



Image by Jen Norton

**Lost,
lifted ...
and launched ...**

**Look,
weep,
love....
Sing ...**

I wonder if, like for me, reading some passages of scripture comes with a song or music the text catching for a moment the music of creation?

Music sometimes takes you above and beyond – We glimpse there something of the joy and compassion, consolation and courage of God. It's not a bad thing, being caught up in song.

Many of you will read *'I know that my redeemer liveth'* and hear Handel's *Messiah*¹ Or from *For God so loved the world...* hear Stainer's *Crucifixion*². Perhaps psalm 19 brings Grieg's *Morning*³ and maybe – as for me - 1 Corinthians 13 leads inexorably to the Beatles' *All You Need Is Love*⁴ – Perhaps Jesus' promise in Matthew's gospel to be with us always, carries a faint echo of Randy Newman - *You Got a Friend in Me*⁵....

Well today's reading from Exodus cannot pass this ex-church-choir-director without leading to memories of the teenagers of my choir bellowing forth John Ireland's marvellous setting of

Ye⁶ are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, that ye should shew⁷ forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light....

¹ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

² Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

³ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

⁴ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

⁵ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

⁶ Old English word for 'you'

⁷ Old English spelling of 'show'

And the amazing shifting kaleidoscope of organ fanfare under that last word *light*⁸. It's triumphant, it's glorious, and ... it is also commanding. Ye have been chosen, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ... **that you should share what you have found.**

You shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation says God to Moses today.

Priestly. And Holy.

I wonder if you are feeling that way?

Perhaps another part of today's reading might help you a little...

..... remember, says the Lord...

*How I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself*⁹

That beautiful image is found more fully in the book of *Deuteronomy* –

*In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft*¹⁰.

So, if you're not feeling priestly, and holy... but perhaps more lost, desolate, stretched thin, and in need of lifting up.... Let's start here. Jesus does not ask us to be priestly and holy, without first finding us in our lost places, lifting us up and nurturing us, filling us with love, until we have enough to be launched – wobbly-winged – from the nest, to share it.

That 'glorious priestly holy nation shining forth the light of God', that my choir used to sing, comes from near the end of a piece called *Greater Love*.... Reminding us of the love of Jesus – given that we may shine:

*Greater Love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*¹¹.

It is from God's compassion on us, that his grace flows. And from his Grace we are asked to share. Yes – we – those he poured his love over from the cross – we, for whom¹² he broke himself open in bread and wine.

⁸ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

⁹ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 32: 10

¹¹ John 15: 13

¹² Accusative form of 'who' in English grammar

To be priestly, and holy... we are called to have compassion and love for each other, perhaps because we love in proportion to our awareness of how much we have been – or are - lost and broken¹³.

You received without payment, says our Gospel today – *Give without payment*.

... *love is like a magic penny*¹⁴ ...

Today we glimpse the great love song of the compassion of God... filled with pity when he saw the people lost like sheep without a shepherd.

It is from compassion that his healing flows. From tears of pity that joy is restored.

There is a phenomenon in the world today called *compassion fatigue*. It is the sense of overwhelmedness against the scale of hurt in our global community. All those wars, all that oppression, all that poverty and injustice - all the damage to creation and the failed crops and endangered species. And perhaps that overwhelmedness can lead us to despair about ourselves too. That there is nothing we can bring; used to pessimism; to ineffectiveness; to a negative spiral of sadness and isolation.

We lose the ability to weep, and become numb.

Who are we to be priestly and holy in a world that is so very broken, and when we ourselves are so broken?

When Jesus saw the crowds he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless... Matthew tells us today. *Then*, he goes on, *Jesus summoned his twelve disciples* – and Matthew reminds us of their names.

Bless them, what a bunch! Nobodies and ordinary working people we don't know much about and never will - plus Simon the Zealot, the knife-wielding military resistance leader ... who would once have wanted to knife Matthew, the tax collector for the oppressing power. Peter, the fisherman with a short temper, and excitable nature.... And even *Judas Iscariot*, the one who betrayed him.... People with their ups and downs, conflicts and histories.... Somehow formed by Grace into one body, and sent forth in healing love.

Twelve disciples to echo the twelve tribes from whom the People of God sprang. This is God's promise of renewal- the new coming from within the old. Love and healing from within the broken.

¹³ Luke 7: 44 - 47

¹⁴ Listen here [Bing Videos](#)

Go, says Jesus, ... to them – and to us in all *our* muddle and ordinariness - share life, healing, hope, stand against the darkness in the light you have received...

Shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father – we are told at our baptisms – and Jesus says to us today through our Gospel –

don't give up on that vision

But what about compassion fatigue – and the size of the problem?

'Know your mission', he says.

Go nowhere amongst the gentiles – he says. God's not asking you to save the world, (he's already done that) he's asking you to see what you can do *here* to share his love.

Here, in this place... to

Look, weep, love - sing... give from what you have received.

You may have been lost, but you are lifted and launched...

(booting us out the nest on our wobbly wings) - we are called to love on our doorstep; touching, crying and healing - sharing the light we have been given in the place entrusted to us.

(and trust in God, the gentiles are not forgotten –that was a task given to Paul, and Barnabas, ... and on to new leaders that sprang up, around the world, and through the centuries – start *here* – says Jesus... and wait to see how far it ripples).

Give what you have received, he says.... trust in the Holy Spirit - *do not worry about what you are to speak, or what you are to say...*

.... you aren't feeling priestly and holy? But within you, through the grace of Baptism, of Pentecost, of Eucharist – is the Holy Spirit of God!

Go wise as serpents, innocent as doves – we are not naïve – we know the language of the world ...

And the world may mock, laugh, ignore, or scorn us.

The problems and pains may feel insurmountable ...

shake it off, says Jesus, your peace is given to you, and no-one can take it away. Don't get knotted up in the dramas - keep on sharing the peace of the love you have received.

Lost, but lifted and launched,

we look – we are unafraid to weep, and we keep on singing.

For despite it all – because of it all – in grace – we are

*A holy nation, a royal priesthood... called to show forth the praises of him who has
called us out of darkness into his marvellous light!*