



Easter Season

Reflective Readings

Easter 2021

Reflective Readings

In the Easter season, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus together and ask ourselves what it means to be people who follow a risen, living Christ. As he invites us to walk with him in new life, we will find ourselves blessed and challenged.

This material is intended for personal meditation. You may want to be in a quiet place and light your own personal candle, but you may also just be sitting in your car waiting for an appointment. Where you are is not the point. The point is that you are taking the time to be quiet and listen so that you may walk through your day in communion with God. Each page contains a reading.



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The Risen Life

I wasn't sure what to do next—
life still felt very raw and different.
The angels at the tomb had done their best,
but dressing up in dazzling clothes was not a good idea! The women were terrified,
and to make it worse
Peter and the others did not believe them.
And although Peter saw the empty tomb for himself
he still has no idea what has happened to me.

I decided in the end to walk alongside two of my friends who were returning to Emmaus that evening.
If I listened in to their conversation
it might give me a clue as to what they were thinking.

So that's what I did.
They didn't recognise me
and I was able to ask them what they'd been talking about.

As I'd guessed, they were talking about
what had happened to me in Jerusalem.
They looked so sad.
Cleopas assumed that I was a stranger to Jerusalem and he told me

all about the events of the last few days.
He told me how they'd hoped that I was the prophet,
the Messiah who would set Israel free.
And then he told me how the women had talked about angels and a message that I was still alive,
how they had gone to the tomb and found it empty
with no sign of any angels or me!

How little they seemed to have understood
of what I had taught them!
I couldn't help myself
I launched into a major lecture on the scriptures referencing all the teachings about the Messiah.
I began with Moses and continued through the prophets: a seven mile bible-study!

I was on a roll...!
I meant to leave them when they reached the village, I had other people to see
and I had plenty to think about,



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but they were hospitable folks
and they urged me to eat with them
and to stay with them for the night.
It was almost evening.

So I stayed
and as we sat at the table
I took the bread, blessed it and broke it
as I had done so often before when I had shared their meal and immediately I was no longer a stranger
to them
they recognised me
and I knew that it was time for me to go.

From what they said afterwards it was obvious
that my interpretation of the scriptures had struck home they had begun to grasp the truth that I was alive
again
but it took the familiar actions and prayers at the meal table for them to know who I was.

And, bless them,
they were desperate to tell the others
for they got up from the table
and walked the whole seven long miles back to Jerusalem.

And when they found the others
they discovered that, while they had been walking, I had managed to speak to Simon.

It had been a long day for me
and for them,
the first day of new life.

This risen life was going to take some getting used to.



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Easter Hymn

by Ku Sang

On an old plum tree stump,
seemingly dead and rotten,
like a garland of victory
flowers gleam, dazzling.

Rooted in you, even in death
all things remain alive;
we see them reborn, transfigured.
How then could we doubt
our own Resurrection since
by your own you gave us proof?

Since there is your Resurrection and ours,
Truth exists;
since there is your Resurrection and ours,
Justice triumphs;
since there is your Resurrection and ours,
suffering accepted has value;
since there is your Resurrection and ours,
our faith, hope, love, are not in vain;
since there is your Resurrection and ours,
our lives are not an empty abyss.

In the lost corner of the earth,
dappled by the spreading spring,
as I imagine that Day's world,
made perfect by our Resurrection,
I am overwhelmed in rapture.

Ku Sang, *Wastelands of Fire*, p. 50

Ku Sang, 1919-2004, is a Korean poet. He was born in North Korea and was raised in the Catholic Church. After World War II his poetry was rejected by the North Korean government and he fled to South Korea.



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Jesus of Nazareth

by Ku Sang

Jesus of Nazareth!
Who are you really?
Born in a stable's manger,
dying nailed to a cross with thieves,
the unlucky possessor of an absurd destiny.

Wandering around, without house or home,
you kept company with low class people,
with prostitutes and rebels,
with louts from other regions
normally considered enemies;
you enjoyed eating and drinking with them.

To the poor
to the hungry,
to those in tears,
to those despised for their just deeds,
insulted, driven out, and dishonored
for having practiced what is right,
you dared to proclaim:
"You, you are blessed!
Yours, yours is the Kingdom of God!"

You gave sight to the blind,
you opened the deaf man's ears,
you made the cripple walk,
you completely healed the leper's sores,
you brought the dead back to life,

as you yourself said,
heaped with the whole world's hatred,
insulted and driven out,
finally labeled a traitor
and dying without any show,
you are the ultimate failure
and to me, united with you from my mother's womb,
you are the very ground of my being, the way
from which, at times, I incline to stray,



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finding it a nuisance,
at times a cause of discouragement, despair;
at times although extremely familiar,
you look like an absolute stranger.

So what on earth are you really like?
You weren't a thinker,
you weren't a moralist,
you weren't one of this world's statesmen,
and you weren't the founder of a religion,

Therefore, you didn't teach any kind of learning,
you didn't teach and kind of rules,
you didn't launch any kind of social reform movement,
neither did you teach some kind of detachment from this world

You didn't compute
anyone's past merit or lack of it,
you didn't compute
anyone's past sins, whether many or few.
Really, you overturned the thoughts and words
of everyone in the world:
'Come to me, all you
who are toiling and struggling along
under heavy burdens,
I will give you rest!'
To suffering humanity
you proclaimed liberation,

and you taught that God is our Father,
that he is Love itself, infinite,
that when, nestling like children in his breast,
we forgive as our Father forgives,
and love as our father loves,
then eternal bliss dwells in our lives,
and that, you taught, is called 'the kingdom of God'
and having practiced at the cost of your life
the sincerity of such loving,
you bore witness by your Resurrection
to that Love's imperishability.

