



Easter dawn

He blesses every love which weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept

Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.
She turns, but cannot focus through her tears,
Or recognise the Gardener standing there.

She hardly hears his gentle question 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply
'They took my love away, my day is night'

And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

Malcolm Guite



Christians today use the word 'Alleluia' to express an overflow of thanksgiving, joy, praise, and triumph. The word is interchangeable with 'Hallelujah'. Both translate the Hebrew phrase, 'praise the Lord'.

Alleluia is generally used in its original form (preserved and not translated) and has been since the very earliest times. For example, the Liturgy of St Mark, which is the most ancient of all the preserved of the world's liturgies, instructs the person preaching to 'Follow the "Let us pray" with "the Prologue of the Alleluia".' Here, the 'Prologue of the Alleluia' is a prayer or verse sung by the choir to introduce readings from the Gospel.

We say 'Alleluia' as we read the Gospel because it tells us about Jesus and his mighty deeds of grace and forgiveness. Indeed, the word 'Gospel' means literally 'The Good news'.

And we say 'Alleluia' and "Hallelujah" every day of Easter. For example, on the Sundays of Easter, we repeatedly say, 'Alleluia, Christ is Risen!' By this, we are not merely offering a simple word of praise. We are offering God praise and worship.

So when you say Alleluia with your lips, tell your soul to say 'Yippee!'

Alleluia!

**Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say. Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high.
Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply:
Alleluia!**

Charles Wesley

Mary Magdalen and Jesus

The Lord Jesus was dead and now he's alive. The infinity of the resurrection is difficult to squeeze into a finite human mind. So it may be easier to analyse it with a different medium than prose or theology.

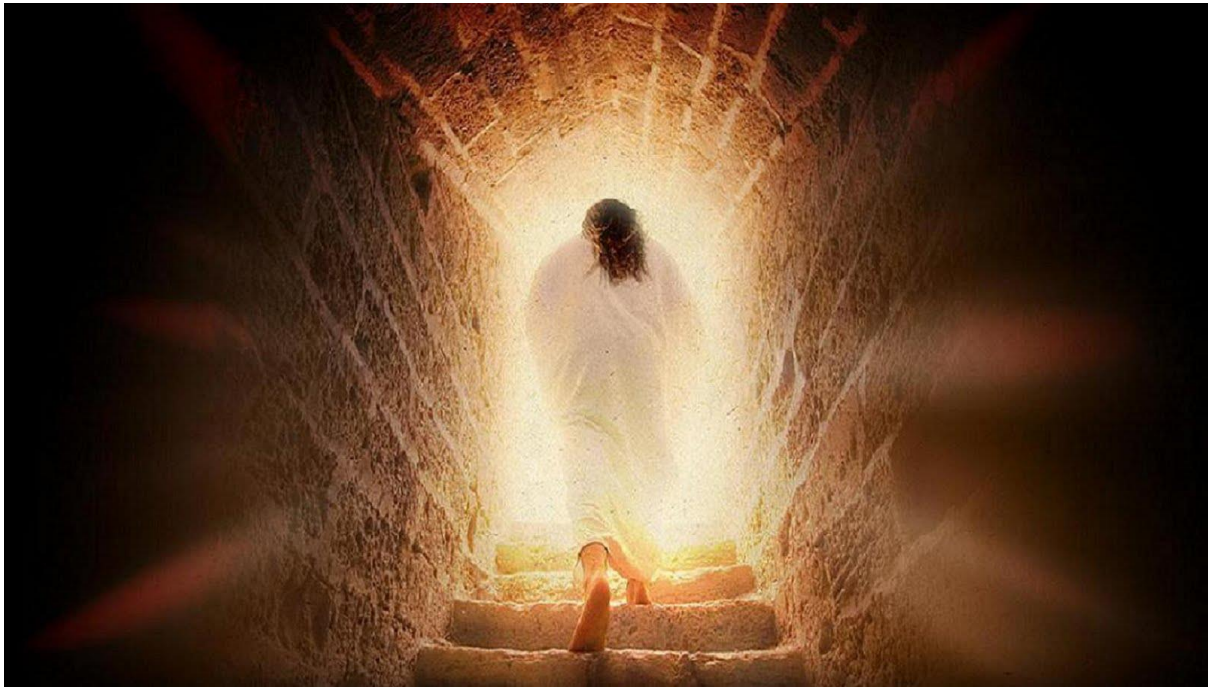
The following by the Welsh poet R. S. Thomas is entitled simply 'Suddenly'.

As I had always known
he would come, unannounced,
remarkable merely for the absence
of clamour. So truth must appear
to the thinker; so, at a stage
of the experiment, the answer
must quietly emerge. I looked
at him, not with the eye
only, but with the whole
of my being, overflowing with
him as a chalice would
with the sea. Yet was he
no more there than before,
his area occupied
by the unhaloed presences.
You could put your hand
in him without consciousness
of his wounds. The gamblers
at the foot of the unnoticed
cross went on with
their dicing; yet the invisible
garment for which they played
was no longer at stake, but worn
by him in this risen existence.

