

Books

by [Barbara Crooker](#) in the [February 28, 2018](#) issue

In folio 32v, Jesus sits, not on the Throne of Heaven, but on an ordinary blue kitchen chair. He's barefoot and holding a book. *In principio erat verbum*; in the beginning was the Word. His hair, blond plaits ending in Celtic twists. He's framed, not by angels, but by farmhouse peacocks. You can almost hear their unworldly squawks. On other pages, we see books brandished by angels instead of flaming swords. Or clutched to the chests of young boys. St. Matthew is holding his gospel like a treasure, all silver and gold, delicate tracings on the bindings. Imagine a world where books were scarce. Where copying was done by human hand. Where the word itself was sacred.

In our time, it's a rush of too much: pixelated images, the blather of television, the constant stream of the internet. With such a torrent, nothing is important; all of it blends and whirls. While outside my window, a blackbird is singing, its clear six notes the only sound. They pierce me like nails. He might be saying *Listen, listen, listen*. He might have flown down to remind me that, more than anything, my job is to pay attention.