

'Hymns We Love' series: THINE BE THE GLORY!

Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory
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, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
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 hath lost its sting.

*Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won!*

No more we doubt thee,
Glorious Prince of life;
Life is naught without thee:
Aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors
Through thy deathless love;
Bring us safe through Jordan
To thy home above:

*Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won!*

Imagine the scene 2,000 years ago. Early on that first Easter Sunday morning, the followers of Jesus were devastated and hidden away, fearful of what lay ahead. All their hopes for a

wonderful future seemed shattered because Jesus, their master and teacher from God, in whom they had put their faith and their hope, whom they had loved and followed, was now dead.

Early that morning, the disciples Peter & John were together when suddenly Mary Magdalene arrived shouting that someone had moved Jesus' body but she didn't know where. Peter and John immediately ran to the tomb and there they found the folded grave clothes where the Jesus' body should have been. and although John believed something special had happened, Peter was just even more confused.

Certainly neither Mary, Peter nor John at this point could respond with the sense of victory and joy with which we have just sung, but over the coming hours their encounters with the risen Jesus took each of them on a journey from a place of utter despair and grief, to one of joy, filled with confidence, faith and hope for a future to be spent with the risen Jesus.

And this is journey that Edmond Budry, who wrote this wonderful, inspiring hymn, takes us on today. From the empty tomb with the rolled away stone and folded grave clothes, through Jesus' appearance to the disciples in the locked room where he scatters their fear and gloom - to his promise, as our Glorious Prince of Life, to bring us safe through Jordan to our home above - through the trials and challenges of life to an eternity safe by his side.

Edmond Budry was born in Vevey, in Switzerland in 1854. Vevey is a small, pretty town on the shores of Lake Geneva and has been home to Charlie Chaplin, the writer Graham Greene and actor James Mason, amongst many others. More pertinently perhaps at this time of year, it was also here in the 1870's that a man named Henri Nestle helped invent milk chocolate.

But whilst milk chocolate was being developed in his home town, Edmond Budry had moved to nearby Lausanne to study theology, becoming a Free Church Pastor at the age of 27, before returning a few years later to Vevey where he remained a pastor until 1923, retiring 9 years before his death aged 78. He wrote and translated a number of hymns, but this is by far his most famous, which he wrote specifically to go with this wonderful rousing tune, composed by George Handel 140 years earlier.

Budry knew that the resurrection of Jesus is at the centre of the Christian faith, without it his belief would be meaningless. Saint Paul himself said "if Christ did not rise from the dead... then our trust in God is worthless" but equally, if Jesus did rise from the dead on that first Easter Morning, the implications are breathtaking and everything the Bible says about Jesus is true: God can be trusted, forgiveness is possible, death is defeated and heaven is attainable.

And that is why the reality of seeing and knowing a risen Jesus so transformed the lives of the disciples that morning and that's why we, and they, can sing so confidently

"Endless is the victory, Thou o'er death hast won"

But as we just reflected, the journey that first Easter Morning didn't start so confidently. Since the trauma of his public & agonising death on Friday afternoon, everything now appeared lost to the followers of Jesus. Grieving, fearful and defeated they were not expecting a miracle and weren't ready for one. But Jesus came gently and personally to each of them that day, meeting them at their point of need and turning their grief into joy, their fear into confidence and their defeat into victory.

Mary was the first to see Jesus. She had lingered outside the tomb when Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. We don't know why she stayed, perhaps she just wanted to be near the last place she had seen Jesus, but we do know that this is where Jesus comes to her, on her own, and gently speaks her name. "Mary".

She immediately recognises his voice, turns towards him and cries out "Teacher". It was not until Jesus speaks her name that Mary recognises him. But the moment he does she knows it's him, because His voice is full of love for her. Sometimes seeing is not believing... Loving is.

The disciples also needed to encounter Jesus that day... and to see him. So, although Mary is sent by Jesus to tell them all that had just happened – the apostle to the apostles as she is often called - they all, including Peter and John, seem to struggle to believe her story and we find them that evening still fearful and hiding behind locked doors.

And this is where Jesus comes and stands among them. He doesn't tell them off for their lack of belief, or for not understanding all his teaching over the previous 3 years, he simply greets them "Peace be with you" and then he shows them his wounded hands and side.

Whilst Mary just needed to hear her name, the disciples needed a bit more, they needed to see Jesus, they needed him to show them his scars and to hear his voice. And Jesus meets them exactly where they were at.

They didn't need to leave their room, they didn't need to resolve their questions and fears, they didn't need to go to the temple or follow a religious programme. Instead Jesus came to them in their weakness and fear, just as they were.

And as they saw and experienced the risen Jesus, so their fear and despair disintegrated and were replaced with astonishment and delight. As we sing:

"Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom"

And what about you and I? I suspect that many of us may feel a bit like the disciples at the moment. For very different reasons we are also locked inside our houses, shut off from the world around us, possibly feeling lonely, isolated and fearful.

But the story of Easter assures us that the risen Jesus still wants to come to you and to me, to stand before us, to speak our name, to show us his love - demonstrated through his scars from the cross - and to gently call us to believe and to follow.

He is not deterred by our questions or our doubts, he will meet us just where we are. Over the coming days we will explore together who Jesus is through 5 well-loved hymns and I would love it if you came on that journey with me. Together we will find a risen Jesus who is not afraid of our doubts or our fears, but who calls us by name, who shows, who explains, who welcomes and who forgives.

And if we place our trust in the risen Jesus, put our lives in his nail-scarred hands, he will scatter our fears and gloom, he will aid us in our strife and bring us safe through Jordan to our home above.....and then together we can proclaim

“Thine be the glory, Risen conquering Son, Endless is the victory, Thou o'er death hast won”

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord

Thank you that no matter where I am today, you are able to find me, to come by my side and to call me by my name. Thank you that you are not put off by my doubts, anger, or fears but will always welcome me, just as I am.

Help me now to put my trust in you, knowing that being held in your arms is the safest place to be in this time of trouble.

I ask Lord that over the coming days you would help me draw close to you, listen to your voice and come to know just how much you love me.

In the name of Jesus I pray.

Amen

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