

EASTER ORATORIO

The Story of the Resurrection from the Gospel according to St John, chapters 20 and 21

Translation and libretto by Tom Wright for a setting by Paul Spicer

PART I: THE NEW DAY

- 1. Chorus** On the seventh day God rested
 in the darkness of the tomb;
Having finished on the sixth day
 all his work of joy and doom.
Now the word had fallen silent,
 and the water had run dry,
The bread had all been scattered,
 and the light had left the sky.
The flock had lost its shepherd,
 and the seed was sadly sown,
The courtiers had betrayed their king,
 and nailed him to his throne.
O Sabbath rest by Calvary,
 O calm of tomb below,
Where the grave-clothes and the spices
 cradle him we did not know!
Rest you well, beloved Jesus,
 Caesar's Lord and Israel's King,
In the brooding of the Spirit,
 in the darkness of the spring.
- 2. Evangelist** On the first day of the week, very early, while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, and saw that the stone
had been taken away. So she ran and came to Simon Peter,
and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them:
- Mary** They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know
where they have laid him!
- 3. Chorus** Where have they laid you, Jesus, Lord?
Where have they taken you, my King?
It was enough that you were scorned,
And scourged, and shamed, and stripped, and killed;
But now new terror lifts its head,
Chaos and trembling come again.
- 4. Evangelist** So Peter and the other disciple set off and came to the tomb.
The two of them ran together; but the other disciple ran faster
than Peter, and arrived at the tomb first. He stooped down and
saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then
Simon Peter arrived, following him, and went into the tomb;
and he saw the linen cloths lying, and the cloth that had been
around Jesus' head, not lying with the other cloths, but folded
up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came first
to the tomb, went in; and *he saw, and believed*. For as yet they
did not know the scripture, that he must rise again from the
dead.

- 5. Aria (tenor)** Like day new dawned there rises in me now
The wild delight of God's creative power.
One glance upon the bed where Jesus lay
Has quite undone my cold and aching fear,
And, in its place, a stranger has appeared:
A trust that he who made the earth and sky
Is recreating all, beginning here,
Beginning now.
The race is run, and God
Has overcome the enemy at last.
In Jesus he has loved us to the end,
And love, strong love, has triumphed over death.
- 6. Evangelist** Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood
outside, near the tomb, weeping. As she wept, she stooped
down towards the tomb; and she saw two angels, clothed in
white, one at the head and one at the foot of where Jesus'
body had been. And they said to her:
Angels Lady, why are you weeping?
Evangelist She said to them,
Mary They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they
have laid him.
- 7. Chorus** Where have they laid my Jesus?
Where is he now at rest?
Why did they steal and take him,
The one I loved the best?
The gifts I would have brought him –
The spices rich and rare –
Are worthless; and I stand here
In shame and in despair.
- 8. Aria (soprano)** Where can I go? To whom
In this all-new
Distress? In sorrow, anger, fear? The one
Who knew me, comforted, and healed me –
He is gone; and where,
Where can I turn?
O loving Spirit,
Israel's God, the one whom Jesus
Knew as Father, help me now.
Give hope when hope has gone.
- 9. Evangelist** With those words she turned round, and saw Jesus standing
there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her:
Jesus Lady, why are you weeping? For whom are you searching?
Evangelist She, guessing that he was the gardener, said to him,
Mary Sir, if it was you who carried him away, tell me where you have
laid him, and I will take him away.
- 10. Chorale** The garden of creation
Was Adam's glad employ;
The garden of redemption
Is Jesus' right and joy.
The grains of wheat there planted

Will bear much fruit this day,
The sunlight of the morning
Will chase the night away.

The new creation wakens
Before his skilful hand;
The thorns and thistles vanish
At Jesus' royal command.
The tree of life has blossomed,
The flaming sword is stilled;
The gardener has triumphed
Just as his father willed.

- 11. Evangelist** Jesus said to her,
Jesus Mary!
Evangelist She turned, and said to him in Hebrew,
Mary Rabbouni!
Evangelist Which means 'Teacher'.

