

## ***A Light to Shine in the Darkness: The Transfiguration***

*Matthew 17: 1-9*

Gillian Clarke, Welsh national poet and playwright, used to read poetry in a hospital for those with mental illness

She later wrote a poem about what happened one Spring Sunday, when she had driven to this place of sadness and loss, up the main drive, which was lined with a glory of daffodils .... And this is the end of that poem.

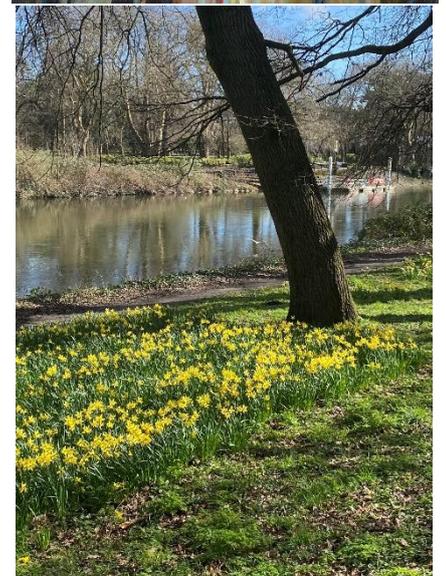
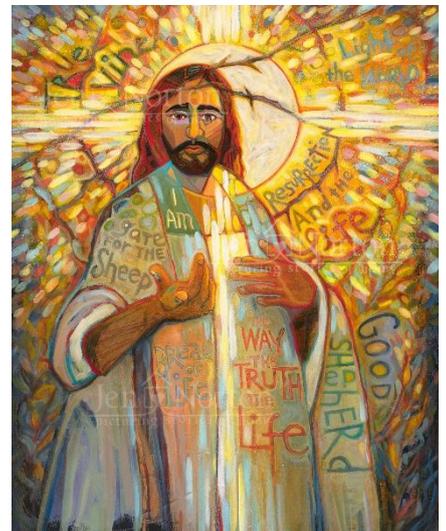
... I read to their presences, absences,  
to the big, dumb labouring man as he rocks.

He is suddenly standing, silently,  
huge and mild, but I feel afraid. Like slow  
movement of spring water or the first bird  
of the year in the breaking darkness,  
the labourer's voice recites 'The Daffodils'.

The nurses are frozen, alert; the patients  
seem to listen. He is hoarse but word-perfect.  
Outside the daffodils are still as wax,  
a thousand, ten thousand, their syllables  
unspoken, their creams and yellows still.

Forty years ago, in a Valleys school,  
the class recited poetry by rote.  
Since the dumbness of misery fell  
he has remembered there was a music  
of speech and that once he had something to say.

When he's done, before the applause, we observe  
the flowers' silence. A thrush sings  
and the daffodils are flame<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Miracle on St. David's Day – Gillian Clarke

Image: Jen Norton, Resurrected Christ

Photo: Daffodils by the Taff, Cardiff

Sometimes, in the journey of faith, we can feel, like the labourer, a little locked into silence. Perhaps God feels hard to sense, or inexplicable.

Sometimes the world can feel disfigured with so many brokennesses, so many different types of loss and pain, powers of oppression and repression. In our own story, locally, or on the global stage.

Our reading today falls between two of Jesus' predictions of his death. A death which he seems dead-set on not avoiding, or fighting. His disciples must have felt confused, scared, lost; at the mercy of the evils and powers of the world.

And ... our scripture tells us ... Jesus took them up the mountain to pray.

And all is transfigured with Light.

When we open our hearts to God,

what is disfigured and broken

can be transfigured.

Light and glory can break through – promise and reality of redeeming love, unconquerable life.

*A thrush sings, and the daffodils are flame*, says Gillian Clarke. Song and Flame, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Gifts that are given to the heart, to be kindled and re-kindled. Known and re-discovered.

Up on the mountain, the disciples encounter the glorious mystery of the Spirit, the tender Voice of the Father, the Touch of the Son ... the Trinity of Love to carry them through the road ahead, through all the challenge of the cross, of the waiting, and to the Resurrection.

I suspect that time on the mountain returned to them often with strength and hope.

Like Wordsworth, wandering the daffodil-blessed fields, which lit his heart later in his sadness and illness; becoming glory shared down the years with a labourer lost in trauma.

The Light passes on.

Jesus says, let me call you out of the spirals that pull you down - come to the mountain top. I will remind you of who I really am and who you, Beloved, really are also. And he simply touches them, - touches us - and says 'do not be afraid'.

The truth is, God does this all the time ... *all the time* - if we open our hearts just for a moment - he is breaking through in glory - to touch us, and name us.

And each time he does, it's like layers of light and blessing; each glimpse renewing life, to return to us when we are weary.

I don't know what feels disfigured in you, or the stories of those you love. I can guess some of what might feel disfigured to you in the world, looking at the news each day...

But I wonder what mountain top moments, what blazes of daffodils, have lit your life of faith? How, now, re-remembered, they might heal and bless, restore, and give you strength and love for yourself, and to share? And what glories are yet to glimpse?

We have a God of transfiguration; of redeeming, glorious light.

Who gifts us his Spirit and fills us too, with flame and song. That we may become channels of his light in a broken world...

And proclaim that what is disfigured, can be transfigured.

That what is lost in mist, can be lit with glory.

And all shall find their Voice, their Song, their inner Flame.

Amen