

Transformation – NOW!
EASTERTIDE

Introduction

by Ruth Burgess and Kathy Galloway

© Wild Goose Publications

Mary's story

I saw angels this morning, in the garden.

Angels, asking me why I was crying –
do angels understand sadness?

Do angels know what it's like to lose someone you've loved,
to not know where they've gone?

Through my tears, I saw a man standing there in the distance.

I thought he was the gardener.

I asked him if he'd moved the body of Jesus
and he spoke to me.

He called me by name:

'Mary.'

I turned to him ... I answered him:

'Teacher.'

Through the ache of my tears, I felt wonder and joy.

I wanted that moment to last for ever,
but he gave me a job to do.

He sent me to tell the disciples what was happening.

I saw angels this morning ...

angels and Jesus.

Now I know something of their glory and joy.

Hymn: I danced in the morning

sung by St Martin's Voices
Sydney Carter (1915-2004)

© 1963 Stainer & Bell Ltd

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,
and I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth,
at Bethlehem I had my birth.

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

I danced for the scribe and the pharisee,
but they would not dance and they wouldn't follow me.
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John -
they came with me and the Dance went on.

Chorus

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame;
the holy people said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped and they hung me on high,
and they left me there on a Cross to die.

Chorus

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black -
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
but I am the Dance, and I still go on.

Chorus

They cut me down and I leapt up high;
I am the life that'll never, never die;
I'll live in you if you'll live in me -
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.

Chorus

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’ When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’

Reflection

by Ruth Burgess and Kathy Galloway

© *Wild Goose Publications*

Lord Jesus,
we are always looking for you in the wrong places;
among the good and respectable people,
when we should know you are to be found
with the poor and disreputable and outcast.

Lord Jesus,
we are always looking for you in the wrong places,
at a safe distance,
but you come so close to us,
nearer to us than breathing.
We look for you in churchy things,
but we are more likely to find you
among the pots and pans,
or around the kitchen table ...

We look for you in buildings,
but you walked crowded streets,
and shorelines
and mountains ...

Even now, even after Easter,
still we insist on trying to find you among the tombstones;
among long-dead dogmas,
in old, decaying fears and hurts,
in the guilts and resentments we inhabit like a coffin.

But the angel said:
Why do you look for him among the dead?
He is not here!
Lord Jesus, help us to lay down the graveclothes,
roll away the stone
and come out into life,
here and now.
We will find you,
among the living,
ahead of us, going to the Galilee we seek.
You have wrestled death to the ground,
and now there is nowhere we can go,
no darkness we can enter,
which is not God-encompassed.

Hymn: In Christ alone my hope is found
sung by St Martin's Voices

In Christ alone my hope is found,
he is my light, my strength, my song;
this cornerstone, this solid ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all,
here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones he came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory,
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am his and he is mine -
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from his hand;
till he returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Stuart Townend (born 1963) and Keith Getty (born 1974)

© 2001 Thankyou Music/Adm. by Kingswaysongs,
a division of David C Cook, www.kingswayworship.co.uk

Used by permission.

Prayers

by Thom M. Shuman

©Wild Goose Publications

If we showed you
our hands,
would you find them nicked
from building houses
for the homeless,
or calloused from using the TV remote control
too much?

If we showed you
our feet,
would you find them toughened
by walking the corridors
of a hospice
with the terminally ill,
or wrinkled
by too many hours
in the hot tub?

If we showed you
our hearts,
would you find them broken
over the struggles of
the lost, the little, the last, the least;
or would they be clogged
with the plague
of our consumerised lives?

God of the empty grave,
show us how
to be your witnesses.
Amen

Mothers' Union prayer

Loving Lord,

We thank you for your love
so freely given to us all.

We pray for families around the world.

Bless the work of the Mothers' Union
as we seek to share your love

through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage
and family life.

Empowered by your Spirit,
may we be united in prayer and worship,
and in love and service
reach out as your hands across the world.
In Jesus' name. Amen

©Mothers' Union

Hymn: Crown him with many crowns

sung by St Martin's Voices

Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own:
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.

Crown him the Lord of Love!
Behold his hands and side,
those wounds yet visible above
in beauty glorified:
no angel in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends his burning eye
at mysteries so bright.

Crown him the Lord of peace,
whose power a sceptre sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease,
and all be prayer and praise:
his reign shall know no end,
and round his pierced feet
fair flowers of Paradise extend
their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown him the Lord of years,
the Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
all hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges (1800-94)

Blessing

by the Rt Revd Matthew Porter, Bishop of Bolton

May Christ who out of defeat brings new hope and a new future
fill you with his new life
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you and all those you love
this Easter season and always.
Amen

from Times and Seasons

©The Archbishops' Council

Material: as stated

Theme music: 'Overflowing grace' by Catherine Hilton

Theme image: Lucjan on Pixabay.com

Readers: Margaret Shewring, Rosemary Taylor, Karen Owen,
Judith Hilton, Denise Smith, Matthew Porter

CCLI: 5097385

Prayers next month will be on 9th May 2024 – ASCENSION