

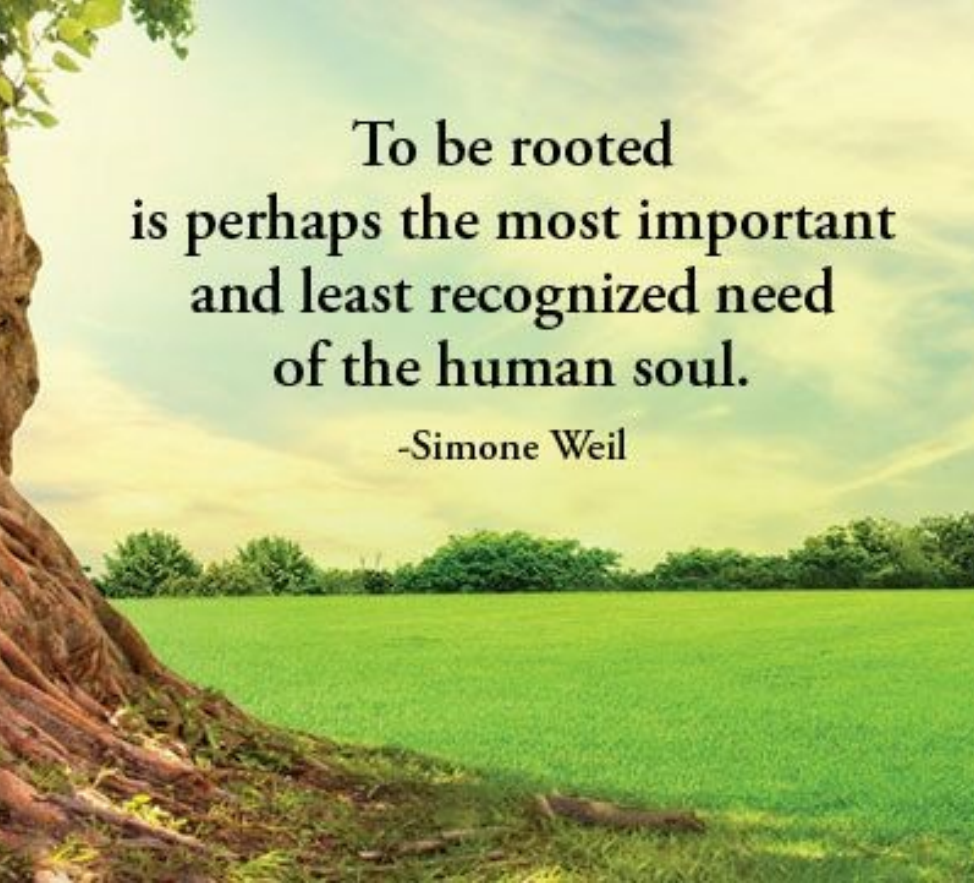


AISGA 2025

Jack Finnegan

preparing for

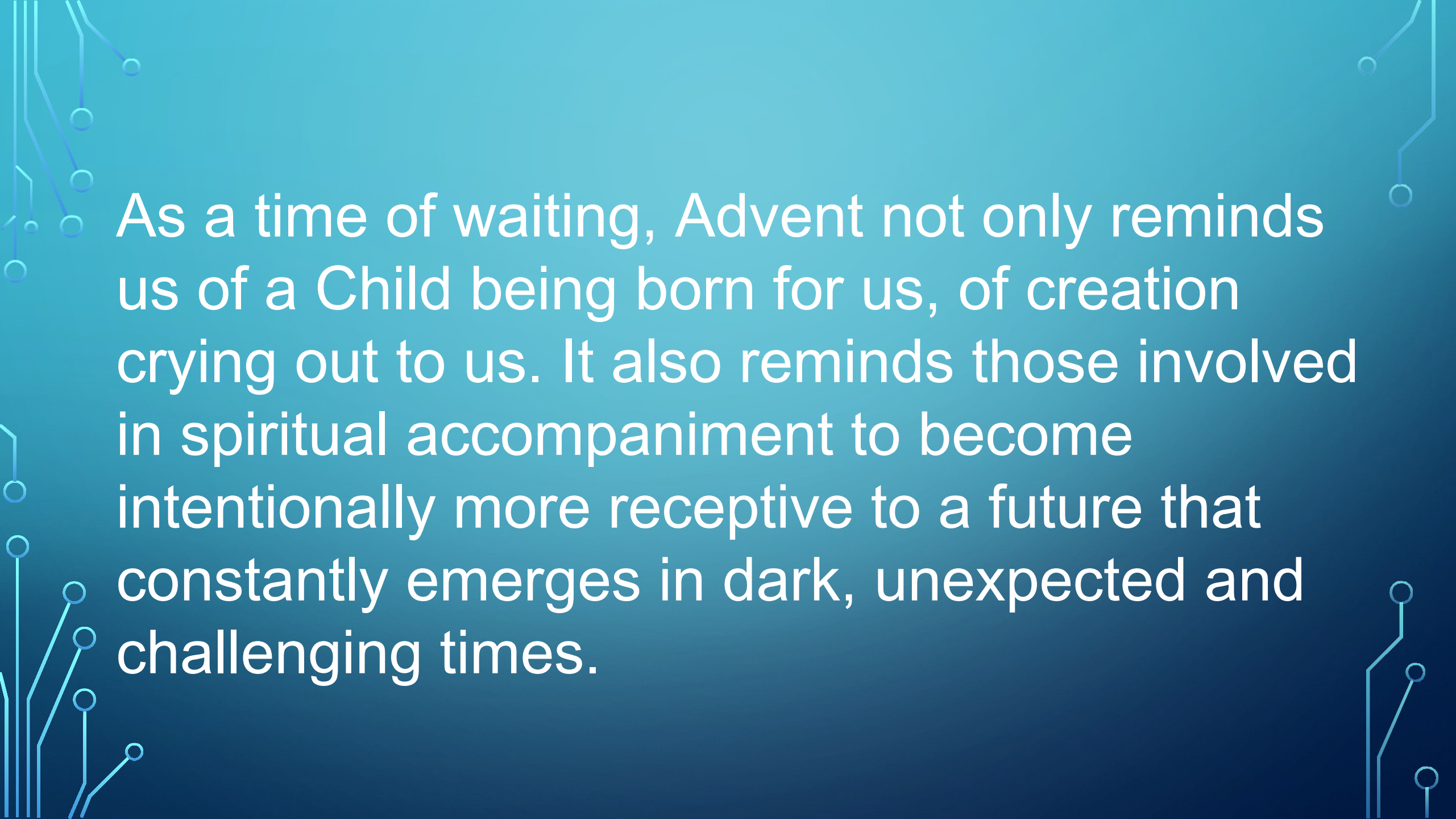
Advent



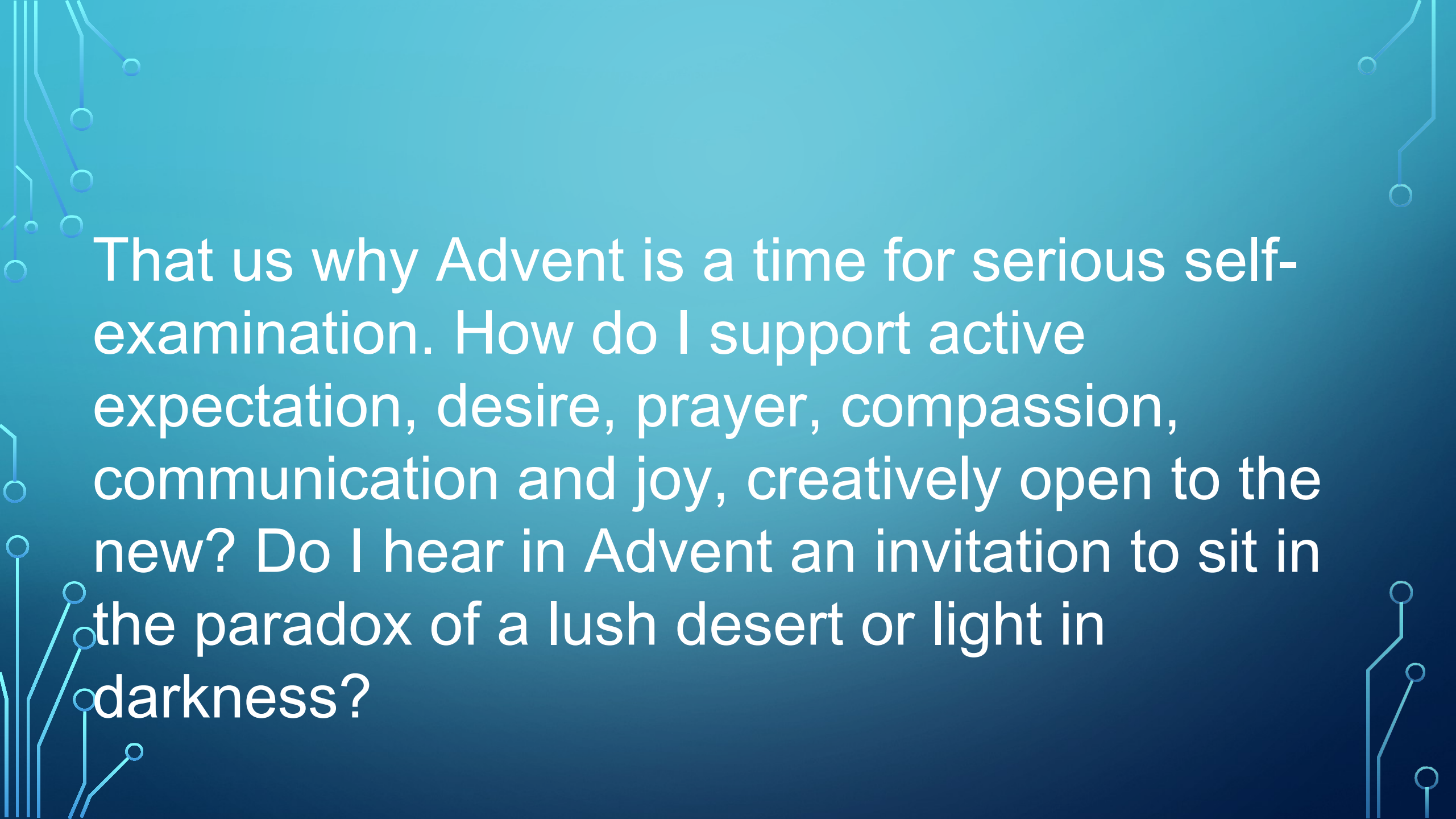
To be rooted
is perhaps the most important
and least recognized need
of the human soul.

