A GENTLE PRAYER

I Have Not Looked Away

Before you fall asleep tonight, I want to tell you something true. Not the version of you everyone else sees. The real one.

I know the version of you that shows up in photographs, the one who smiles on command, who says “I'm fine” before anyone even asks. I didn't come for that one tonight. I came for the one underneath.

The one who lies awake replaying things you can't undo. Who has carried a weight so long you started calling it normal.

I see the nights you cried without making a sound, so no one downstairs would hear you. I see the mornings you got up anyway and told no one what it cost you.

You think if people really knew everything, the anger, the doubt, the thing you still haven't forgiven yourself for, they would look at you differently. I already know all of it. And I have not looked away.

Two thousand years ago I said, “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” I didn't say, “Come to me once you've cleaned yourself up first.” I said: come as you actually are.

You don't have to hold it together in front of me. That was never the invitation.

So tonight, just for a moment, put it down. You were never meant to carry it alone. I am with you. I have always been with you.

Rest now. I'll keep watch.

> *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”*
>
> MATTHEW 11:28 (KJV)