a small thing
to be buried in the waters of baptism
when burial in a tomb was not far off,
and both would end by rising
Beloved Son,
the sinless One,
the Lord of all.
A humble act
for the King of Glory,
just one more way
to stand with humanity,
to climb into our skin
as if our sins were his own—
a servant to the end.
No wonder the Father was pleased.
Is it too much, then, that we
Gentiles of every hue and nation,
who celebrate the nonpartisan
Good News of God's great gift,
should be called to live lives
in harmony with Him,
and to sing together
Hallelujah?

Matthew 3:13–17, Acts 10:34–43

Math Mystery

Mark and the other insiders
kept a careful catalog
of the Lord's provision.
Four thousand fed here,
five thousand fed there.
Even so, they eventually
lost count
You might as well
try to tally
the grains of sand
that edge the sea
as track the Lord's
miraculous provision.
After all,
Jehovah-Jireh is
his middle name.
Yet, the minute need
rings our doorbell,
we stare down at
our empty hands,
rather than look
to the God-man
who holds the pitcher of plenty,
ready to pour it out
should any believer ask.
Blind as we can be,
I wonder when we
will finally understand
that little is much
in God's hand.

Mark 8:14–26

X-Ray Vision

“Keep your eye on the curtain,”
says the magician,
and while we do,
he cleverly disappears.
The ruse works every time
because we trust what we see.
But God reminds us,
that’s not the half of it.
More than magician,
God sees into our hearts
and far into the future
he, alone, created.
Hide and seek was never
a game for the Lord,
as Philip learned.
Jesus said, “Follow me,”
and the new disciple headed out
to spread the word, keen to share it
with one Nathanael, who Jesus saw
before Philip ever found him.
“Where did you get to know me?”
asked Nathanael, mistaking Jesus
for someone with limits.
And even when he realized
Jesus was God and King,
he failed to see the future greatness
God had in mind to do.
Like me and you,
Nathanael was too focused
on the mystery of that moment.

But not to worry.
Jesus says, “Keep your eye on me.
In good time,
all will be revealed.”

John 1:43-51

Rebel Rabbi

Thirsty for conversation,
Jesus goes to the well,
engages the woman there
in a lengthy chat
—a spiritual faux-pas—
a Jew talking up a Samaritan,
and a woman at that!
“I’ll trade you a spring of living water
for a drink from the well,” he says.
Seeing Jesus without pail or bucket,
she snickers a bit,
wondering exactly how
he plans to perform the magic trick
of lifting water from a well.
“Are you greater than
our ancestor Jacob
who gave us this well?” she asks,
her question rhetorical.
But this stranger from Galilee
has answers
she never saw coming.
He shows himself more than seer,
peering into the secrets
of her past and present,
offers her eternal life,
expounds on true worship,
reveals his divine identity.
Water and well all but forgotten,
the woman shivers
with sudden knowing:
the man before her is

the long-awaited
source of salvation.
The disciples crash the scene,
aghast to find their Rabbi
conversing with
a lowly Samaritan,
(a woman at that).
But Jesus brushes off
their unasked questions
to share a word or two with them
about true hunger and food,
about his Father's work,
about the harvest of souls
that awaits.
He leaves in his wake
a Samaritan woman
spreading the good news
of Messiah come to save us all.
When last did we have
a conversation so sacred?

John 4:5-42

Kryptonite

Superman is not without
his weaknesses.
The burning blade of Kryptonite
whittles away his strength
and for all his super-sight,
his keen eyes cannot
see through lead.
Maybe that's what
prejudice is made of.
We encounter our Samaritans,
those certain races or religions
we label as "other"
and we go blind,
unable to see heart or hurt.
But Jesus sees.
Love is all the X-ray vision
he needs to peer past
walls of difference,
to see through sin
and points of shame,
the vulnerability
of hunger or thirst
to offer us the water of life
we never knew
we were desperate for.
Then, like the woman
at the well, we are free
to dismantle our own fears
of "the other,"
take the holy cup
we've been given
and pass it on.

