

## Love is the Lesson

April 12, 2021 Scott Gunn

*Most glorious Lord of life, that on this day,  
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin:  
And having harrow'd hell, didst bring away  
Captivity thence captive, us to win:  
This joyous day, dear Lord, with joy begin,  
And grant that we for whom thou diddest die,  
Being with thy dear blood clean wash'd from sin,  
May live for ever in felicity.  
And that thy love we weighing worthily,  
May likewise love thee for the same again:  
And for thy sake, that all like dear didst buy,  
With love may one another entertain.  
So let us love, dear love, like as we ought,  
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.*  
Edmund Spenser (c.1552-99)

I love this poem, and it has been put to music in several notable settings. Perhaps the most well-known version is that of William Harris.

A few days ago, I wrote about the harrowing of hell, and why this teaching is so powerful in understanding the depth of God's love for us. While I love the poetic reminder that in redeeming people from hell, I am also reminded that Jesus "didst bring away / Captivity thence captive, us to win."

What I especially love about this poem though is the final pair of lines, for they remind us that Easter is meant to show forth in our lives, today. "So let us love, dear love, like as we ought, / Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught."

It's tempting to reduce "love" to some sentimental feeling. But Christian love is more about actions than feelings. Indeed, love is the lesson Jesus taught. He himself said in his final instructions to his disciples, "*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another*" (John 13:34).

Well, that's sobering. Jesus wants us to love one another as he loved us. How did he love us? Completely. Perfectly. Sacrificially. Graciously, loving us before we loved him.

That's the Easter life, the way we are meant to live if we grasp the freedom and joy that comes in the risen Christ. We are to love others sacrificially and generously. We are to love others first, without expecting anything in return. We are to love one another with Christian love. With God's help, let us love others as Christ first loved us.