12. Duet (soprano and tenor) and Chorus

I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the
horse and the rider he has thrown into the sea. This is my
God, and I will praise him. The Lord will reign for ever and
ever.

13. EASTER HYMN 1

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness;
God hath brought his Israel
Into joy from sadness;
Loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke
Jacob's sons and daughters;
Led them with unmoistened foot
Through the Red Sea waters.

'Tis the spring of souls to-day;
Christ hath burst his prison,
And from three days' sleep in death
As a sun hath risen;
All the winter of our sins,
Long and dark, is flying
From his light, to whom we give
Laud and praise undying.

Now the queen of seasons, bright
With the day of splendour,
With the royal feast of feasts,
Comes its joy to render;
Comes to glad Jerusalem,
Who with true affection
Welcomes in unwearied strains
Jesu's Resurrection.

Neither might the gates of death,
Nor the tomb's dark portal,
Nor the watchers, nor the seal,

Hold thee as a mortal;
But to-day, amidst thine own
Thou didst stand, bestowing
That thy peace which evermore
Passeth human knowing.

**14. Evangelist
Jesus**

Jesus said to her,
Do not touch me; for I have not yet gone up to the Father. But
go to my brothers and say to them: I am going up to my Father
and your Father, to my God and your God.

15. Aria (bass)

The victory of the cross is now declared.
When we were foes, God made us friends;
When we were slaves, he made us sons.
He calls us now
To be the brothers of our Lord,
The newborn sisters of the crucified.

16. Evangelist

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples that she
had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her.

17. Chorale

The first to bring the gospel
Of life newborn at last
Was she who most had needed
God's healing from the past.
God chose the weak and humble,
To shame the proud and strong,
God chose the meek and trusting
To prove the sceptic wrong!

18. EASTER HYMN 2

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green
In the grave they laid him, Love whom men had slain,
Thinking that never he would wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.
Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain,
Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen,
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.
When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Thy touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts, that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springeth green.

19. Evangelist

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors
were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Judaeans.

**Jesus
Evangelist**

Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them,
Peace be with you.
And saying this, he showed them his hands and his side.

20. Chorus

The price of peace is carved upon his hands
And in his side. The wounds that love has borne

Are strange, familiar, signs of passion spent.
The water and the blood have told their tale,
And we have seen and testified the truth;
Now, hands and side declare a double theme,
Pressed down and running over, full of hope:
Jesus is risen from the dead;
The price is paid at last, and peace is won.

21. Evangelist Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again,
Jesus Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.
Evangelist Saying this, he breathed on them, and said to them,
Jesus Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained.

22. Chorus The peace so dearly won is dearly shared.
We glimpse the glory of the Word
Made flesh - our flesh, our hands, our side, our love:
Sails for the Spirit's breath. Our cargo now
Forgiveness to the world, and warning too.

23. Aria (soprano) The evening of the first day of the week –
The day of new creation, new beginnings,
After God's six days' labour, one day's rest –
Jesus commands his friends, as once, to Eve
And Adam, God had given their commission,
Breathing his secret, mighty wind of love
Into their nostrils: "Bear fruit, multiply,
And tend the garden and the beasts of God."
So now, "Go forth, bring peace, forgive, retain,
I send you as the Father once sent me."

O Holy Spirit of the living Lord,
Bread-of-life's breath, bird brooding on the waters:
Accept our thanks for servants and apostles
Sent to our world as Jesus was to his!
Accept our thanks for shepherds' costly love
Showing Christ's peace-filled wounds to troubled souls!
Come, when the doors of this old world are locked –
For fear of foe or neighbour, sin or pride –
Come with the wounds of Jesus, in your saints,
Stand in our midst, give peace, and bless, and warn.

24. Chorale Jesus' mission now is ours,
His commission, all his powers,
All the Father's pleasure;
All he wrought in life and death,
By the Spirit's mighty breath
Now is ours for ever.