-Simone Weil

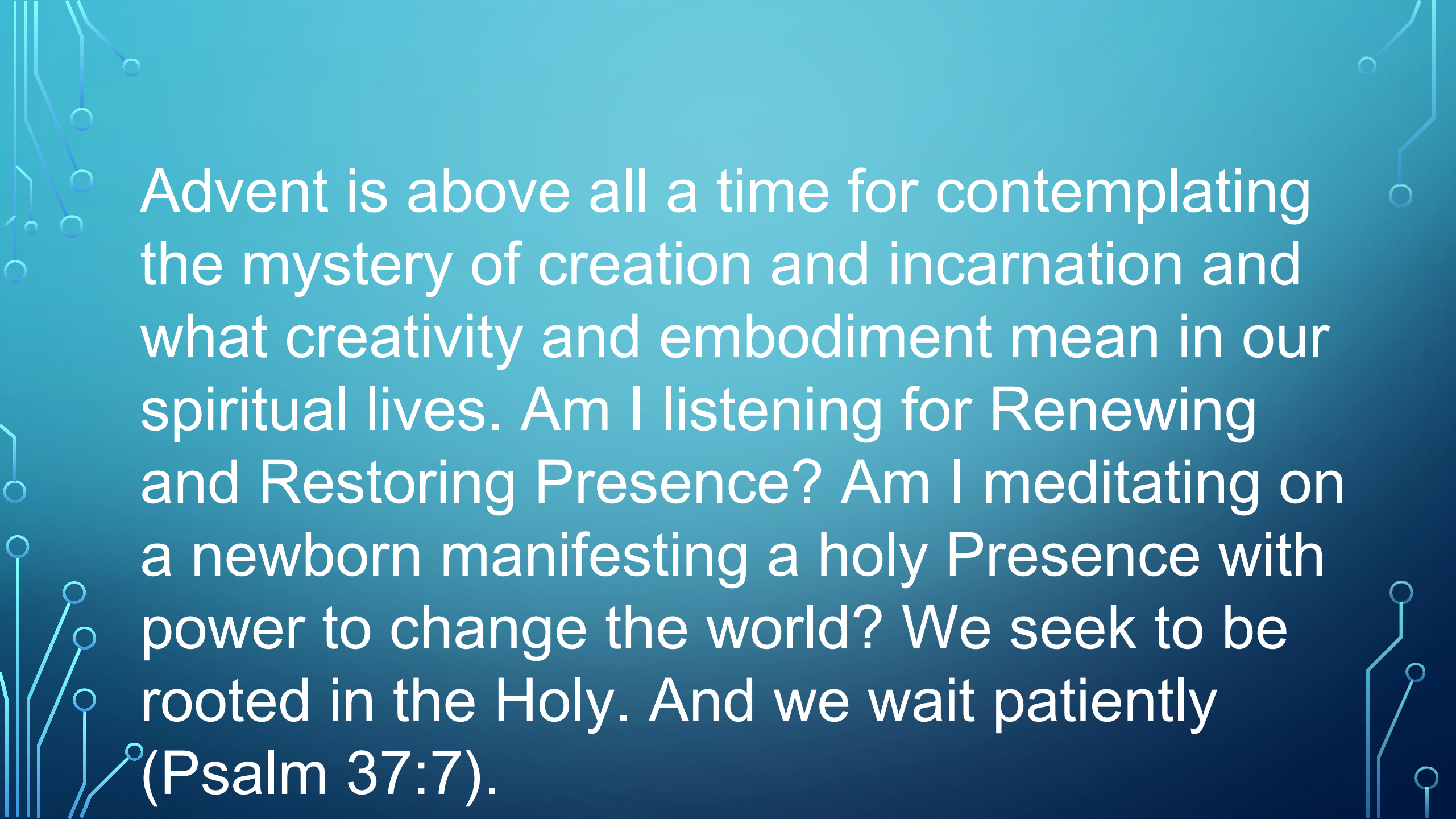
Roots, rootedness and uprootedness form the core of her longest piece of writing (*The Need for Roots*, 1943). How do you see their interplay in spiritual accompaniment as you enter Advent?

The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this background are several thin, light blue lines that resemble circuit traces or a stylized network. These lines are primarily located along the left and right edges of the image, with some extending towards the center. They consist of straight segments connected by small circles, creating a geometric, abstract pattern.

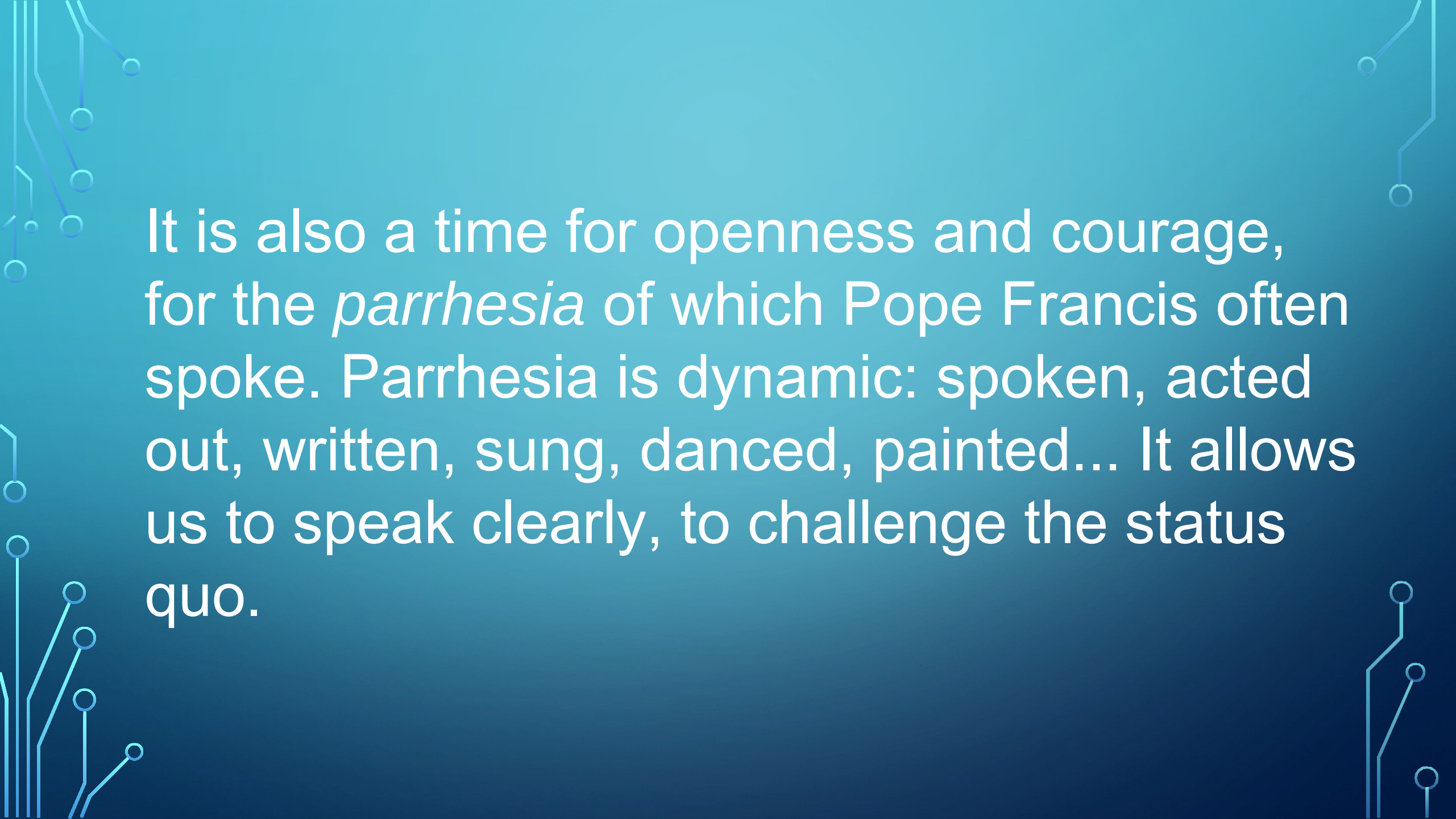
As a time of waiting, Advent not only reminds us of a Child being born for us, of creation crying out to us. It also reminds those involved in spiritual accompaniment to become intentionally more receptive to a future that constantly emerges in dark, unexpected and challenging times.

