

At the Lamb's High Feast

April 26, 2021 Scott Gunn

At the Lamb's high feast we sing
praise to our victorious King,
who hath washed us in the tide
flowing from his pierced side;
praise we him, whose love divine
gives his sacred Blood for wine,
gives his Body for the feast,
Christ the victim, Christ the priest.

Where the Paschal blood is poured,
death's dark angel sheathes his sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant got
through the wave that drowns the foe.
Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,
Paschal victim, Paschal bread;
with sincerity and love
eat we manna from above.

Mighty victim from on high,
hell's fierce powers beneath thee lie;
thou hast conquered in the fight,
thou hast brought us life and light:
now no more can death appall,
now no more the grave enthrall;
thou hast opened paradise,
and in thee thy saints shall rise.

Easter triumph, Easter joy,
these alone do sin destroy.
From sin's power do thou set free
souls newborn, O Lord, in thee.
Hymns of glory, songs of praise,
Father, unto thee we raise:
risen Lord, all praise to thee
with the Spirit ever be.

Latin, 1632. Translated by Robert Campbell

Perhaps people love this one because we usually sing it to Salzburg, which is an outstanding tune. But I think the words are the real treasure.

Too often, I think we domesticate Easter. We focus on the stirring truth of Christ's resurrection, but we shy away from the fact that for Christ to have been raised, evil had to be vanquished.

The joy of Easter relies on the agony of sacrifice. Eternal life is achieved by the destruction of death. Jesus Christ is able to appear to his disciples after his death precisely because he was willing to be crucified, an offering for the salvation of all. If we celebrate Easter without staying in sight of the cross, we are looking for cheap grace, the scent of Easter lilies without the scent of the anointing oil of death.

If you've been to Jerusalem, you may have visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. There you can see how close the cross and the tomb are to one another. It's hard to gaze at the cross without glimpsing the tomb. It's hard to visit Christ's tomb without noticing the crowds at Golgotha.

Let us, by all means, celebrate unfettered Easter triumph! But let us remember also to sing, "Mighty victim from on high, hell's fierce powers beneath thee lie; thou hast conquered in the fight, thou hast brought us life and light."