

Peace and Quiet in Troubled Times May 2026

Welcome to this opportunity to give yourself time and space away from the daily tasks, worries and fears which put our minds in turmoil. You are invited to focus on the music, words and pictures. You may find it helpful to read the poems out loud and then to keep silences in between, entering into an oasis of calm, to engage in 'mindfulness'. Each month we explore a different theme, relevant to our common experiences of life and the world around us. We follow the pattern of the seasons of the Church year.

Please click on the underlined text beneath the images to hear the music via YouTube. Please do skip or close any adverts that appear.

Visions of Heaven

This month's Peace and Quiet becomes available during the Church's Easter season which continues until 14th May. This is Ascension Day which marks the completion of the story of Jesus's earthly life.



https://youtu.be/4hIRXX_7gME

Mozart – Andantino from Flute and Harp Concerto

Spring

With each unfolding seed, with every spring,
He breathes the rumour of his resurrection,
As birdsong calls your hidden heart to sing.
So may this season be his benediction,
To life your love, and bid your prayer take wing,
To thaw your frozen hope, to warm your mind,
For spring has come! Can Heaven be far behind?

Malcom Guite

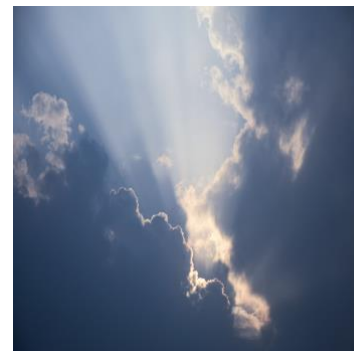
Heaven: How do we understand heaven?

Do we need to fully comprehend this mystery? Perhaps we get surprising glimpses of it in the midst of our broken and messy lives? Maybe we use the word 'heaven' to express the fulfilment of our longings. 'It will be heaven to see you again, to hold you again, to escape from the suffering we see all around us.'



Ascension Day

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place,
As earth became a part of heaven's story
And heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted,
He took us with him to the heart of things,
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and heaven-centred now, and sings:
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we ourselves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light;
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed.

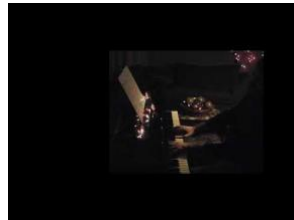


Malcolm Guite from 'Sounding the Seasons'

Heaven

How can our language,
Formed for time and space, express
The timeless graciousness of God?
What of ourselves, how will we be
When limits to loving are removed?
To know how we are known,
The judgement past, should fill us
Not with terror but with joy.
Complete acceptance in the love of God -
Will that be heaven?

Ann Lewin from 'Watching for the Kingfisher'



<https://youtu.be/uXVVsiW-nHk>

O Magnum Mysterium

The last book of the Bible 'Revelation' records the vision granted to John whilst in exile on the island of Patmos. 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem.' It was a city with streets of gold and gates of pearl, with the river of the water of life running through it and the tree of life growing and producing leaves 'for the healing of the nations.' It inspired John Bunyan to write 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. Published in 1678, it is a Christian allegory: the journey of 'Christian' or 'Everyman' from his home town, from the city of destruction (this world) to the celestial city (that which is to come - heaven). As the pilgrims arrived at the Holy City, they had to wait at one of the Gates until the King commanded to open the Gate.

'Now I saw in my dream, that these pilgrims went in at the Gate; and as they entered they were transfigured, and they had Raiment put on that shone like Gold. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the City rang again for joy, and that it was said within, Enter ye into the joy of our Lord.'



Heaven in the ordinary

Teach me my God and King
In all things thee to see;
and what I do in anything
to do it as for thee.

A man that looks on glass,
on it may stay his eye;
or, if he pleaseth, through it pass,
and then the heav'n espy.

George Herbert (1593-1633)

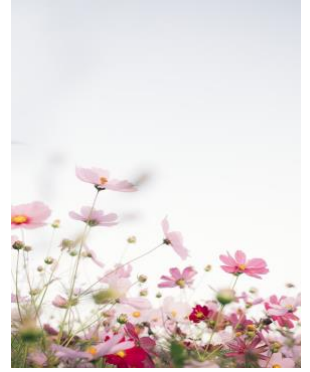




From Auguries of Innocence

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.

William Blake



Heaven

Are you dying to see heaven?
I tell you the truth -
you have seen it already.

The earth is thick with heaven.

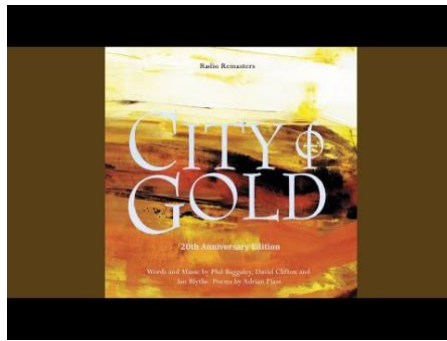
Anyone who has climbed a tree
knows this.

Anyone who has stood on the forgiving shore
while the ocean breathes upon them
knows this.

Anyone who has fed a bulb to the soil
and through slow seasons watched sun and rain
give everything of themselves
just so it can grow beautiful
knows this.