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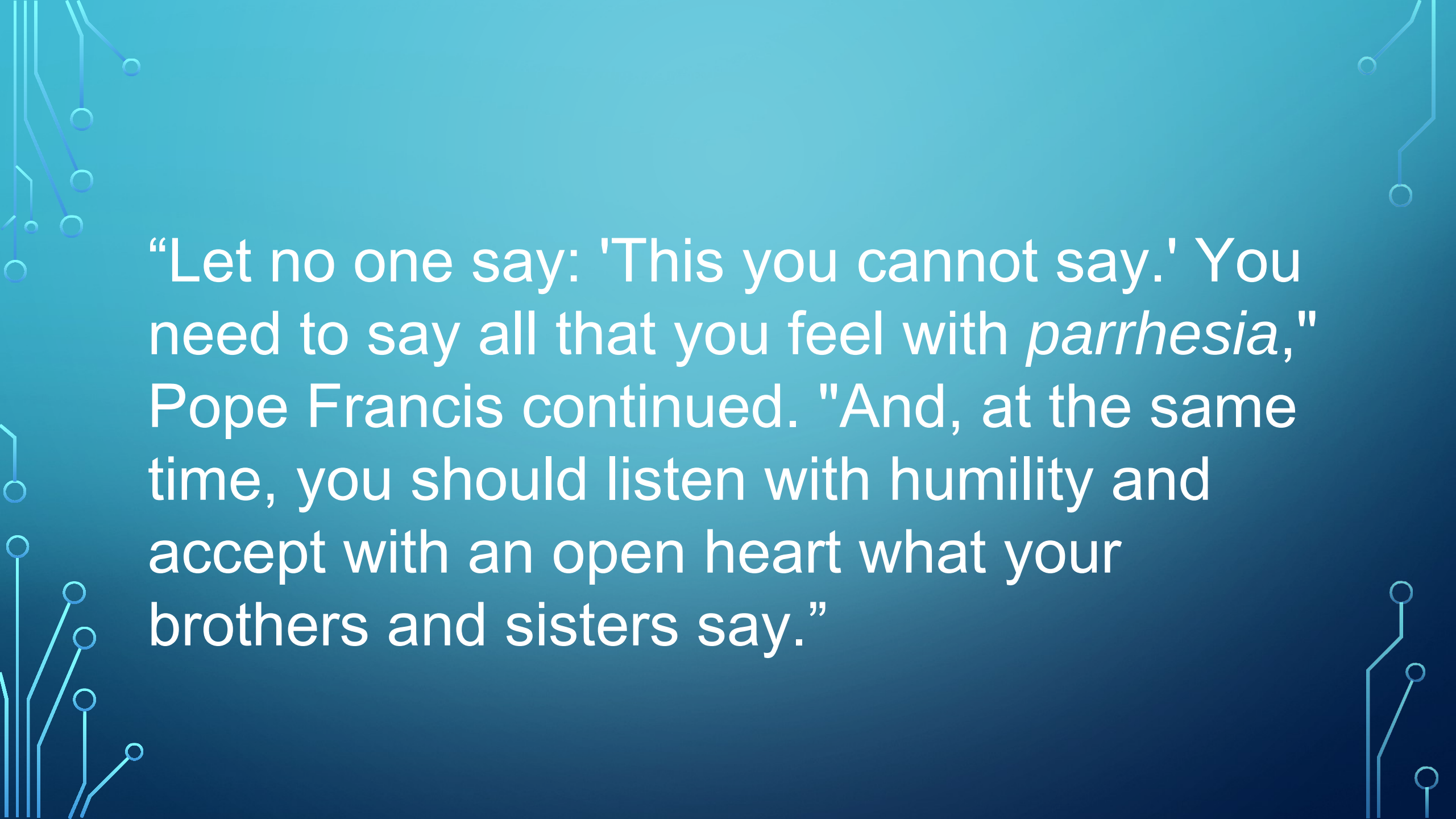
That us why Advent is a time for serious self-examination. How do I support active expectation, desire, prayer, compassion, communication and joy, creatively open to the new? Do I hear in Advent an invitation to sit in the paradox of a lush desert or light in darkness?

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Advent is above all a time for contemplating the mystery of creation and incarnation and what creativity and embodiment mean in our spiritual lives. Am I listening for Renewing and Restoring Presence? Am I meditating on a newborn manifesting a holy Presence with power to change the world? We seek to be rooted in the Holy. And we wait patiently (Psalm 37:7).

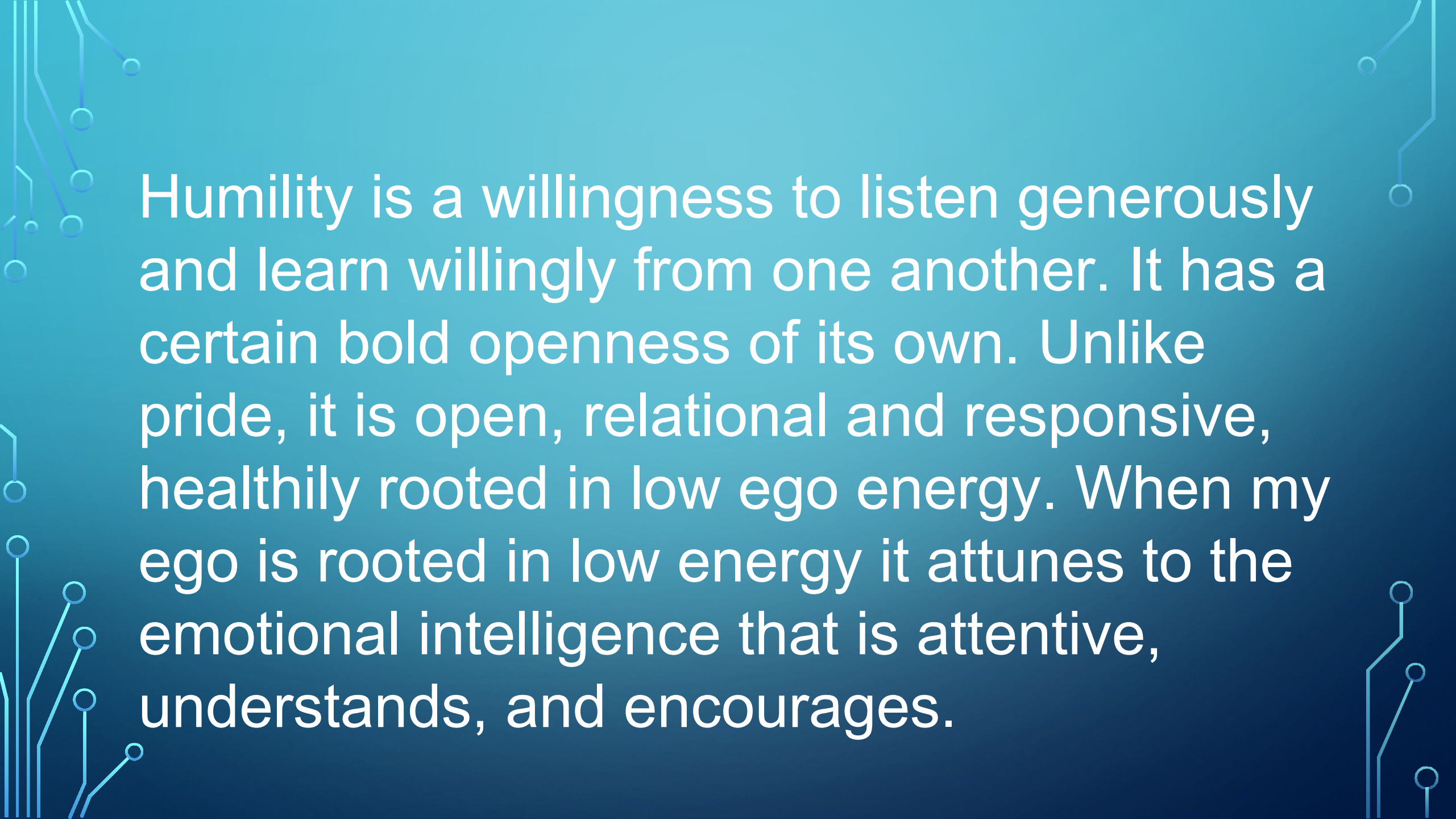
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It is also a time for openness and courage, for the *parrhesia* of which Pope Francis often spoke. Parrhesia is dynamic: spoken, acted out, written, sung, danced, painted... It allows us to speak clearly, to challenge the status quo.

