SUNDAY link

4 April 2021
Easter Day

Connecting faith and daily life

Afraid to hope

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Mark 16:1-8

The ending of Mark's Gospel is strange, so strange that down the centuries various bits have been added. We want what the other Gospels offer us: some meetings of Jesus with his disciples, some explanations, some commissioning, something other than three women running away and not telling anyone what they have seen.

And yet Mark's account somehow rings true. The women have been with Jesus during his life. They have seen him executed. They have waited till after the sabbath to go to the tomb and perform the last rituals for him. They understand the situation. Their grief will be deep and enduring, but it will follow the usual path of grief. They will get used to life without Jesus. They will go home and get on with things. They do not want to see an angel, or hear stories of resurrection. They cannot cope with the prospect of a live Jesus, a new beginning. It is all too much. They cling to their despair and run away from hope.

Hope is frightening. It sets us up for disappointment. It stops us settling where we are comfortable. And yet hope is where we are invited to live, because Jesus really did overcome death. As the women no doubt discovered, after Easter we cannot run from hope. God has given us eternal life. Today for us there is no running away, but rather a joyful acceptance of the promise of a future in which everything is possible.

God of life and power, we thank you for the hope you give us in Christ. Help us not to run away, but to take hold of your promises and look forward with expectation, joyfully sharing the good news of our salvation. Amen.

Church music

Part III – liturgical action

by Andrew Lyon

My early excitement that music could powerfully combine with words to make their meaning more intense was tempered by realising that music can also obscure the words. So I believe church musicians have a responsibility to ensure that the music they produce is a vehicle for devotion.

Does this mean that church musicians ought ideally to be practising Christians? The Iona Community's John Bell once told me that he didn't think so, but that "anyone who's writing liturgical music has to be, if not immersed in, then certainly working towards the flow, the depth, the intention of liturgy. And in an increasingly secularised society, we cannot presume that everyone has the [necessary] kind of religious formation (irrespective of religious belief)."

Church composers and musicians have to have a good understanding of the liturgical action if they are to write, select and lead music. It is not enough to be musically competent, because "good" liturgical music is a very different thing from "good" music in the concert hall or at a gig. If composers and musicians are to make music that aids us in our prayers, an understanding of what the liturgy is for, and to be in sympathy with it, surely does matter.

Holy places

Iona

by Heather Smith

We describe holy places as "thin" places, where heaven and earth seem very close, where the faith of modern pilgrims is deepened. Iona is such a place. Tradition tells us that the monastery was founded in AD 563 by Columba, having been exiled from Ireland. St Aidan lived here until he answered a call from King Oswald of Northumbria to bring Christianity to his kingdom and set off for Lindisfarne. Iona was a centre of Celtic Christianity and it is thought that the *Book of Kells*, an illuminated Gospel book, was begun here in the eighth century.

Iona Abbey, in a dramatic position overlooking the sea, was built around 1200 and outside is an impressive ninth-century Celtic cross, St Martin's Cross. The burial ground on the island is the resting place of many early kings of Scotland, including Macbeth.

The Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian community, was founded by George MacLeod in 1938. It is a dispersed community, welcoming members in various categories who want to share its life. https://iona.org.uk

> **"All I can 'pay back' to God or others of myself is who I really am."**
>
> **C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian**

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