You needn't fly
You needn't reach or strive.
If heaven is what you're looking for
then all you need to do
is realise that you're alive.

Gideon Heugh - Rumours of light

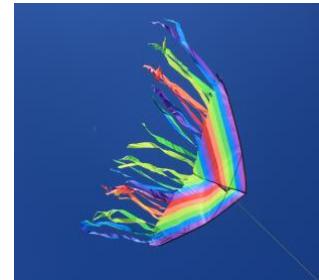


<https://youtu.be/EU9HXkQIMQI>

Adrian Pluss - Heaven

Heaven

When I'm in heaven
Tell me there'll be kites to fly,
That kind they say you can control
Although I never did for long,
That kind that spin and spin and spin and spin
Then sulk and dive and die,
And rise again and spin again,
And dive and die and rise up yet again,
I love those kites.



When I'm in heaven
Tell me there'll be friends to meet,
In ancient oak-beamed Sussex pubs
Enfolded by the wanton Downs,
And summer evenings lapping lazily against the shore
Of sweet familiar little lands
Inhabited by silence or by nonsenses,
The things you cannot safely say in any other place,
I love those times.



When I'm in heaven
Tell me there'll be seasons when the colours fly,
Poppies splashing flame
Through dying yellow, living green
And autumn's burning sadness that has always made me cry
For things that have to end.
For winter fires that blaze like captive suns
But look so cold when morning comes.
I do love the way the seasons change.



When I'm in heaven
Tell me there'll be peace at last,
That in some meadow filled with sunshine
Filled with buttercups and filled with friends
You'll chew a straw and fill us in on how things really are,
And if there is some harm in laying earthly hope at
heaven's door,
Or in this saying so, well,
Have mercy on my foolishness dear Lord,
I love this world you made - it's all I know.



Adrian Plass



<https://youtu.be/aQjNEfPiYyA>

Mendelssohn – Violin Concerto in E minor Andante

Recovering a vision of heaven cannot be achieved simply by biblical exegesis, intellectual rigour, artistic passion or cultural nostalgia. It has to emerge as human beings in their diversity encounter the friendship of Jesus within the brokenness and confusion of human life.

Michael Vasey in 'Resources for Preaching and Worship Year A' compiled by Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild

Heaven and Hell

There was a rabbi who wanted to see both Heaven and Hell. And God who has hidden from us the opposites and their unity, gave way to his pleading.

The rabbi found himself before a door, which bore no name, he trembled as he saw it open before him. It gave into a room, and all was prepared for a feast. There was a table, and at its centre a great dish of steaming food. The smell and the aroma inflamed the appetite. The diners sat around the table with great spoons in their hands, yet they were shrieking with hunger, and fainting with thirst in that terrible place. They tried to feed themselves, and gave up, cursing God the author and origin of their torment. For the spoons God had provided were so long that they could not reach their faces and get the food to their tongues. They stretched out their arms, but their mouths remained empty. So they starved because of these spoons while the dish of plenty lay amongst them. And the rabbi knew their shriekings were the cries of Hell. And as knowledge came, the door closed before him.

He shut his eyes in prayer, and begged God to take him away from that terrible place. When he opened them again, he despaired, for the same door stood before him, the door that bore no name. Again it opened, and it gave onto the same room. Nothing had changed, and he was about to cry in horror. There was the table, and at its centre the steaming bowl, and around it were the same people, and in their hands the same spoons.

Yet the shriekings had gone, and the cries and the curses had changed to blessings.

And nothing had changed, yet everything. For with the same long spoons they reached to each other's faces, and fed each other's mouths. And they gave thanks to God the author and origin of their joy.

And as the rabbi heard the blessings, the door closed. He bent down, and he too blessed God who had shown him the nature of Heaven and Hell, and the chasm - a hairsbreadth wide - that divides them.

Michael Vasey in 'Resources for Preaching and Worship Year B' compiled by Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild



<https://youtu.be/Uffjii1hXzU>

Ludovico Einaudi – I Giorni

St Augustine said 'We are Easter people and Alleluia is our song.'

All shall be Amen and Alleluia.
We shall rest and we shall see.
We shall see and we shall know.
We shall know and we shall love.
We shall love and we shall praise.
Behold our end, which is no end.

St Augustine of Hippo (354-430)



<https://youtu.be/QOUXA1sNlKA>

Gabriel Faure - In Paradisum

and that will be heaven

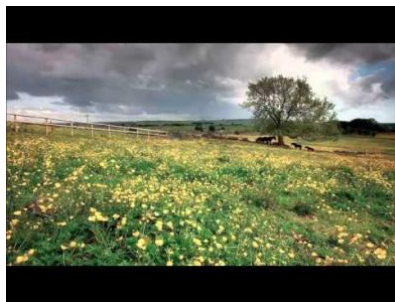
and that will be heaven
at last the first unclouded
seeing

to stand like the sunflower
turned full face to the sun drenched
with light in the still centre
held while the circling planets
hum with an utter joy

seeing and knowing
at last in every particle
seen and known and not turning
away

never turning away
again

Evangeline Paterson



<https://youtu.be/UJjwXf9Q6U>

Ralph Vaughan Williams – The Lark Ascending