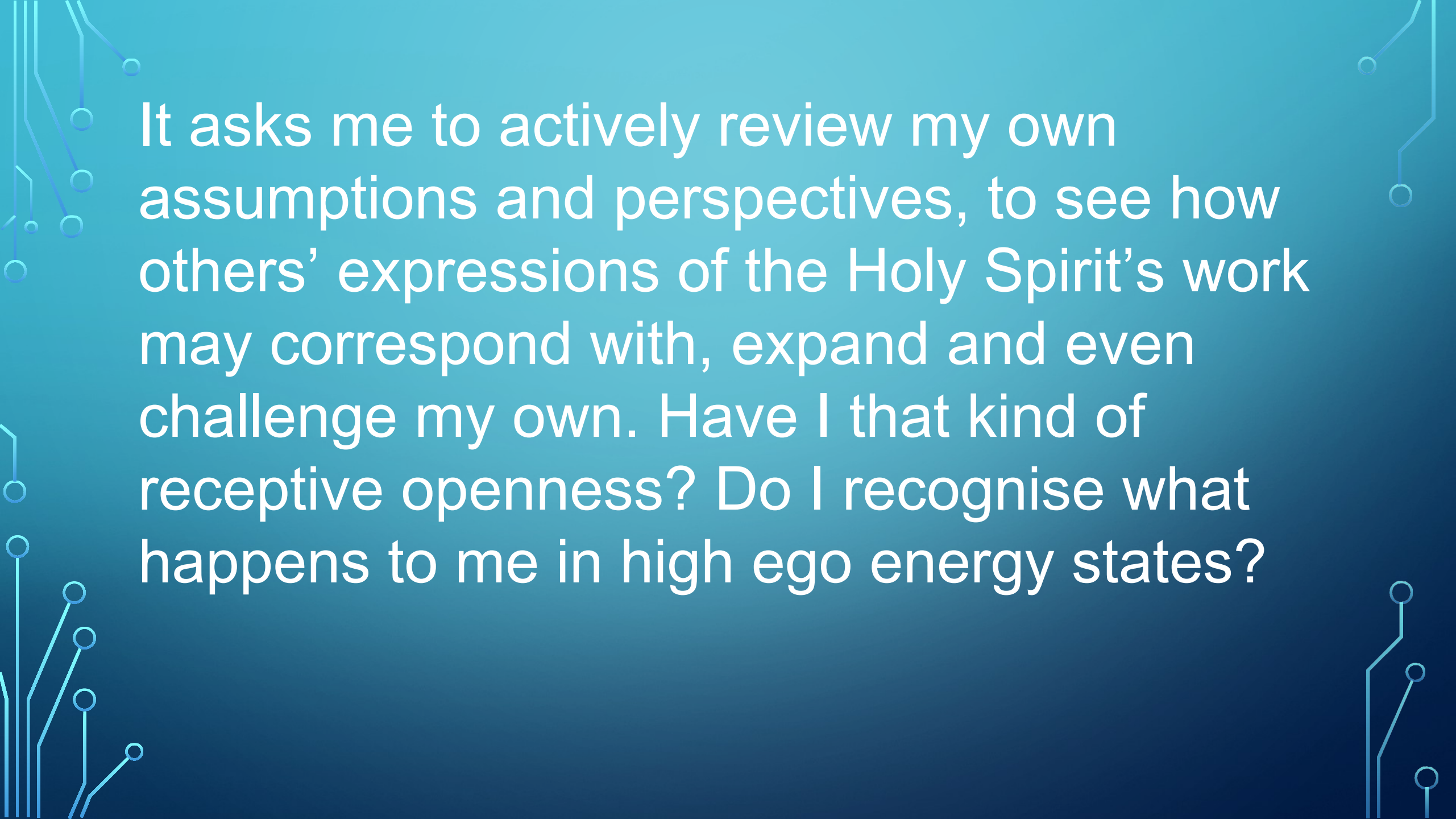
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“Let no one say: 'This you cannot say.' You need to say all that you feel with *parrhesia*,” Pope Francis continued. “And, at the same time, you should listen with humility and accept with an open heart what your brothers and sisters say.”

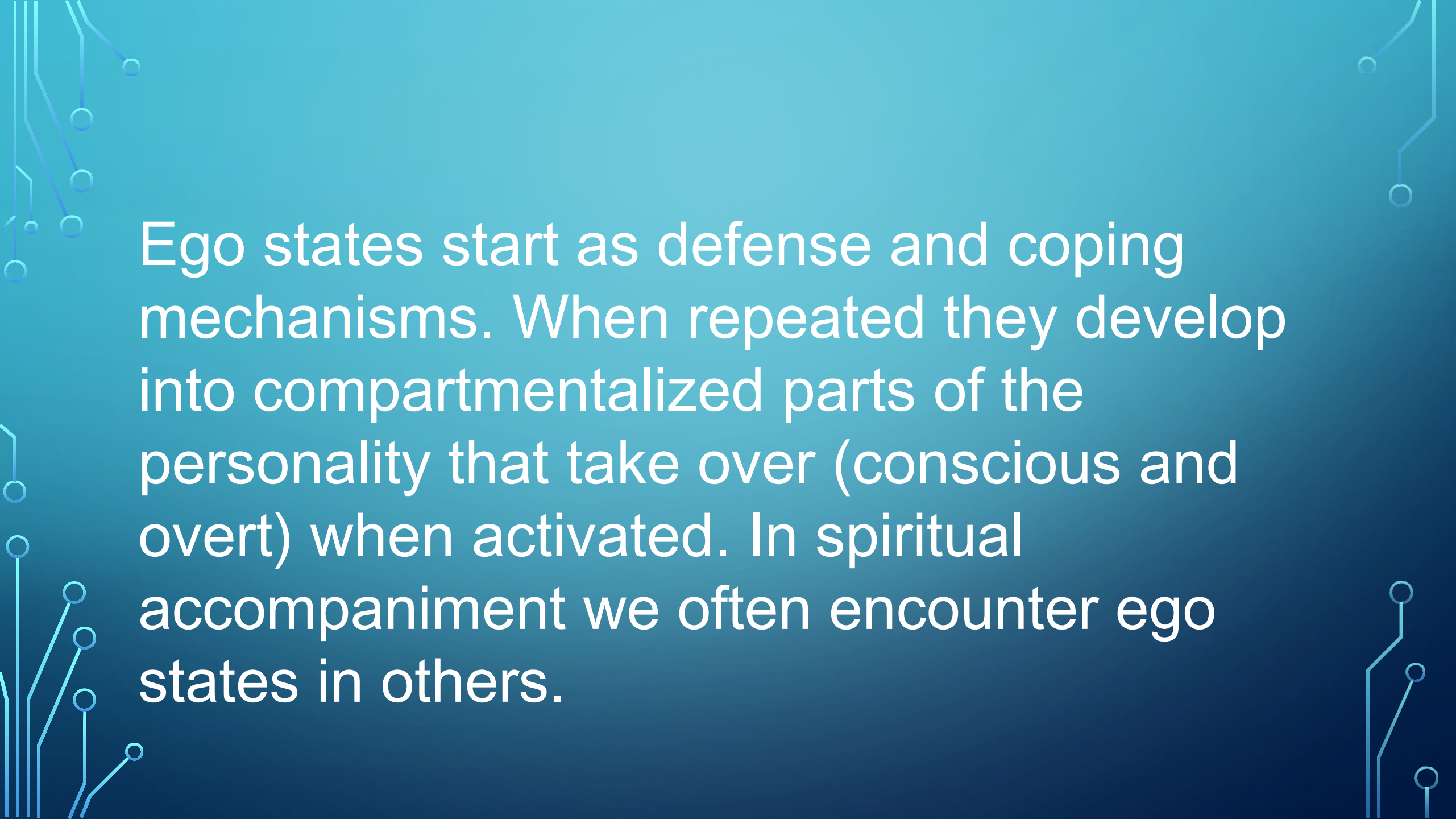
Advent frames two elements essential for discerning dialogue with people and culture: parrhesia and humility. *Parrhesia* describes a way of speaking: with honesty, frank openness and the certainty of being loved, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2778). It is open, ownerless, and free like the wilderness in which Jesus found himself (see Mark 1:9-13).

The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this background are several decorative circuit-like patterns. These patterns consist of thin, light blue lines that branch out and connect to small, hollow circles, resembling electronic circuit traces or a stylized network diagram. These elements are positioned primarily along the left and right edges of the frame, with some extending slightly into the central area.

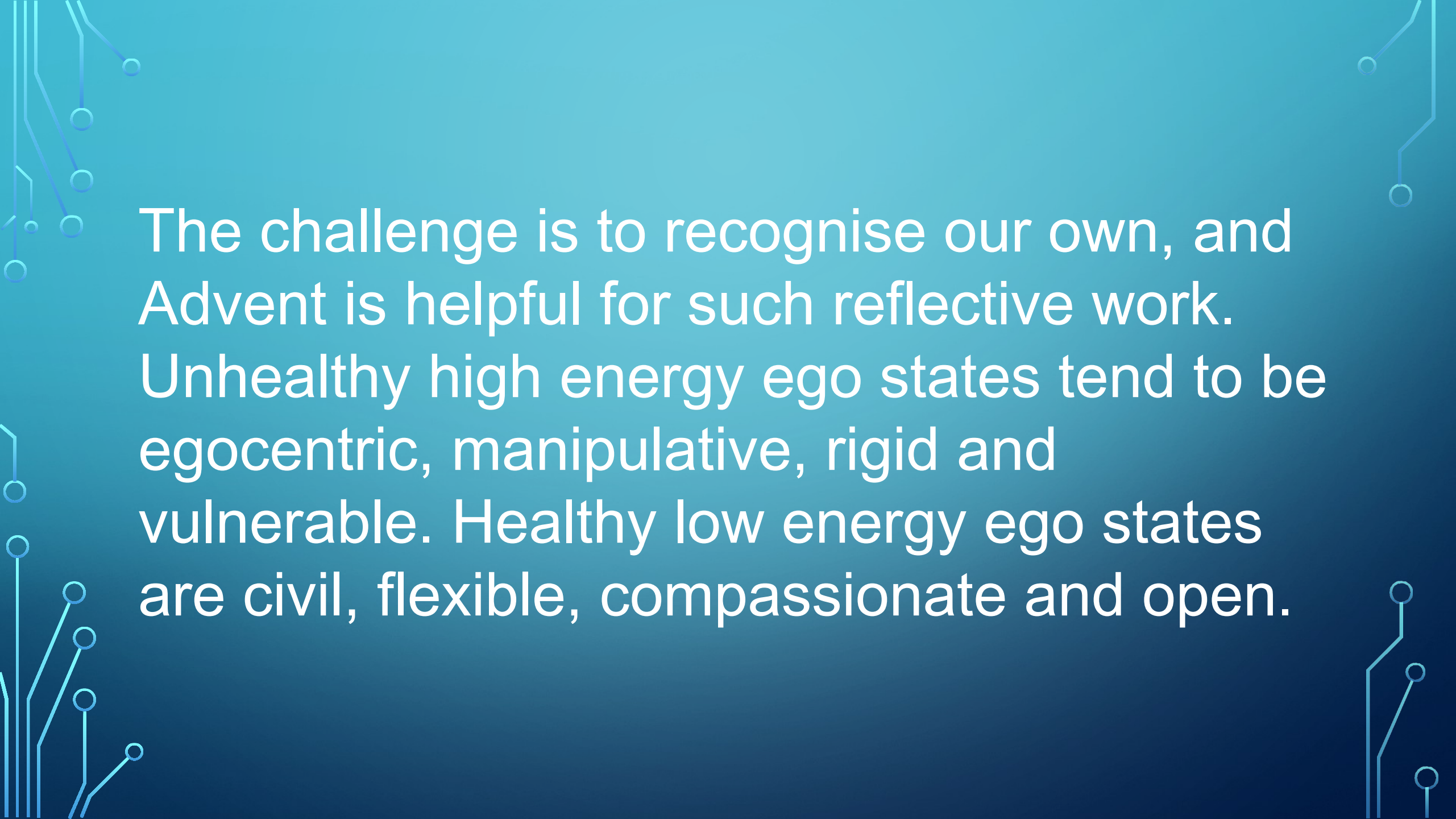
Humility is a willingness to listen generously and learn willingly from one another. It has a certain bold openness of its own. Unlike pride, it is open, relational and responsive, healthily rooted in low ego energy. When my ego is rooted in low energy it attunes to the emotional intelligence that is attentive, understands, and encourages.

