

A Hymn Mediation for Easter by Malcolm Sturgess

When I went to the Oberammergau Passion Play in 1980 I found it all too easy to identify with all the details of the actual Passion - the betrayal, the trial, the procession to Calvary, Jesus' relationship with His Mother. They were all comparable to things we see now on our televisions every day. The Resurrection and the Ascension were much less convincing. How can such things be represented in human terms, by words and musical form? Maybe Messaien gets somewhere near it in his organ music, but many people do not understand or like that. The same applies to our Easter hymns. Some are a good sing, but in my opinion they are not nearly so effective as the Advent and Whitsun hymns. A few modern authors have tried to say something straightforward which rings true, like Percy Dearmer's *A brighter dawn is breaking*. Brian Wren (b. 1936) has done best: "his hymns appear in hymnals of all Christian traditions and have been influential in raising the awareness of theology in hymns". He says what it might actually mean to us, his words fit the well-known tune *Truro* (*Jesus shall reign*) like a glove:

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing!

The Cross stands empty to the sky.

Let streets and homes with praises ring.

Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

**Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.**

**In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.**

**Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, free for all.**

**Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.**

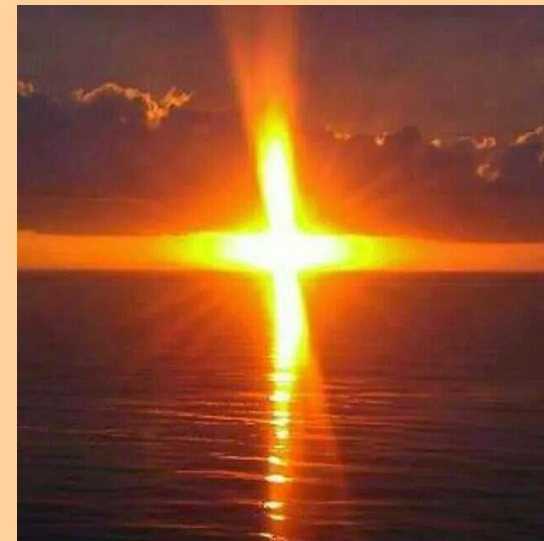
Reflections for Easter Day

The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone
had been removed from the entrance.

John 20:1



The resurrection of Jesus is an eruption of light.
Death is conquered. The tomb is thrown open.

The Risen One himself is Light.

The Light of the World.

Pope Benedict VI

Dawn and resurrection are synonymous.
The reappearance of the light is the same as survival of the soul.

Victor Hugo

Unless you see something in the light of love, you do not see it at all.
Love is the light in which I recognise your true origin and purpose,
and you recognise mine.

Kathleen Raine

On Easter eve the Easter vigil begins by the light of a fire. The great story of salvation is retold: God's saving love from the beginning of time through to today. From the dawn of the first day, through the light of the **promises** of God which our Forefathers Abraham, Isaac, Moses and Foremothers Ruth and Hannah lived by, through the light of **wisdom** that the kings ruled by, through the light of God's **word** that the Prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel shared with their people in the Word and Laws of God, to the light of breaking dawn of the First Easter.

This light was very real for all those who tried to live by it. Jesus is described as The Light itself. Can you imagine coming into the light of the first light? Can you imagine coming into the light, the life force that existed before all creation? No wonder Jesus was unrecognisable...

It is hard to put Easter into words. I believe in the Resurrection because in various times and places, people and community I have met such Light. I have heard such wisdom in the light of God's word. I have known the light of forgiveness, and embracing love. I have seen how powerful the light of Jesus Christ can be even to transform spiritual darkness. And for me it is awesome.

Jesus the Light means new creation, Jesus the Light means triumph over sin, Jesus the Light means to live in 'dangerous wonder'.

As Mike Yakonelli puts it 'O to be in the presence of God, frightened and amazed at the same time and to feel as if you are in the

presence of Life itself, with your soul shaking in terror and in gratitude...

I want a lifetime of holy moments. I long for a life that explodes with meaning and is filled with adventure, wonder, risk... I want to be with Jesus not knowing whether to laugh or cry! I want to live in dangerous wonder.

Or as Michael Mayne puts it 'You cannot look directly at the mystery of the resurrection any more than you can look at the light of the sun. But just as by the sun's light creation is revealed in all its beauty even so by the light of Easter we glimpse the new creation and having glimpsed it can never be satisfied with anything less.'

Or as St Paul writes to the Philippians 'I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection...'

Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven, exult, let Angel ministers of God exult, let the trumpet of salvation sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!

Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King, let all corners of the earth be glad, knowing an end to gloom and darkness.

Rejoice, let Mother Church also rejoice, arrayed with the lightning of his glory, let this holy building shake with joy, filled with the mighty voices of the peoples.

Let the flame burn brighter in the heart of the darkness
Turning night to glorious day
Let the song grow louder as our love grows stronger
Let it shine, let it shine!

We'll walk for truth speak out for love
In Jesus' name we shall be strong
To lift the fallen to save the children
To fill the nation with your song.

Graham Kendrick