Risen Lord, whose hard-won peace
In the world must now increase,
By the Father's sending;
Overcome our anxious fears,
Wipe away the long night's tears
In your love unending.

Send us out with peace divine,
Pour forgiveness out like wine,
Like a mighty river;
Grieving, may we warn of woe
Those who still choose not to know
God the gracious giver.

25. Evangelist

Now Thomas, called 'Didymus', one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him,

Disciples

We have seen the Lord!

Evangelist

But he said to them,

Thomas

Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I shall not believe.

26. Chorus

The sea is too deep
The heaven's too high
I cannot swim
I cannot fly;
I must stay here
I must stay here
Here where I know
How I can know
Here where I know
What I can know.

27. Evangelist

And after eight days, the disciples were again indoors, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came again, although the doors were shut, and stood in the midst, and said,

Jesus

Peace be with you.

Evangelist

Then he said to Thomas,

Jesus

Come here with your finger, and inspect my hands; come here with your hand, and put it into my side. Do not be faithless, but believe.

28. Aria (tenor)

The sea has parted. Pharaoh's hosts –
Despair, and doubt, and fear, and pride –
No longer frighten us. We must
Cross over to the other side.

The heaven bows down. With wounded hands
Our exiled God, our Lord of shame
Before us, living, breathing, stands;
The Word is near, and calls our name.

New knowing for the doubting mind,
New seeing out of blindness grows;
New trusting may the sceptic find
New hope through that which faith now knows.

29. Evangelist

Thomas, in reply, said,

Thomas

My Lord, and my God!

Evangelist

Jesus said to him,

Jesus

Do you believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe.

30. Chorale

O Lord, when we have doubted
Your mighty power to save;
When we have feared, and questioned
Your victory o'er the grave;
Forgive us for our blindness,
And open now our eyes,
To see in faith and wonder
Our Lord and God arise!

31. EASTER HYMN 3

The Day of Resurrection!
Earth, tell it out abroad;
The Passover of gladness,
The Passover of God!
From death to life eternal,
From earth unto the sky,
Our Christ hath brought us over
With hymns of victory.
Our hearts be pure from evil,
That we may see aright
The Lord in rays eternal
Of Resurrection-light;
And, listening to his accents,
May hear so calm and plain
His own 'All Hail!', and, hearing,
May raise the victor strain.
Now let the heavens be joyful,
And earth her song begin,
The round world keep high triumph,
And all that is therein;
Let all things seen and unseen
Their notes of gladness blend,
For Christ the Lord hath risen,
Our joy that hath no end.

32. Evangelist

There are many other signs which Jesus did, in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these things are written so that you may believe that the Messiah, the Son of God, is Jesus; and that, by this faith, you may have life in his name.

33. EASTER HYMN 4

You shall go out with joy
And come again in peace;
The mountains and the hills
Shall sing and never cease;
The Son of God is risen again,
His love has conquered death's domain.
The trees in every field
Shall clap their hands, and say
'Come shout aloud, and help
Us celebrate this day!'
Jesus, the King, has burst the grave,
And lives once more to heal and save.

The Word, like rain or snow,
Has come down from above,
And now reveals to all
God's purposes of love;
The Word made flesh, once dead, now lives,
New life to all he freely gives.

The myrtle for the briar,
The cypress for the thorn,
Shall rise to tell the world
Of its awakening dawn.
Jesus, the Life, the Truth, the Way,
Has ushered in God's great new day.

PART II: THE NEW CALLING

- 34. Chorus** Into that strange, unmapped new land,
Round the forbidden corner, through
The locked and bolted door, we grope,
Prisoners released upon a larger world.
New freedoms frighten us. We clutch
Old tasks, familiar ways. Come now
Lord of the old and new, disclose
To our explorers' eyes your new-found land.
- 35. Evangelist** After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples,
by the sea of Tiberias. And he showed himself in this way.
Gathered there were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus,
Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two
other disciples. Simon Peter said to them,
- Simon** I am going fishing.
- Evangelist** They said to him,
- Disciples** We will go with you.
- 36. Aria (bass)** This was where
He came.
Wakening love's first
Blossom from thorns, he wooed
Our kneeling wonder.
This was where
He came.
- 37. Evangelist** Off they went and got into the boat, and during that night they
caught nothing.
- 38. Chorus** All night
We worked
We know
The sea
Nothing
We caught
Ashamed
We are...