The background is a solid blue gradient. Overlaid on this are several white, stylized circuit board traces. These traces are composed of straight lines and small circles, resembling electronic components or wiring. They are located in the corners and along the edges of the frame, creating a modern, technological aesthetic.

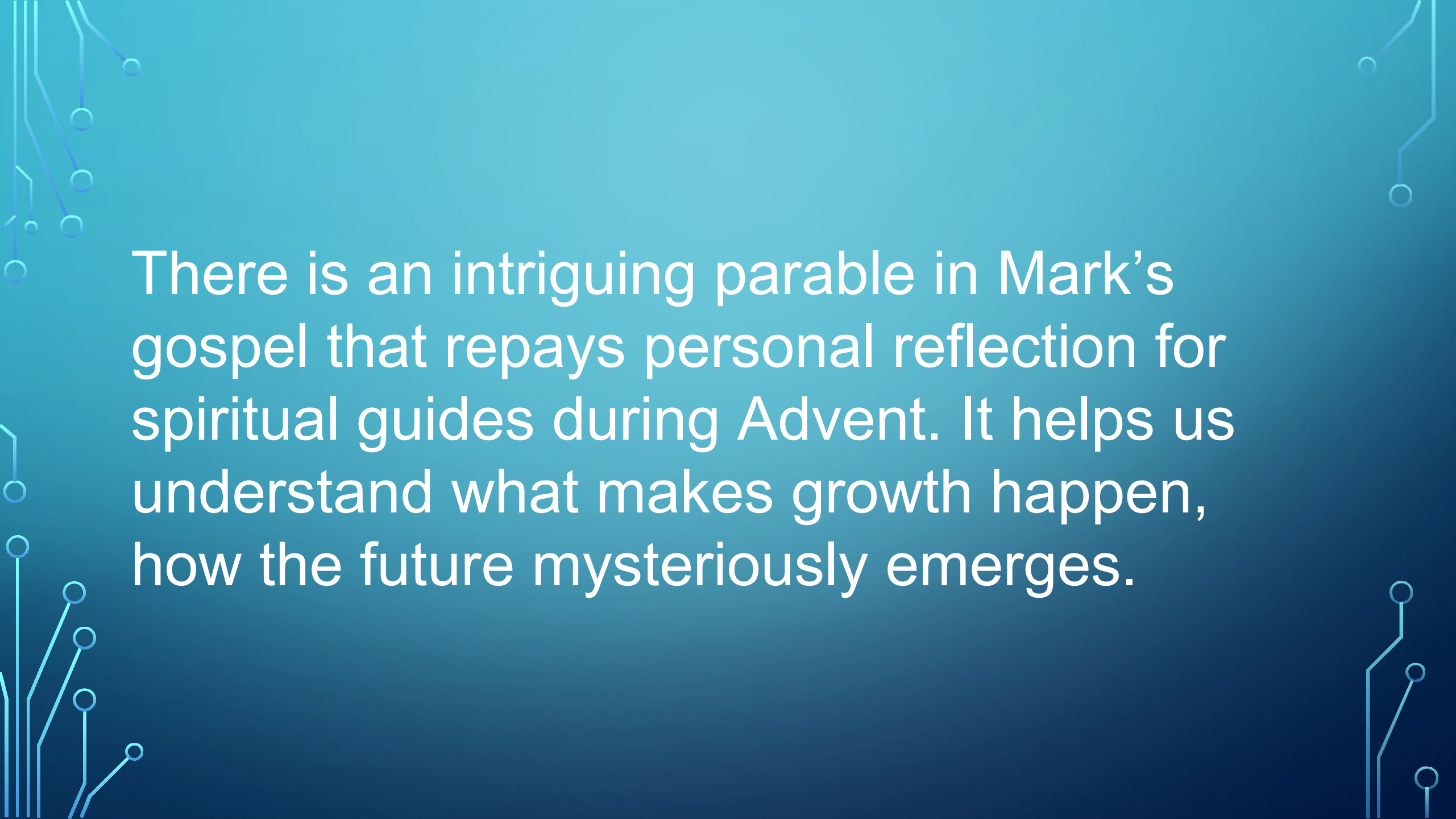
It asks me to actively review my own assumptions and perspectives, to see how others' expressions of the Holy Spirit's work may correspond with, expand and even challenge my own. Have I that kind of receptive openness? Do I recognise what happens to me in high ego energy states?

The background is a solid blue gradient. Overlaid on this are several decorative circuit-like patterns. These consist of thin, light blue lines that branch out and connect to small, hollow white circles, resembling electronic components or nodes on a circuit board. These patterns are located in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners of the image.

Ego states start as defense and coping mechanisms. When repeated they develop into compartmentalized parts of the personality that take over (conscious and overt) when activated. In spiritual accompaniment we often encounter ego states in others.

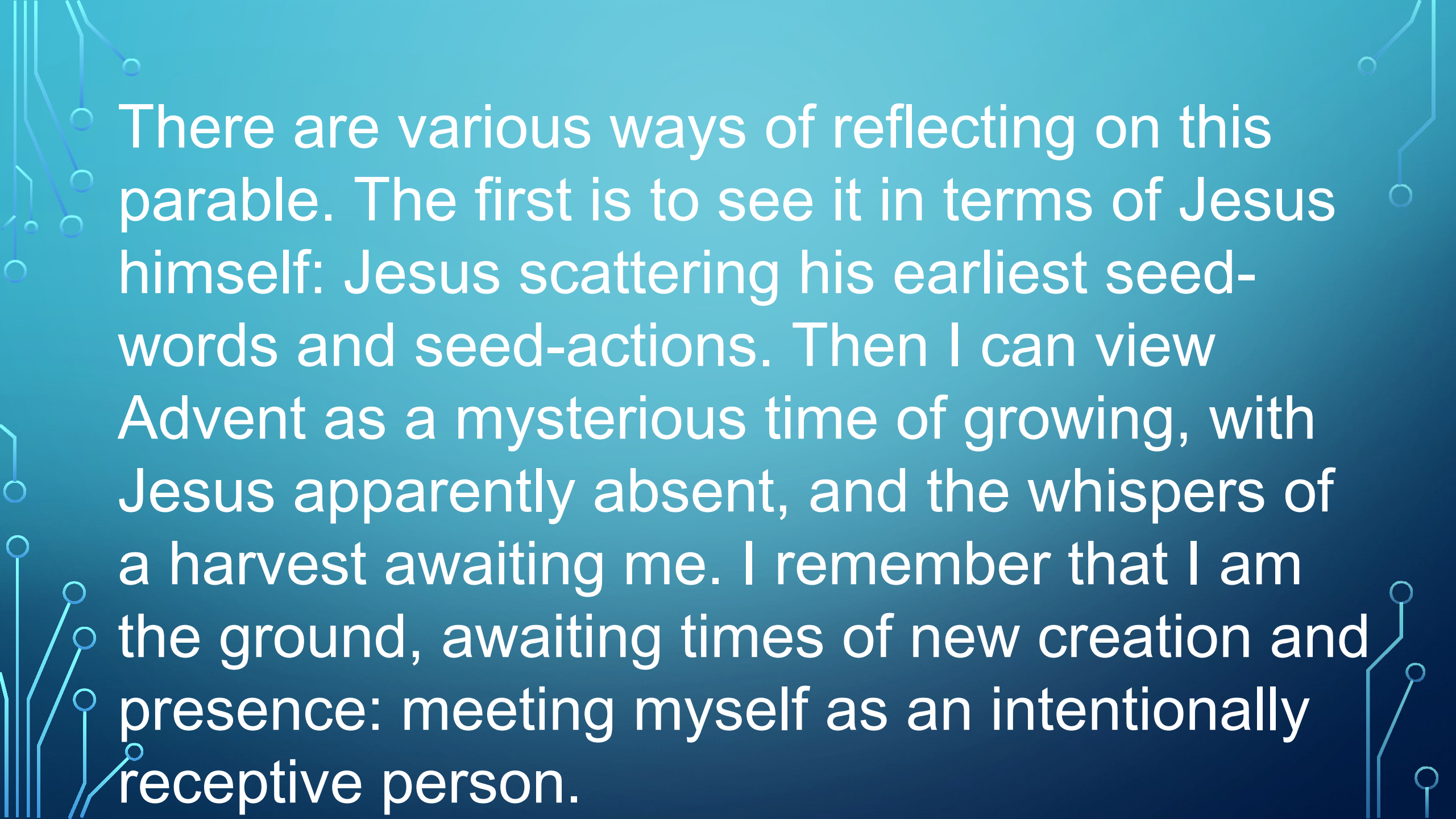
The background is a solid blue gradient. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling electronic circuit boards or neural networks, with lines and small circles connecting them.

