

An Easter Sunday reflection for worship

Place the flower and a seed on a bible before you as we worship

Call to worship: *Psalm 118: 1-2*
O Give thanks to the Lord for he is good
His steadfast love endures forever!

SING: Christ the Lord is risen today!
(R&S 223) Alleluia. *(as loudly as you like)*

Pray; A day breaks like any other
A garden wakes from its night-time death
And dawn carries our tears of mourning;
Finding an empty tomb
With disbelieving eyes
And doubting minds,
We wonder at the stone rolled away,
Seeing the place where you lay
And still we do not understand;
This garden tomb has conquered death,
Death is no longer sealed,
Death has risen in tears of joy.
So morning's dawn renews our light
With a Son whose light is life itself,
And this day breaks like no other. Amen. (Heather Lodge)

Reading: John 20; 1-18

Easter 1952, was special for me. I was on guard-duty at the wireless station in the hills above Fayid overlooking the Great Bitter Lake in Egypt. When the dawn broke we could see Mount Sinai on the horizon to the South-East. As the sun rose, it was silhouetted against the sky and momentarily it seemed as though the sun was resting atop the Holy Mountain before rising higher and bathing the new day in Easter light. It reminded me of this hymn;

SING: There's a light upon the mountain
(MP 679) And the day is at the spring,
When our eyes shall see the beauty
And the glory of the King.
Weary was our heart with waiting
And the night-watch seemed so long;
But his triumph-day is breaking,
And we hail it with a song.

This seemed so fitting for the occasion. So, we walked around the perimeter wire singing it quietly to ourselves. Truly a memorable Easter dawn! ([Easter Glory by Roger Fenn](#))

The first musical I ever produced with young people, apart from a few pantomimes, was a show called DAYBREAK by Paul Field. In rock music and drama, it reflected on the thoughts of Mary, Thomas and Peter immediately after that first daybreak-resurrection of our Lord.

*Peter needed to be a mountain but had a "mountain" to climb. Thomas felt he was "chasing shadows". (Sung in Daybreak Paul Field 1983). Mary, was alone according to the account in Johns gospel. **Alone.** That word is having new resonance for many more of us in these days of social distancing and self-isolation. Even for the more fortunate ones who are at home with a family member or more the idea of remaining separate from others in times of struggle or difficulty is a torment. To both carer and cared for. Mary came to the tomb, saw the stone had been moved and immediately when to find others. That is what we do isn't it. Go to find others. Then they all ran together. The men went directly into the tomb leaving Mary once again, alone. Mary was still alone. That was until she met the gardener.*

And gardens and gardening have been life saver for many these past few weeks. Being stuck at home some have found new inspiration in their gardens and others have enjoyed the extra time they can spend there. We have heard an increase of children's cries and yelps from local gardens.

I know many of you enjoy your gardens too. Indeed, should not garden centres be essential shopping argues Alan Titchmarsh? As well as the cost of their closures to the economy Gardening is vital to physical and mental health. And of course, they are all part of Gods on going creation! – And yet there are concerns at the waste grown in nurseries. And then we remember too some cannot enjoy gardens at all.

But when Mary came face to face with a man that morning at daybreak it seems so obvious, he should be a gardener. Not because that is where a gardener would obviously be. But because of what a gardener does and who a gardener is. Jesus, the gardener was there, beside her, bringing new life, new creation, new joy and colour and beauty, new seeds of life. At first alone, Mary recognised all this through her aloneness and weeping.

*“It’s you, standing there before me. It is you naturally alive,
And as I stare and rub my eyes, and then you turn on me your smile,
I know it’s you. Jesus it’s you”. (Sung by Mary in Daybreak Paul Field 1983)*

How lovely is that garden now,
From death’s cold hand set free;
The sunshine spreads its golden warmth,
On every rock and tree.

That once was dank and drear;
A scent of spices on the breeze,
A heavenly perfume there.

How gentle our Lord Jesus’ voice,
That casts out Mary’s fear;
She scarce believes, but then she knows,
And greets her Master here.

All faithful souls can come with her,
And find that garden fair;
Where Jesus Christ will greet each one,
Who trusts and seeks him there.

And then like Mary run to tell,
And spread the news around,
That life and health and joy and peace,
Are in the garden found.

(Easter Garden by Barbara Pearson)

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EASTER PRAISE AND INTERCESSION

Loving God, we praise you for this day of celebration,
This day of praise, this day of thanksgiving.
A day that changes the way we think, the way we act, the way we live.
That changes everything. **Lord of life, hear our prayer.**

We pray now for change in our world. For change for all those places
where there is human need. We pray for the poor, the homeless, the sick
and the hungry. **Lord of life, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the victims of war, for refugees, for divided communities and
countries. **Lord of life, hear our prayer.**

We pray for the sorrowful, the fearful, the troubled in heart and mind.
Lord of life, hear our prayer.

We pray for the oppressed, the persecuted, the imprisoned and the
exploited. **Lord of life, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are bereaved, that they may trust their loved ones to
your tender care. **Lord of life, hear our prayer.** (Barbara Pearson)

Living God,
May the truth of Easter break into each and every one of these situations,
bringing help and healing, strength and support,
comfort and courage, hope and help,
faith and freedom, love and life.
The change that you alone can bring. **Lord of life, hear our prayer.**
We offer all our prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Saviour and Lord,

SING: Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King
To all the world glad news we bring
(R&S) Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (Again! As loudly as you like)

AMEN

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