

A JOURNEY TO EASTER
LENTEN MEDITATION – WEEK 8

The reflections and linked meditations are derived from 'An Ocean of Grace', ©Tim Chester

The Victory of God – Part 2

1. *Welcome this day, all of creation:*
Jesus has conquered and gained the stars!
The changes of years and the light of days,
all things applaud you and offer their praise.
The leaves of the trees clap in excitement;
the vine, with its silent shoots, gives you its thanks.
The thickets resound with the chatter of birdsong;
every sparrow sings with exuberant love.
Venantius Fortunatus (c.530-600/609)

HYMN

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son,
endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son,
endless is the vict'ry thou o'er death hast won.

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom.
Let the Church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth; death hast lost its sting. *Thine be……*

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife.
Make us more than conqu'rors through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above….*Thine be…….*

CONFESSION Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you. We are not worthy to be called your children. We turn to you again. Have mercy on us, bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead but now have life through Christ our Lord.
(Patterns of Worship)
May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit, and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen. (Common Worship)

READINGS AND REFLECTIONS
2. <u>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.</u>
(1 Corinthians 15: 56-57)
3.The first Easter Sunday was a day of victory and the beginning of an eternity of victory, however, for us that victory is still partial. Jesus rose at the beginning of a new era, but the old era continues and will do so until Christ returns. We can still be influenced by sin, guilt and fear, despite Jesus having atoned for our sin, defeated our enemy, cleansed our guilt and calmed our fears. So we live with this tension, and will feel the struggle keenly some days. But we know that the resurrection promises us victory; when Jesus returns, his victory in our lives will be complete. Thomas Adams, writing in the 17th century writes of Easter Sunday.

4. *Eternal Father, we praise you for this day, the Sabbath of the new world, our Passover from everlasting death to life, our true jubilee, the first day of our week, and the chief day in our calendar. Christ's resurrection is not only the object of our faith but the example of our hope. The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for us, preserves our bodies and souls into everlasting life. Did death kill Christ? Christ shall therefore kill death. He who this*

day rose from the clods of earth we expect one day from the clouds of heaven: to raise our bodies, to perform his promises, to finish our faith, to perfect our glory and to draw us unto himself. (Thomas Adams 1583-1652)

5. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst forth in song before you,and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. *Isaiah 55:12*

6.Over the centuries, Christians have seen spring as an annual picture of the coming joy of the restoration of God's creation. 'The Easter Poem' by the 6th century bishop and poet Venantius Fortunatus links spring with the resurrection of Christ from the dead. (It probably rhymed in Latin…)

7.*Good Shepherd, enjoy your snow-white flock.*
Draw wandering sheep from the beast of prey.
Those whom Adam's guilt once had poisoned,
restore and nurture within your church.
May what is sown return to you hundredfold,
filling your barns with an abundant crop.
Strengthen your people, safe in your arms:
keep us blameless and bear us to the stars.

8. I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. *Isaiah 61:10*

9.One word there, 'delight'! Everything has changed. Death itself has been defeated! Maybe we need, on such occasions as this, to cast off the solemnity with which we habitually approach religious matters, and, with the 17th century Welsh poet Henry Vaughan, 'wake more merry'.

10. ***Easter Hymn***

Death and darkness, get you packing,
Nothing now to man is lacking,
All your triumphs now are ended,
And what Adam marred is mended.
Graves are beds now for the weary,
Death a nap, to wake more merry;
Youth now, full of pious duty,
Seeks in thee for perfect beauty;
The weak and aged, tired with length
Of days, from thee look for new strength;
And infants with thy pangs contest
As pleasant, as if with the breast.
Then, unto him, who thus hath thrown
Even to contempt thy kingdom down,
And by his blood did us advance
Unto his own inheritance,
To him be glory, power, praise,
From this, unto the last of days!
(Henry Vaughan 1621-1695)

PRAYERS God our Creator, the centre of our lives, we thank you for our good life, for those who are dear to us, in this life and beyond, and for all who have helped and influenced us. We thank you for the freedom we enjoy, and most of all we thank you for the faith that is in us, for our awareness of you and the hope you bring us. Keep us, we pray, thankful, hopeful and useful throughout our lives. *(NZ Prayer Book)*

We continue to pray for those in any kind of trouble, here and in the wider world; for the sick and suffering, whether through disease, poverty or disaster, naming any known to us……

We give thanks for the opportunity to learn more of your love during the weeks of Lent, and the ability to meet together in these times of pandemic. And so we pray for ourselves, asking that you will renew our energies and our commitment to the spreading of your kingdom here on earth.

THOUGHTS…





O God, we thank thee for all the joy we have in life. (Byrhtnoth, 10th century)

Notes for week 8 - A journey to Easter

Venantius Fortunatus

c.530-c.600/609 AD He was born in Venetia, Italy during a time of political turmoil. He was educated in Ravenna, studying, in particular, classical and Christian poets. He emigrated to France where he became known as an influential poet. He was ordained as a priest around 576 in Poitiers, staying there until about 600, when he was appointed Bishop. He died in the early 7th century and was called a saint after his death, although not formally canonised. Two of his poems are known as hymns; 'Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle', and 'The royal banners forward go'. Eleven books of poetry survive; he was important in the development of Latin literature as well as being a devout Christian.

Thomas Adams  1583-1652 He was an English clergyman and reputed preacher. Robert Southey called him 'The Shakespeare of the Puritans', although he wasn't strictly a Puritan. He was educated at Cambridge and ordained in 1604. He was vicar of Wingrave in Buckinghamshire, then moved to London. He was a powerful preacher, much quoted writer and influential theologian. John Donne was among his friends. Adams was loyal to the king. Because of this he was not acceptable to Cromwell, had to leave his post under the Commonwealth, and was left to live out his days dependent on charity. His massive folio of sermons, reprinted in the nineteenth century was again reprinted in 1998. It is supposed that he influenced Bunyan. Neatly rounding off our course, he was also quoted by Spurgeon!

Henry Vaughan 1621-1695. He was a Welsh metaphysical poet, author, translator and physician, who wrote in English. He is chiefly known for religious poetry, having been persuaded by reading George Herbert (with whom he shared ancestry) to give up 'idle verse. He is thought to have been educated at Oxford, but returned home during the Civil War. He served briefly in the Royalist army, then began to practise medicine. He wrote poetry, but it was after an unspecified illness that he converted to writing religious works; he said 'by dying. I gain new life'. He is recognised as an 'example of a poet who can write both graceful and effective prose', and influenced Wordsworth, Tennyson and Siegfried Sassoon. He died in Wales, where he had spent most of his life, and is buried in the churchyard of St Bride's, Llansantffraed, where his grave is visited by enthusiasts for his work.