The challenge is to recognise our own, and Advent is helpful for such reflective work. Unhealthy high energy ego states tend to be egocentric, manipulative, rigid and vulnerable. Healthy low energy ego states are civil, flexible, compassionate and open.

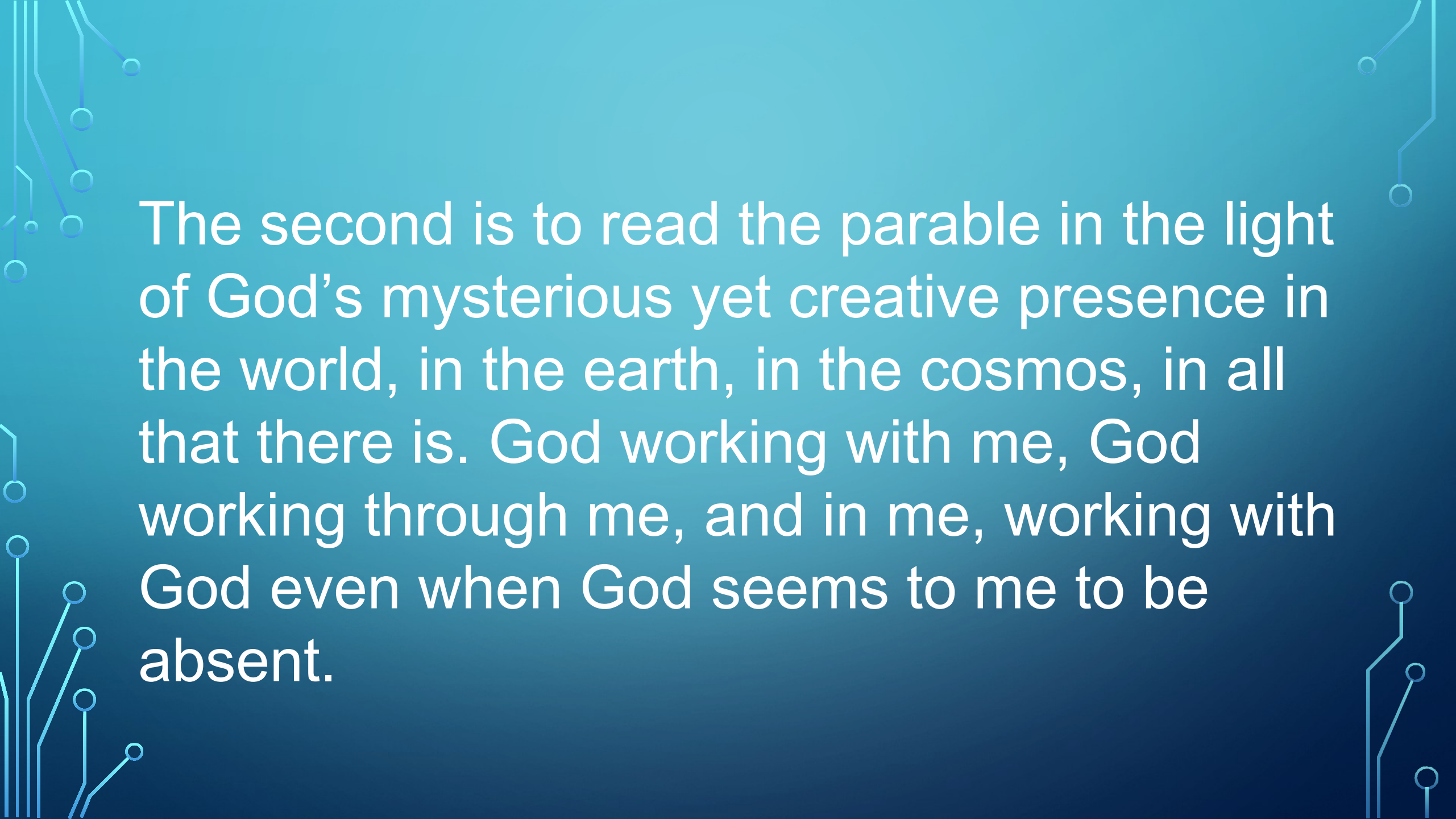
The image features a dark blue gradient background. In the corners, there are decorative elements resembling circuit board traces or neural network connections, consisting of thin white lines and small white circles.

There is an intriguing parable in Mark's gospel that repays personal reflection for spiritual guides during Advent. It helps us understand what makes growth happen, how the future mysteriously emerges.

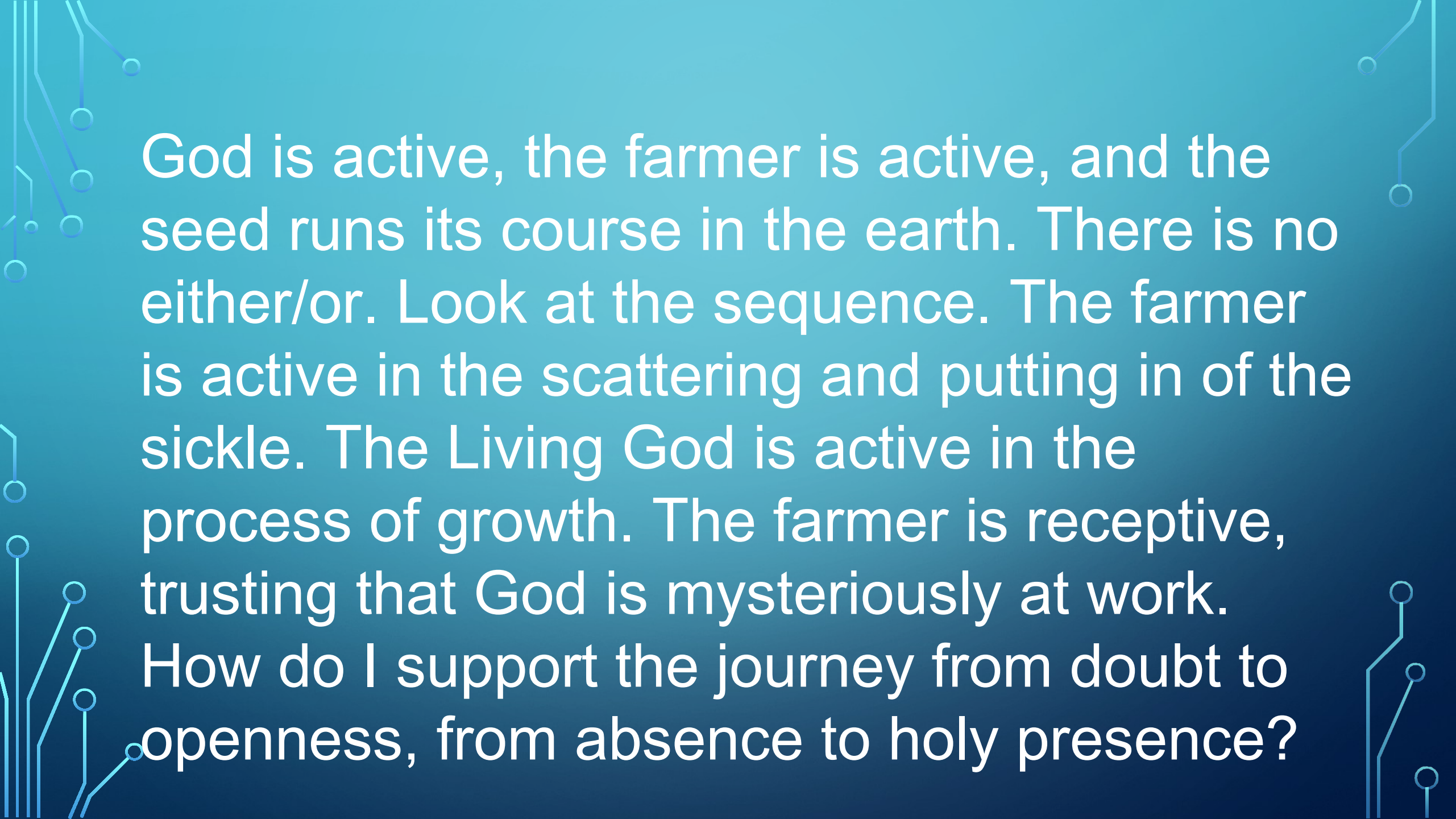
Mark 4: 26-29. *The kingdom of God is like a farmer scattering seed upon the ground, who sleeps and rises night and day, while the seed sprouts and grows, we know not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once the sickle comes into use, because harvest time has dawned.*

The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this background are decorative circuit-like lines in a lighter shade of teal. These lines are composed of small circles connected by thin lines, forming a network that resembles a circuit board or a neural network. The lines are primarily located along the left and right edges of the image, with some extending towards the center.