John 4:5-42

Where Meaning Resides

The night visitor let Jesus know
he was in on the secret.
“Rabbi, I see who you are,”
said Nicodemus. But did he?
“To see the kingdom of God,
you must be born from above” —
this mystery from a man
who routinely spoke in riddles.
Unlike his parables,
there was not even
a sliver of story here to grasp.
Retracing one’s journey
from womb to world
is beyond even the realm of
Once upon a time.
Yet, Jesus was never one
to mince a word, or waste it.
Nicodemus quickly surmised
there must be meaning,
but where did it reside?
High up in the region of spirit
where the Almighty lives.
Jesus holds the key to the code.
Come closer, he coaxes.
Only then can we focus
through the telescope of his eye
to decipher divine mystery and
crack open the door of heaven.
You must be born
of water and spirit.
Yes! we say, rising
from baptismal waters.

“Of course!” we affirm,
welcoming the Holy Spirit.
But where must even
a Pharisee begin?
“Father, forgive me,
for I have sinned.”

John 3:1–7

Conundrum

The darkness of night seems
somehow appropriate
for all things ethereal,
celestial, otherworldly.
A perfect time for Nicodemus
to venture into consultation
with the Rabbi
about eternal life
and the best way to breach
the kingdom of God.
The rabbi's unexpected answer
led Nicodemus to contemplate
the humanly impossible:
all six feet of him
crawling back into
his mother's womb,
the reverse journey
through the birth canal
bloodier than the first,
his poor mother
savagely ripped in half
before even this
imaginary journey
could reach its conclusion.
Baffled, Nicodemus shook
his tired head.
"How can anyone be born
after having grown old?
Can one enter a second time
into his mother's womb
and be born?"

A fair question
for a finite mind.
But the rabbi expounded
on a transformational truth
sculpted by the Infinite,
a birth fashioned
of water and spirit
wrought in the womb of God,
an upward journey
through the birth canal
from Earth to Heaven,
the loving arms of Jesus
waiting to catch the reborn,
waiting to guide each one
into this new life.
Still baffled,
Nicodemus only accepted
this miraculous mystery
when an inner voice whispered,
Don't trust your imagination.
Just believe.
Faith is where
heavenly rebirth
begins.

John 3:1-17

Paradox on Parade

The Mount of Olives,
the site of a small commission
and a necessary obedience:
Two disciples dispatched
to acquire a colt in, shall we say,
a questionable manner.
And soon thereafter, all is set
for a demonstration of
power and humility intertwined.
Here comes our King
who calls the dead to life,
who silences the roiling sea,
who gives sight to the blind
yet doesn't seem to mind
riding atop a borrowed donkey?
A living, breathing paradox,
he willingly enters the scene
of the crime to be.
"Come! Die with me,"
he invites us,
and drunk on the power
we have witnessed, we follow.
But what do we do with the love
that held our Lord to the cross
in blood and agony
he could easily have wiped away
by simply stepping down
and leaving us to pay
for our *own* sins?

How can we begin
to respond to that?
We bow our heads,
our hearts, our knees.

Luke 19:28–40, Philippians 2:5–11

Glimpse of Glory

Death comes in threes, they say
but so does life.
If I understand nothing else
of the Trinity,
that one truth sings.
The Father offers up his son,
full of power and grace;
the Son gathers the called
then sets his face
toward Jerusalem;
and the Holy Spirit makes sure
nothing is lost in translation.
There is no way to understand
the Son without the others—
except in that moment
of supreme despair
when the Son hung there
on the cross, alone,
drenched in sin, and
the Father looked away.
Yet when the Beloved died,
all hope was born for us:
A life of grace
purchased by the Son;
a place at the table of
God's heart, secured;
and a glimpse of glory through
the gift of the Holy Spirit who
guides us along each avenue
marked with suffering
till we reach home.

And so you see, the Trinity
is just that simple—
and mysterious.

John 16:12–15, Romans 5:1–5