- 39. Evangelist** When morning came, Jesus stood on the shore; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So Jesus said to them,
Jesus Friends, haven't you caught anything?
Evangelist They answered him
Disciples No!
Evangelist So he said to them,
Jesus Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find something.
Evangelist So they cast the net, and now they were not able to haul it in because of the weight of the fish.
- 40. Chorale** And God said, Let the earth
And sky and sea bring forth,
Let beauty come to birth
In south, east, west and north;
The night, the day; the land, the sea;
Let all things tell their maker's worth.

And God said, Let my Son
Arise to greet the day;
The sorrows of the night
The morn has chased away.
Creation's new abundant joy
Now beckons those who will obey.
- 41. Chorus** The fish in the sea
The corn on the land
The joy of the world
Is at his command.
The nets will not break
The promise is sure
Food for the world
The harvest secure.
- 42. Evangelist** So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter,
Beloved Disciple It is the Lord!
Evangelist So Simon Peter, hearing that it was the Lord, wrapped his cloak about him, for he was naked, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish; for they were not far from the land, but about two hundred cubits away.
- 43. Chorus** Come, Lord Jesus, stand and bless
All our nights of hopelessness
With the dawn of life's new day;
Without you, no fruit is borne
Without you, the branch is torn
Withered, useless, cast away.

Come, Lord Jesus, bid us now
In the vine to live, and grow
Filled with life, and love, and power;
Send us, now that day is here,
Into darkness far and near
With the light of this new hour.

- 44. Evangelist** So when they had come to the shore they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.
Jesus
Evangelist So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net on to the shore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty three of them. And though there were so many, the net was not torn.
- 45. Aria (soprano)** The glowing charcoal in the high priest's hall heard everything. The three-times broken word accused and shamed. The night was wet with tears. Now, in the morning light, another fire prepares the wound for healing balm.
- 46. Evangelist** Jesus said to them,
Jesus Come and have breakfast!
Evangelist None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?", because they knew it was the Lord.
- 47. Aria (tenor)** The same, and yet renewed:
Transformed. The eyes, the hands, the feet;
The one we knew, we know.
What is this knowing, that would yet
Desire to ask?
- 48. Evangelist** So Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and similarly with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after being raised from the dead.
- 49. Boys & Chorus** Loaves and fishes
By Galilee's shore,
Bread of life, broken
To die no more;
Food for the hungry
Sight for the blind
Loaves and fishes
For all humankind.
- 50. EASTER HYMN 5**
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Hearts to heaven and voices raise;
Sing to God a hymn of gladness,
Sing to God a hymn of praise;
He who on the Cross a victim
For the world's salvation bled,
Jesus Christ, the King of glory,
Now is risen from the dead.
- Christ is risen, Christ the first-fruits
Of the holy harvest field,
Which will all its full abundance
At his second coming yield;
Then the golden ears of harvest
Will their heads before him wave,
Ripened by his glorious sunshine
From the furrows of the grave.
- Christ is risen, we are risen;
Shed upon us heavenly grace,
Rain, and dew, and gleams of glory

From the brightness of thy face;
That we, Lord, with hearts in heaven
Here on earth may fruitful be,
And by angel-hands be gathered,
And be ever safe with thee.

Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory be to God on high;
To the Father, and the Saviour,
Who has gained the victory;
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
Fount of love and sanctity;
Alleluia! Alleluia!
To the Triune Majesty.

