



This Religion column is a regular feature written for the Gallup Independent by Gallup area residents, representing different faith communities, who share their ideas about bringing a spiritual perspective into our daily lives and community issues. For information about contributing a guest column, contact Elizabeth Hardin-Burrola at The Independent: (505) 863-6811 ext. 218 or lizreligion01@yahoo.com.

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What Language Shall I Borrow?

This article will appear on one of the most hopeful days of the Christian calendar—after Good Friday, and before Easter. We can only now describe it as hopeful because we know of the Resurrection. Surely for the followers and friends of Jesus, the day after his death, nearly 2000 years ago, must have been the saddest of all days.

I claim we “know” of the Resurrection—in other words, Christians believe it to have happened. The Bible identifies a host of witnesses who saw a risen Jesus. St. Paul proclaims in that if Christ did not rise from the dead, “we are of all people to be most pitied.” (I Cor. 15)

So Christians stake their very life, their identity, their hope on the death and resurrection of Christ. It is the most profound phenomenon in all of history. It has turned the world upside down, and continues to change lives and cultures and the sweep of human history itself.

Christians have for centuries tried to find words to describe their gratitude for the love of God and the sacrifice of His Son. Poets and songwriters do the best job of it, as compared to most of us who fumble around for some paltry expression of thankfulness. Martin Luther asked: “What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest Friend?”

Songwriter Fred Lehman, though it sounds like hyperbole, got it right when he penned:

...to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretch from sky to sky. (The Love of God)

So on this day after what my kids used to call “Bad Friday” and on Easter Eve, let’s find a few more precious jewels which, if we stop to examine and brood over them, will bring us to our knees.

We ought to ask:

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon Thee? Alas, my treason, Jesus has undone thee! T’was I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied Thee; I crucified Thee. (Ah, Dearest Jesus)

And acknowledge:



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Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul; Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole...I bless the Christ of God; I rest on love divine; and with unfaltering lip and heart I call this Savior mine. (Not What My Hands Have Done)

And ponder:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?...Sometimes it causes me to tremble... (Were You There?)

And judge:

See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down: Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown? (When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)

And respond:

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. (When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)

And celebrate:

Death can not keep its prey—Jesus my Savior. He tore the bars away—Jesus my Lord. Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes... (Low in the Grave He Lay)

And worship:

Christ, we do all adore thee, and we do praise thee forever...for on the holy cross Thou the world from sin redeemed...Christ we do all adore thee. (Christ, We Do All Adore Thee)

And live in gratitude and service:

Fill thou my life, oh Lord my God, in every part with praise, that my whole being may proclaim thy being and thy ways...so shall no part of day or night from sacredness be free, but all my life in every step be fellowship with Thee. (Fill Thou My Life)



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These words and ways are written on our hearts, embedded in our being, woven into our worldview. For me, it is the result of being raised in a Christian home, of being in church twice every Sunday where these songs have been sung for decades and of being educated in Christian schools where Christian thought and morality was foundational.

What language shall we borrow to express our faith, our hope, our love? Let us dig deeply into the Christian tradition and allow the words and thoughts of the centuries to enrich our worship and energize our way of life.

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