



O COME
LET US
ADORE HIM



ADVENT 2022



*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as men of old have sung.
It came, a flow'ret bright, amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.*

LO, HOW A ROSE E'ER BLOOMING



By Brian Wooddell

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Old songs have a way of enchanting us. As they're passed down, they take on the flavor of each culture and time. Christmas is full of such traditions, such as wreaths and garland and Old Saint Nick. None of these would have been seen or heard in a first-century stable in Bethlehem. But these days, they're integral to how we celebrate the season.

That merging of ideas over time—known as syncretism to scholars—is on full display in the carol “Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming,” which has been around since the 16th century. And although it's an amalgamation of theology and folkloric metaphor, it points rather beautifully to the significance of Jesus' birth.

The “men of old” in this text are singing Isaiah. In Chapter 35, the desert rejoices as a flower blooms. The hymn and the King James Version call this a rose; other translations call it a crocus or a narcissus. But in Hebrew, it's a *Panocratium*. Search that in Wikipedia and you'll find a beautiful white flower shooting straight out of the sand.

For the German author of this hymn, sand became winter's frigid snow. But the point stands: In the unlikeliest of situations, with all odds against it, a flower—an eternal flower, at that—blooms.

The flower is, of course, Jesus. He's from the line of Jesse, father of David, as foretold in Isaiah 11. That stem is indeed tender. The Israelites had experienced centuries of trials, persecution and occupation. Jesus made it, though, against all odds.

And therein lies the hope of Christmas: The world can be cold and desolate, whether that looks like desert sand or frozen tundra. Our lives can feel the same way, especially if the past few years have taken an outsized toll.

But like a defiant plant poking its head through the sand, Jesus interrupts our reality, blooming brightly in darkest night.

