

A thousand shades of gray

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Knowing I love the composer Morten Lauridsen, a friend posted Lauridsen's setting of "Sure On This Shining Night" on my Facebook page.

It's a great anthem for the Advent season. I saved it for my morning commute. Appropriately, it was still dark when I listened to it on the train—but listening to it on the train may have been a mistake. This YouTube version moved me to tears, with its beautiful black-and-white photos:

I lament the fact that black-and-white photography seems to be a dying art. I fondly remember spending hours upon hours in my darkroom years ago. Something magical happened there while the processing chemicals slowly brought the images to life, from dark blacks to white whites and a thousand shades of gray in between.

In the digital age, it seems we've been seduced by color. It is as though we want to live only with the vibrant colors of summer, eschewing the subtler tones of a winter landscape. I find good black-and-white photography as alluring and even more seductive than the best color photos.

It strikes me that viewing black-and-white photography is a good discipline during the Advent season, when we're contemplating lightness and darkness.