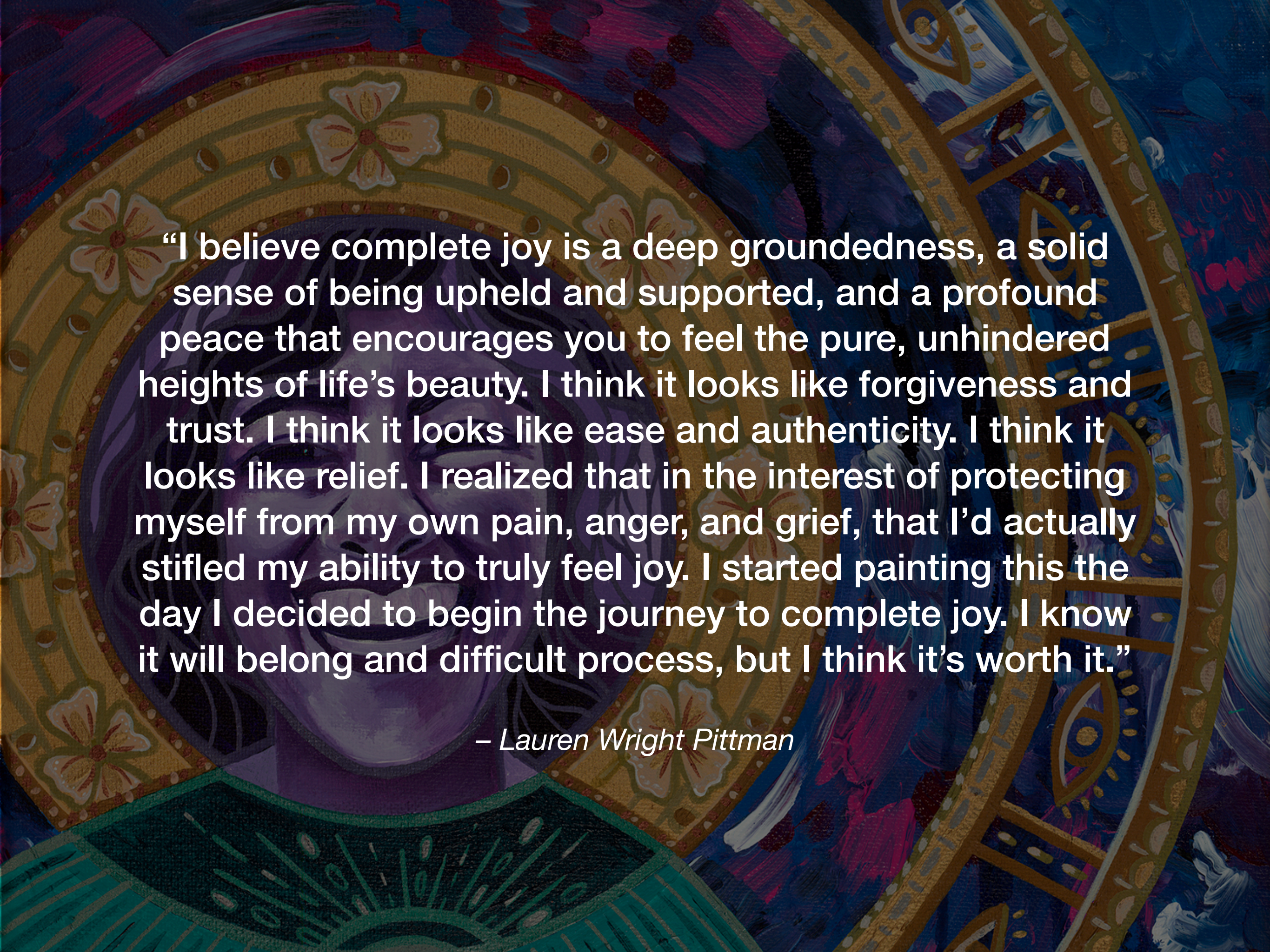




But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;
For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing
And her people for gladness.

Isaiah 65:18





“I believe complete joy is a deep groundedness, a solid sense of being upheld and supported, and a profound peace that encourages you to feel the pure, unhindered heights of life’s beauty. I think it looks like forgiveness and trust. I think it looks like ease and authenticity. I think it looks like relief. I realized that in the interest of protecting myself from my own pain, anger, and grief, that I’d actually stifled my ability to truly feel joy. I started painting this the day I decided to begin the journey to complete joy. I know it will belong and difficult process, but I think it’s worth it.”

– *Lauren Wright Pittman*

Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!

I will praise the LORD while I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Do not trust in princes,
In mortal man, in whom there is no salvation.

His spirit departs, he returns to the earth;
In that very day his thoughts perish.

**How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,
Whose hope is in the LORD his God,**

Who made heaven and earth,
The sea and all that is in them;
Who keeps faith forever;

Who executes justice for the oppressed;
Who gives food to the hungry.
The LORD sets the prisoners free.

The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;
The LORD raises up those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous;

The LORD protects the strangers;
He supports the fatherless and the widow,
But He thwarts the way of the wicked.

The LORD will reign forever,
Your God, O Zion, to all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Psalm 146

In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

Luke 2:8-20

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.” So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Luke 2:8-20

“Who can be astonished at anything, when he has once been astonished at the manger and the cross? What is there wonderful left after one has seen the Saviour? Dear reader, it may be that from the quietness and solitariness of your life, you are scarcely able to imitate the shepherds of Bethlehem, who told what they had seen and heard, but you can, at least, fill up the circle of the worshippers before the throne, by wondering at what God has done.”

-Charles H Spurgeon