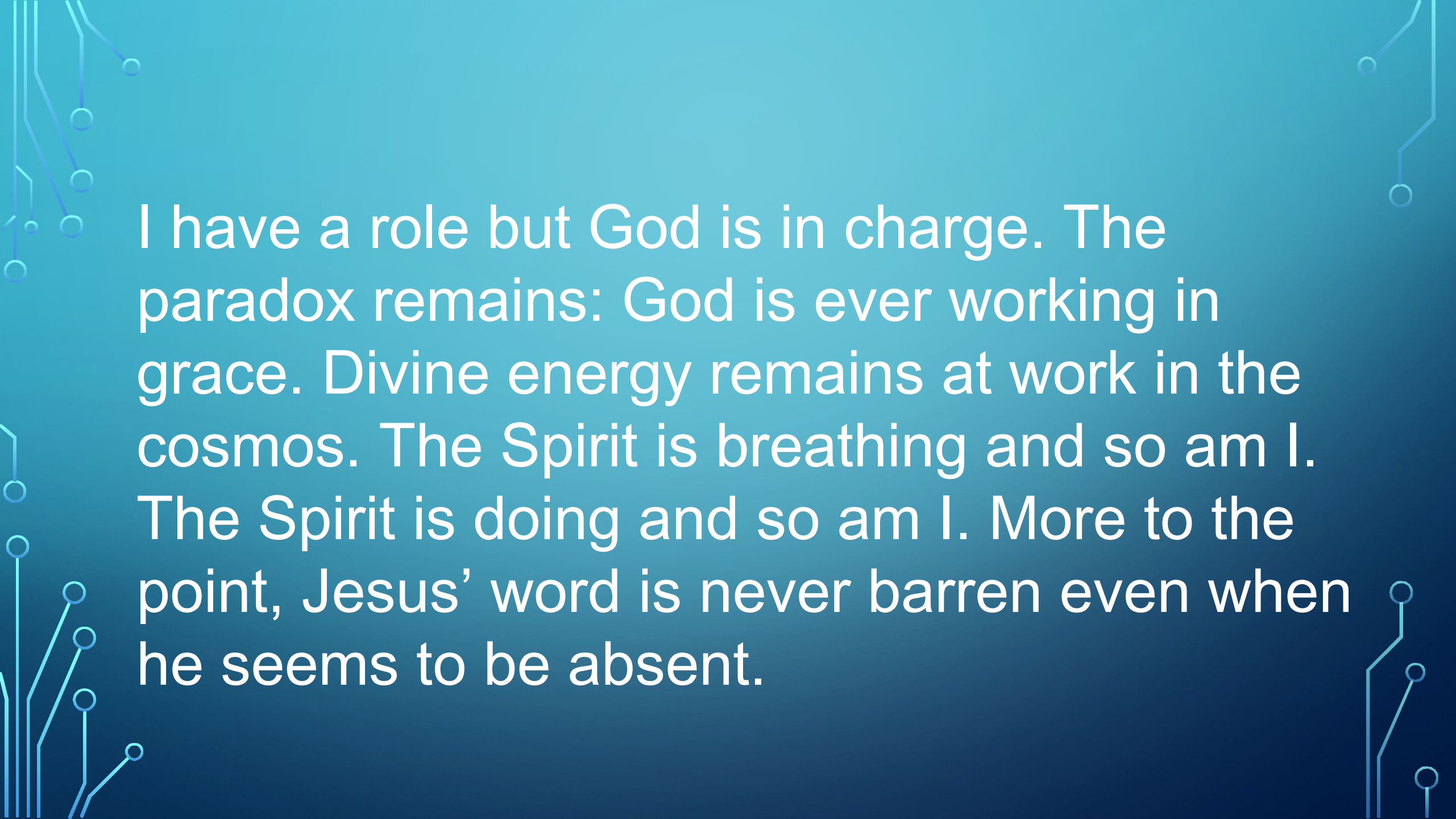
There are various ways of reflecting on this parable. The first is to see it in terms of Jesus himself: Jesus scattering his earliest seed-words and seed-actions. Then I can view Advent as a mysterious time of growing, with Jesus apparently absent, and the whispers of a harvest awaiting me. I remember that I am the ground, awaiting times of new creation and presence: meeting myself as an intentionally receptive person.

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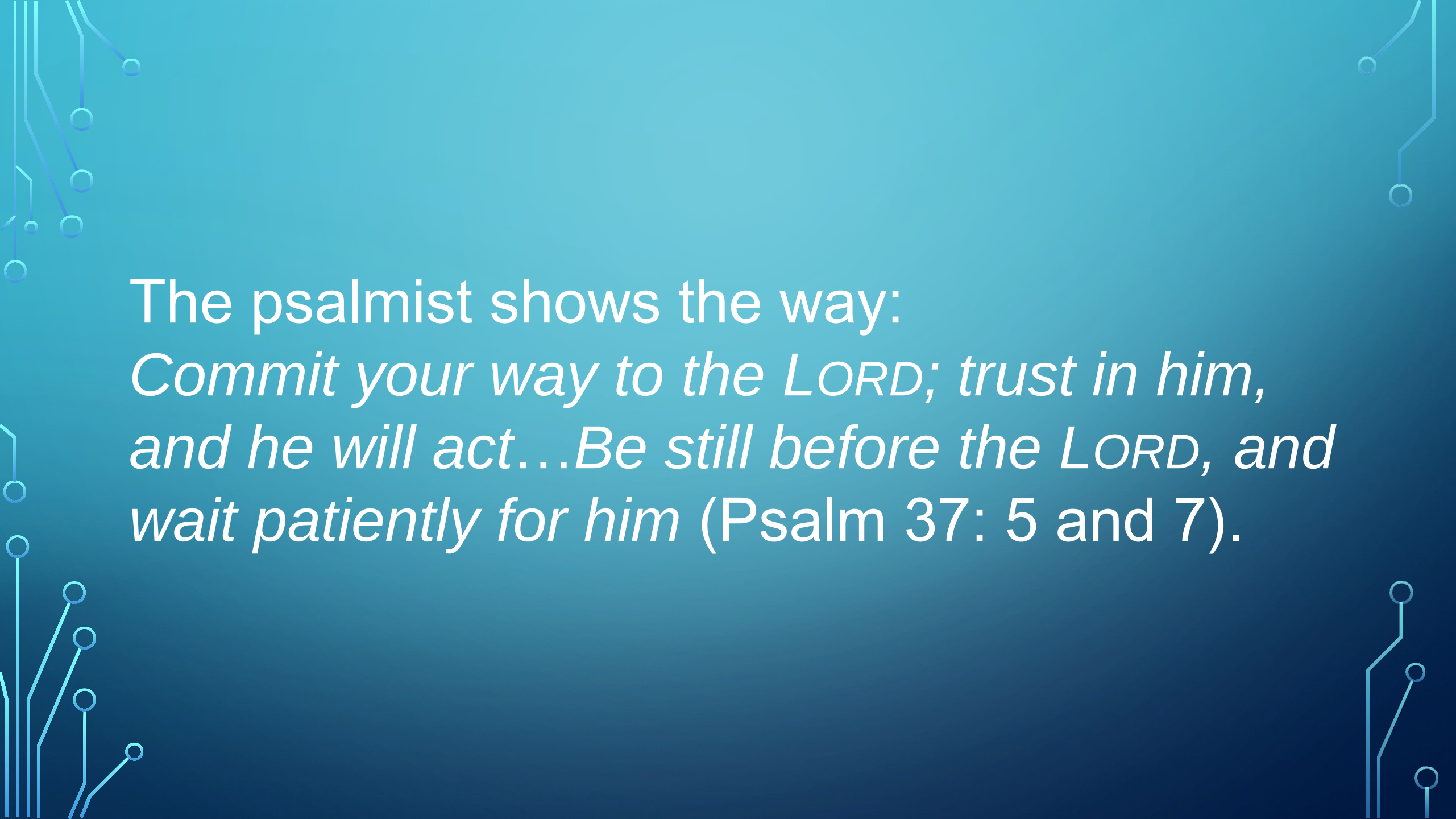
The second is to read the parable in the light of God's mysterious yet creative presence in the world, in the earth, in the cosmos, in all that there is. God working with me, God working through me, and in me, working with God even when God seems to me to be absent.

The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on this background are decorative white lines that resemble electronic circuit traces. These lines are located primarily along the left and right edges of the frame, with some lines extending slightly into the central area. The lines consist of straight segments connected by small circles, creating a complex, web-like pattern.