- 51. Evangelist** So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,
- Jesus** Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?
- 52. Aria (soprano)** The buried truth
Must now be brought
Into the light again:
The fear that lied,
The shame that wept,
The love that hid its name.
O give me courage now, to tell
The truth my heart has known too well.
- 53. Evangelist** Simon Peter said to Jesus,
- Simon** Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.
- Evangelist** Jesus said to him,
- Jesus** Feed my lambs.
- 54. Aria (soprano)** Is this forgiveness? Is this love's new word,
Spoken so gently, yet with healing power?
Rescuing love sends shepherds to the fields;
Those fed on love must feed the hungry lambs.
- 55. Evangelist** He said to him a second time,
- Jesus** Simon, son of John, do you love me?
- Evangelist** He said to him,
- Simon** Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.
- Evangelist** He said to him,
- Jesus** Look after my sheep.
- 56. Chorus** Like a shepherd he will feed
His flock, his lambs; and all in need
Shall come into his sheepfold.
All his work he gladly shares
All his hope, his joy, his tears
With his newborn shepherds.
- 57. Evangelist** Jesus said to him the third time,
- Jesus** Simon, son of John, do you love me?
- Evangelist** Peter was upset that he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?".

- 58. Aria (soprano)** The sharpest pain
In love's bright armoury:
The probing, wounding,
Healing question. Why
Do we shrink from joy?
- 59. Evangelist** So Peter said to him,
Simon Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.
Evangelist Jesus said to him,
Jesus Feed my sheep. Truly, truly I say to you, when you were young, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wished. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and take you where you do not wish to go.
Evangelist He said this to indicate by what kind of death Peter would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said,
Jesus Follow me!
- 60. Boys & Chorus** I spoke like a child
I thought like a child,
I played and I dressed and I laughed like a child;
But when I am grown
Love calls me his own
And bids me to follow him where he has gone.
The hill outside the city gate
Is steep, but I must follow;
The tree of life - its angry weight
Is harsh, but I must follow;
The path he trod through sea and wave,
The feasting, healing, shame and grave
Are all too much; but, as he gave,
He calls, and I must follow.
- 61. Evangelist** Peter turned, and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?'
When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus,
Simon Lord, what about this man?
Evangelist Jesus said to him,
Jesus If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?
Follow me!
- 62. Duet (bass and tenor)**
The play has many parts. I do not ask which is the greater, which the less. We all play without pride, or shame, our given roles; so shall the many-coloured tale be told.
- 63. Evangelist** The saying went out among the community that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; merely, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?' This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things, and wrote them; and we know that his witness is true.

64. Chorus

The unnamed, special friend whom Jesus loved
The one who heard and saw, believed and taught;
Within his heart the wound of love has left
Its mark. We know his witness to be true.

65. Evangelist

There are many other things that Jesus did. If they were to be
written down one by one, I suppose that the world would not
contain the books that would be written.

66. Chorus, soprano, tenor and bass

Unfathomed life of Jesus
Unknown, untold, unthought!
Unwritten and unspoken,
The deeds that he has wrought!
Love's mountain towers o'er us,
And, far above our sight,
The sunlight ever beckons
The children of the night!
The books that would be written,
The stories we would tell
Would fill to overflowing
The world in which we dwell;
Lord, give us hearts to know you
And wisdom past our sight
That we may now embrace you
And find our whole delight!

67. EASTER HYMN 6

Ye choirs of new Jerusalem
Your sweetest notes employ,
The Paschal victory to hymn
In strains of holy joy.
How Judah's Lion burst his chains,
And crushed the serpent's head;
And brought with him, from death's domains,
The long-imprisoned dead.
From hell's devouring jaws the prey
Alone our Leader bore;
His ransomed hosts pursue their way
Where he hath gone before.
Triumphant in his glory now
His sceptre ruleth all,
Earth, heaven, and hell before him bow,
And at his footstool fall.
While joyful thus his praise we sing,
His mercy we implore,
Into his palace bright to bring
And keep us evermore.
All glory to the Father be,
All glory to the Son,
All glory, Holy Ghost, to thee,
While endless ages run. Alleluia! Amen.

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