



Evening Prayer with Healing Prayers 7th Feb 2021
Online: www.youtube.com/c/stmaryleboneparishchurch

Psalm 65
St Luke's Gospel 8.22-35

Paul Simon recalls writing it very quickly, so much so that he asked himself 'where did that come from?' It starts with that strong and rolling piano that quickly becomes hesitating and vulnerable.

Paul Simon says Bach's setting of the ancient Passiontide Hymn 'O Sacred Head sore wounded' inspired some of the melody – you can hear it once you know. Then the voice comes in: Art Garfunkel's gentle and simple solo voice 'when you're weary, feeling small, when tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all...'

He took the name from a Gospel song with origins before the American Civil War but which had hit the charts just 10 years before in 1958. 'Mary Don't You Weep' the singer cries to Mary of Bethany as Jesus comes to raise her brother Lazarus from the dead. And then the singer speaks for Jesus – paralleling the waters of the Red Sea and deliverance from Pharaoh's army with deliverance from death and the way that leads to heaven (as Christians have always done): "I'll be your bridge over deep water if you trust in my name".

You can feel the soulfulness of *O Sacred Head*, Bach's setting, the hope against hope of oppressed slaves and African Americans, Gospel music passion, and the intimacy of this love of Jesus that runs through all those things bubble up in the words and music of the song I'm talking about – you've already guessed it – 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'.

The words and story of this song draw together the threads of Passiontide which will be upon us soon enough: the beaten and scarred beautiful body of Jesus, and the Resurrection triumph over death and hell, prefigured in Lazarus and completed in Christ. And in tonight's reading of course, the troubled waters that nearly overwhelm the disciples. Many of them had spent their whole lives on those waters for them to fear death, the gale must have been terrifying.

Jesus wakes and rebukes the wind. He becomes their safe passage – a bridge over troubled waters, just as He had lead Moses and the Israelites through the sea of reeds, just as He would open the way from death to eternal life, just as He would sit with beaten slaves around their cooking fires and give them hope in a true homeland with true freedom over Jordan in the Father's house.

After this service stay on YouTube and find 'Bridge over Troubled Water' to listen to. Apart from the line 'sail on silver girl' which I won't try to wrap in my own riddles, but *apart* from that one line, every single word is the voice of Jesus speaking to you tonight. Listen, and hear Him speak to you.

The streets and shops and schools and workplaces around us, perhaps even our own homes or the internal landscapes of mind and heart feel at times at the moment like the haunted empty tombs of the Gerasenes. Like the poor demoniac we don't know which way is up, let alone which way to turn, events have overtaken us, perhaps shades of drabness and grim loneliness shackle us.

But then Jesus arrives. The crowds were unable to hear, unable to see and their fear persisted – the last words of tonight's reading 'and they were afraid'. But our friend the poor demoniac *does* see Jesus for who he is, and recognizing His presence (just as He is present with you now, wherever you are) He hears Him, and is freed from His torment. St Luke tell us, he sat at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind'.

So let us do the same, in this online service, and in the words of Bridge Over Troubled Water, sit at Jesus' feet wherever you are and hear Him speaking to you across the hill of Calvary, across deep waters and troubled lives out of the depths of God's love which overcomes all.