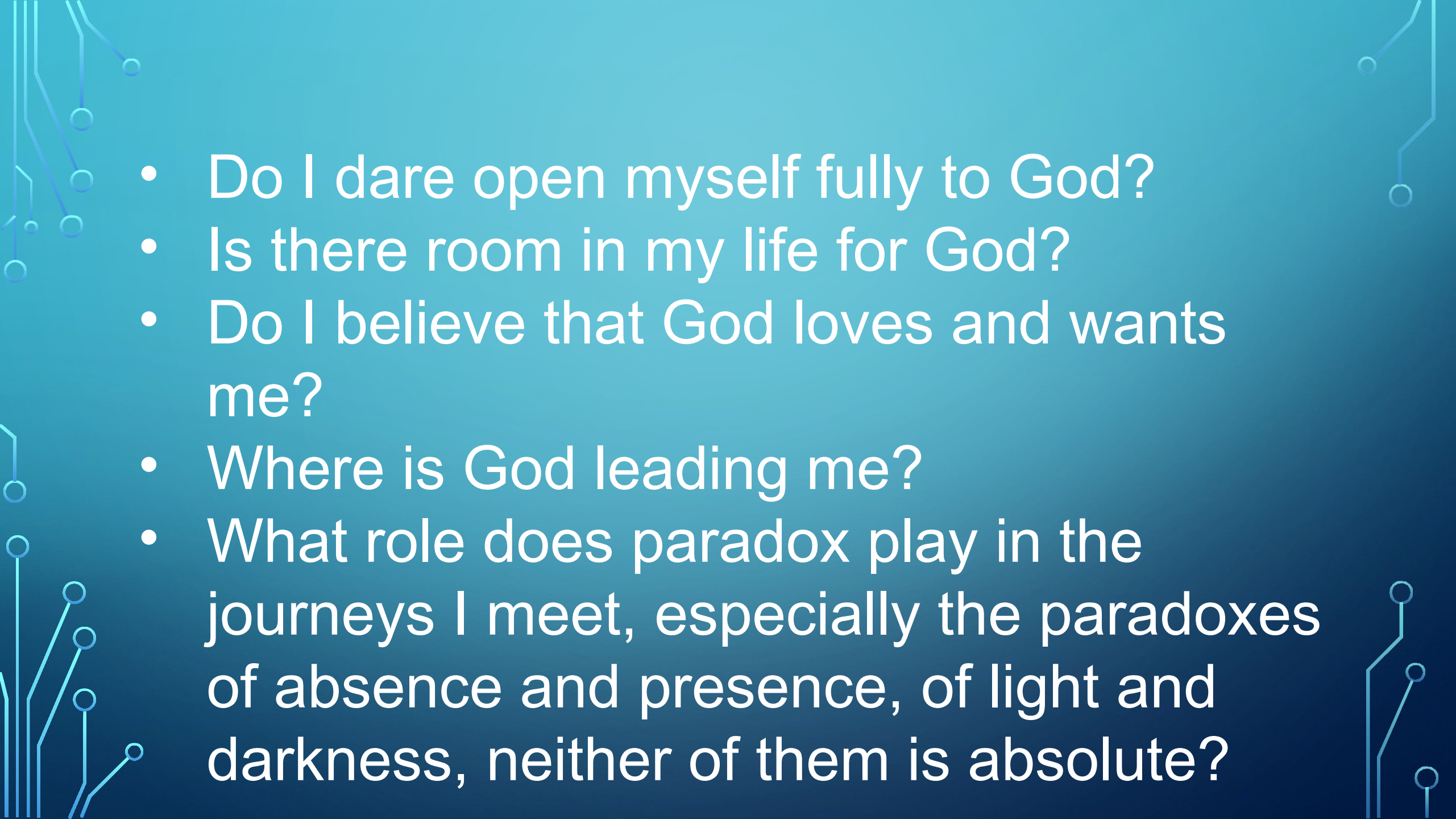
God is active, the farmer is active, and the seed runs its course in the earth. There is no either/or. Look at the sequence. The farmer is active in the scattering and putting in of the sickle. The Living God is active in the process of growth. The farmer is receptive, trusting that God is mysteriously at work. How do I support the journey from doubt to openness, from absence to holy presence?

The background is a solid blue gradient. In the corners, there are abstract, light blue line art designs that resemble circuit boards or neural network connections, with lines and small circles extending from the edges.

I have a role but God is in charge. The paradox remains: God is ever working in grace. Divine energy remains at work in the cosmos. The Spirit is breathing and so am I. The Spirit is doing and so am I. More to the point, Jesus' word is never barren even when he seems to be absent.

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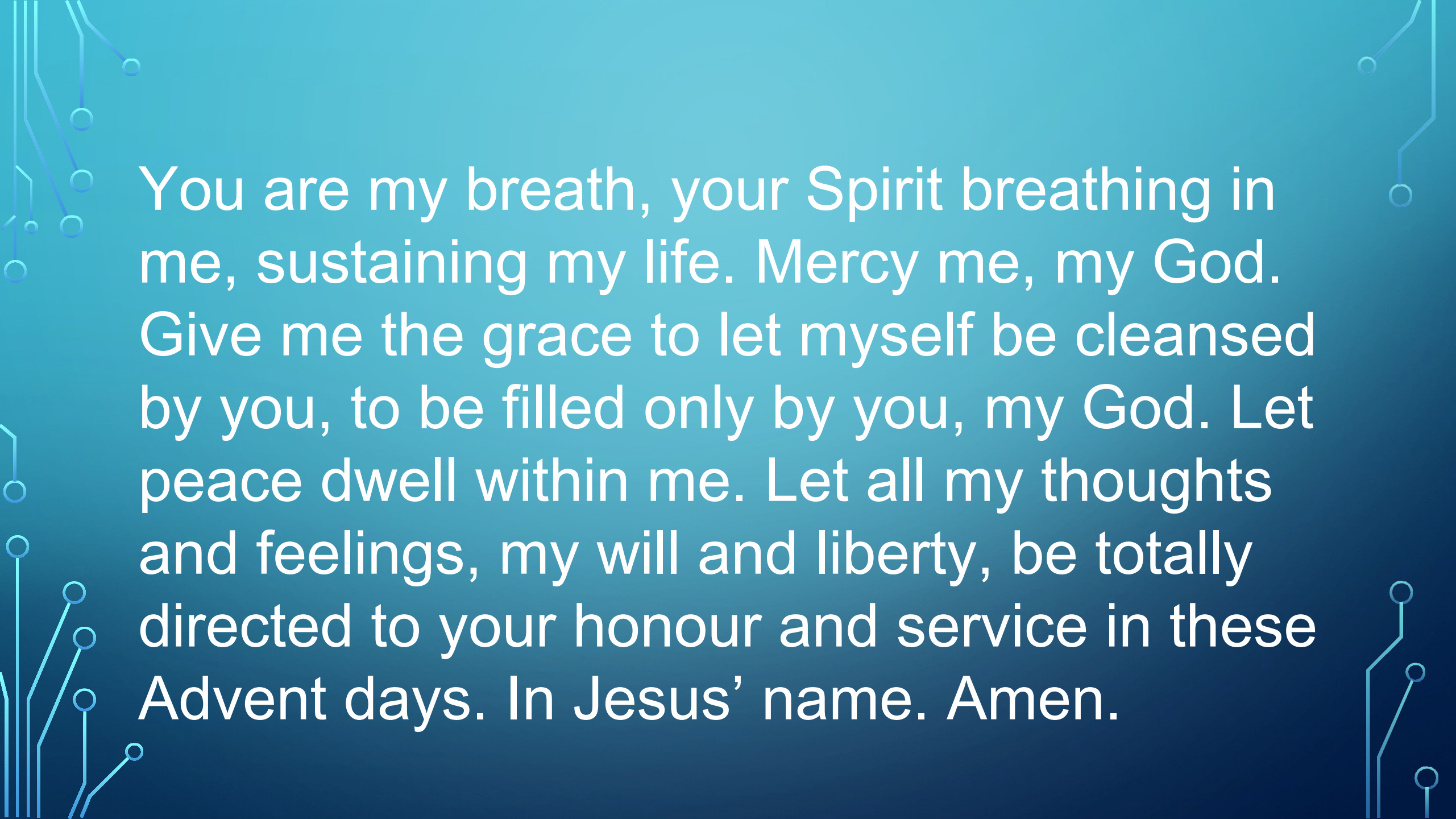
The psalmist shows the way:
*Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him,
and he will act...Be still before the LORD, and
wait patiently for him (Psalm 37: 5 and 7).*

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- The background is a solid teal color. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements that resemble electronic circuit boards or neural network connections, with lines and small circles.
- Do I dare open myself fully to God?
 - Is there room in my life for God?
 - Do I believe that God loves and wants me?
 - Where is God leading me?
 - What role does paradox play in the journeys I meet, especially the paradoxes of absence and presence, of light and darkness, neither of them is absolute?

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- A decorative graphic consisting of light blue circuit-like lines with small circles at the ends, running vertically along the left and right edges of the slide.
- Am I truly committed to God?
 - Do I truly trust God?
 - Am I ready to stop and be still before God?
 - Am I ready to wait patiently and receptively for God in absence and affliction?
 - Do I know how much depends on developing and embracing low energy

PRAYER

Glorious One, here I am before you just as I am at this moment. I sit in your presence in peace and tranquility. I open myself to your presence. Please direct my spirit in your sacred way. I open myself to you who are near at hand. Be for me the fount of life, the crystal spring that permeates every molecule and cell of my being.

The image features a solid blue background with a subtle gradient. In the corners, there are decorative white line art elements resembling electronic circuit boards or neural network connections, with small circles at the end of the lines.

You are my breath, your Spirit breathing in me, sustaining my life. Mercy me, my God. Give me the grace to let myself be cleansed by you, to be filled only by you, my God. Let peace dwell within me. Let all my thoughts and feelings, my will and liberty, be totally directed to your honour and service in these Advent days. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**God's love for us is
not the reason for
which we should love
him. God's love for us
is the reason for us to
love ourselves.**

Simone Weil
(GRAVITY AND GRACE, 1942)

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**Advent INVITES US TO BE LIGHT-BEARERS AND
LOVE-BEARERS ,
BREACH-MENDERS IN THE WORLD'S DIVISIVE
DARKNESS**