When the Easter Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, she didn't expect to see Jesus and therefore didn't. When the Easter Christ appeared to two men walking along a road to Emmaus, they didn't expect to see Jesus and therefore didn't. When the Easter Christ appeared to Thomas the twin, he didn't expect to see Jesus and therefore didn't. In all cases, they did not believe in the resurrection, didn't expect to see Jesus, and therefore they didn't.

We are the resurrection people of Christ. If we expect to see Jesus, we will: in a moment of audacious hope; in a glance of love; in a healing from sin; in a soul made new. In each, we can see the resurrected Jesus. That's what resurrection people do.

Let us pray O God, whose beauty is beyond our imagining
and whose power we cannot comprehend:
show us your glory as far as we can grasp it,
and shield us from knowing more than we can bear
until we may look upon you without fear;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen



Another Garden, Another Kiss

Judas, stretched out prone upon the
ground
In what passed for a garden in the
place he'd fetched up in —
Trunks, twisted and blackened
like forest after fire has passed:
No life —
Dragged himself to his feet, and saw,
Bathed in translucent light, the risen
Christ,
Who came towards him with his arms
outstretched,
Greeted his lost disciple with a kiss
And led him from that place.

Pam Gidney

The names we use over Holy Week and Easter

Maundy Thursday

Most scholars agree the English word *Maundy* comes from the Latin word *mandatum*. Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the Last Supper. He gave them his New Commandment as a response to their expressions of alarm and horror at him doing such a menial task. In Latin, he said, '*Mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos* ('A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you'), as recorded in the Gospel of John 13:34. So 'Maundy' derives from the first word of the New Commandment.

Good Friday

At first sight, 'Good' seems the very last word we would choose for a day commemorating the politically-motivated murder of Jesus. The day is 'good' because of its consequences: Jesus carried our sins on the Cross and thereby enabled our forgiveness.

Easter

The origin of the name is very obscure. The most widely accepted explanation of where the word *Easter* comes from suggests it is a German name for the ancient Celtic goddess, *Ēastre* or *Ēostre*. The earliest mention of this theory comes from the Venerable Bede who wrote in the seventh-century. He said that *Ēosturmōnaþ* was an English month (corresponding to April) that was named 'after a goddess of the ancient Britons named *Ēostre*, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month'.

Low Sunday

The first Sunday following Easter is traditionally called 'Low Sunday'. We don't know the exact cause of this name, but we have two likely causes.

- The Sunday contrasts so dramatically with the high theatre of Easter Day the preceding week that it acquired an ironic name. It was lowly and altogether less dramatic.
- It's possibly a corruption of the Latin *Laudes*, meaning the first word of a sequence, itself pointing to the sequence of named Sundays between Easter and Trinity in the Church calendar.

from 'Crucifixion'

They set up their decoy
in the Hebrew sunlight. What
for? Did they expect
death to come sooner
to disprove his claim
to be God's son? Who
can shoot down God?
Darkness arrived at
midday, the shadow
of whose wing? The blood
ticked from the cross, but it was not
their time it kept. It was no
time at all, but the accompaniment
to a face staring,
as over twenty centuries
it has stared, from unfathomable
darkness into unfathomable light.

R.S. Thomas

Palm Sunday is a forerunner to Easter Day

I find Palm Sunday an odd day in the Church calendar. What's it for? Who's it for? What's it saying, and to whom? Most Christian festivals celebrate something definite and concrete: for example, at Christmas we think of Jesus' birth. In order to look at what it's telling me, I'll tell a short story. At face value it's obviously fiction but deeper down it *is* true.

Last year, I went on a time-travellers' holiday. For a fee, I could go anywhere in the world and at any period in time. Being a Christian I chose (of course!) to go to the Holy Land for the first Holy Week.

I arrived. Straightaway, I noticed the heat, the noise, and dirt. And how small everything seemed! I checked in to a small hovel in what today we would call 'Old Jerusalem' but then was quite new. Next day was the Sunday before Passover so I rose early. I wanted a good view when Jesus rode past on his donkey. And I saw everything—what an experience!

I enjoyed the rest of the week, but was inwardly waiting for its end, the scene with Pilate. I was not disappointed. The crowd was huge, so I was nowhere near the front. Suddenly there was Jesus standing before Pilate. All of us shouted, "Crucify him!" We repeated it at all the right times. I was near the back of the crowd so needed to shout very loudly. It felt rather odd at first, but I soon got into the swing of it. 'Crucify!' I shouted repeatedly 'Crucify!'

And then something odd happened. The man in front of me pulled up his sleeve to read a Google Watch. I gawped. Then a man beside me began to take pictures on his phone. I saw a different man was wearing glasses. I heard someone behind me talking in English. With horror, I realised that all of us in the crowd were time-tourists. We were the ones who changed Pilate's mind: we helped persuade him to crucify Jesus. We were rooting for the death of Jesus. In fact, *I* was the reason why Jesus of Nazareth needed to die that week.

I realise that we relate the story of Palm Sunday to emphasise that I—and you—are the changeable and fickle people who kickstarted that first Holy Week, the week that put Jesus on the Cross.

Let us pray

Loving heavenly Father, thank you that you love us.

Help us to love you.

In your compassion, teach us what loving you means,
and how to stop acting against your love.

To that end, we offer you ourselves in Jesus' name.

Amen.