Ku Sang, Wastelands of Fire, pp. 55-57



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The true appearance of the Word

by Ku Sang

As the cataract of ignorance falls
from off the eyesight of my soul,
I realize that all this huge Creation
round about me is the Word.

The hitherto quite unattended fact
that these familiar fingers number ten,
like an encounter with some miracle,
suddenly astonishes me

and the newly-opened forsythia flowers
in one corner of the hedge beyond my window
entrance me utterly,
like seeing a model of Resurrection.

Smaller that a grain of sand
in the oceanic vastness of the cosmos,
I realize that this my muttering,
by a mysterious grace of the Word,

is no imagined thing, no mere sign,
but Reality itself.

Ku Sang, Wasteland of Fire Boston: Forest Books, 1990, p. 54



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Glad Surprise

by Howard Thurman

There is ever something compelling and exhilarating about the glad surprise. The emphasis is upon glad. There are surprises that are shocking, startling, frightening and bewildering. But the glad surprise is something different from all of these. It carries with it the element of elation, of life, of something over and beyond the surprise itself. The experience itself comes at many levels: the simple joy that comes when one discovers that the balance in the bank is larger than the personal record indicated---and there is no error in accounting; the realization that one does not have his doorkey---the hour is late and everyone is asleep---but someone very thoughtfully left the latch off, "just in case"; the dreaded meeting in a conference to work out some problems of misunderstanding, and things are adjusted without the emotional lacerations anticipated; the report from the doctor's examination that all is well, when one was sure that the physical picture was very serious indeed. All of these surprises are glad!

There is a deeper meaning in the concept of the "glad surprise"
This meaning has to do with the very ground and foundation of hope about the nature of life itself. The manifestation of this quality in the world about us can best be witnessed in the coming of spring. It is ever a new thing, a glad surprise, the stirring of life at the end of winter. One day there seems to be no sign of life and then almost overnight, swelling buds, delicate blooms, blades of grass, bugs, insects----and entire world of newness everywhere. It is the glad surprise at the end of winter. Often the same experience comes at the end of a long tunnel of tragedy and tribulation. It is as if a man stumbling in the darkness, having lost his way, finds that the spot at which he falls is the foot of a stairway that leads from darkness into light. Such is the glad surprise. That is what Easter means in the experience of the race. This is the resurrection! It is the announcement that life cannot ultimately be conquered by death, that there is no road that is at last swallowed up in an ultimate darkness, that there is strength added when the labors increase, that multiplied peace matches multiplied trials, that life is bottomed by the glad surprise. Take courage, therefore:

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,
Our Father's full giving is only begun.



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by Ann Weems

Just when I thought
there would be no more light
in the Jerusalem sky,
the Bright and Morning Star
appeared
and the darkness has not overcome it.

Ann Weems, Kneeling in Jerusalem, p. 89

Time for Kneeling

by Ann Weems

The Lamb has been slain,
and the sheep have scattered.
Now is the time for kneeling,
the time for believers
to kneel and call upon his name,
to kneel
and to rise again:
the community of the resurrection.

Ann Weems, Kneeling in Jerusalem, p. 90



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In Search of New Resurrections

We in the church are in danger
of becoming a tearless people,
unable to rage even in a starless abyss.
We have imitated a smiling society,
glossing over the hurt, the oppression,
the peacelessness on earth,
or we have become caustic
and cynical and despairing,
insisting on looking the other way
as our church members crawl to the altar,
the scraps of their lives in their arms.

We were created for covenant keeping
and yet, we are in danger
of becoming a blindhearted people,
buying into the system
placing our hope with kings and corporations.
Have we not seen?
Have we not heard?

We persist in clinging
to the way things are,
or eagerly placing our faith
in the newest religious fad,
the latest book on how-to-Christianity
(in ten easy steps),
or the current slogans
presented as though they were
the Word of God.
We are programming and papering ourselves

into perpetuity,
and rationalizing and excusing
our immorality.

We spend our energy in complaining,
gloomily forecasting our future together.
We panic for positions
in employment and committee,
with each special interest group
vying for first place in the kingdom.
Perhaps it's time for remembering
that Jesus stood in the Jordan
to be baptized with the other,
long ago casting his lot,
not with the good church people,
but with the poor
wherever that poverty might emerge.
His name is Emmanuel,
and yet, individually and corporately,
we have named him "GOD-WITH-ME."
Have we not seen?
Have we not heard?
In light of the cross,
the alternative is anything but hopelessness.
On the contrary!
There is every scriptural indication
that we are called to change
who we are into the Kingdom of God.
Where change is possible,
new resurrections loom!

Ann Weems, Kneeling in Jerusalem, p. 91-92



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Rise Heart; the Lord is Risen

by Susan Palo Cherwien

We see the graveclothes lying there
We see the stone rolled away
We see the brightness of the angel.
"Rise heart, thy Lord is risen."
Ah, sheer delight.
We see that we have become
new people
transformed people
For Christ is risen
And we, too, shall rise.

When artist Henry Matisse was painting out-of-doors
he would draw a line on the ground
around his feet
so that he could again find
the perspective
from which he had been painting
to remind himself where he stood.

Perhaps we should draw a line around our feet here
here where we see the gravecloths
here where we see the stone rolled away
here where we see the angel
draw a line around our feet
to remind ourselves where we stand.
to find again our perspective
our perspective as
people of resurrection
to see as
people of resurrection
to live as people of resurrection

draw a line around our feet
to remind ourselves
that we are already standing
have always been standing
in God's garden.