



The Lenten Rose

Dear Fellow Members,

Today is a somber day as we learn of the still rising global coronavirus cases and the death toll passes 100,000.

Today, to us and Christians worldwide is also a somber day, Holy Saturday, also known as Black Saturday, Easter Eve and Easter Vigil, which commemorates the day that Jesus lay in the tomb after his death and his triumphant descent into hell prior to his resurrection the next day.

Traditionally, today is a day of sorrow, penance and fasting, the last day of Lent. For some Christians and for those of the Jewish faith it was then and is still the Sabbath.

Here is what is recorded in the gospels about today: (RSV)

Matthew 27:62-66 reads: Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' Therefore order the sepulcher to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead, and the last fraud will be worse than the first.'" Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go make it as secure

as you can.” So they went and made the sepulcher secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

Mark 16:1 reads: And when the sabbath was past,

Luke 23:56b reads: On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

John does not mention this day.

Today and for the many preceding days we know how it feels to be living during this uncertain coronavirus pandemic.

How much more so might we imagine that on that first Holy Saturday, Jesus’ followers and especially the eleven remaining disciples would have been dealing with considerable inner turmoil and probably hiding. Their hopes and expectations crushed with Jesus being killed as a criminal. They hadn’t understood Jesus predictions about suffering and dying until the crucifixion the day before. Most likely they were terrified that what happened to Jesus would happen to them. And above all, they had to deal with the loss of their leader and teacher who loved them as they loved him.

So, today for me it is the hymn, “What Wondrous Love Is This?” that comes to mind and I suggest you read, sing, play, or listen to !

It’s an anonymous folk hymn, sometimes described as a “white spiritual”. Its text was first published in 1811, during The Second Great Awakening, a Protestant revival, here in the United States during another uncertain time of socio-political changes. Its melody is derived from a popular English ballad, Roud # 5089. It has appeared in many versions. This version comes from one of the most important 19th century tune books in the US, Southern Harmony by compiler William Walker c. 1843.

“What Wondrous Love Is This?”

“What wondrous love is this, O my soul! O my soul! What wondrous love is this, O my soul! What wondrous love is this! That Christ should come in bliss to bear the heavy cross for my soul, to bear the heavy cross for my soul!

To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing, to God and to the Lamb, I will sing; To God and to the Lamb who is the great I Am, while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing; while millions join the theme, I will sing.

And when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on, I’ll sing on, and when from death I’m free, I’ll sing on! And when from death I’m free, I’ll sing and joyful be, and through eternity I’ll sing on, I’ll sing on, and through eternity I’ll sing on!”

Thanks be to God !

Until we are able to gather together, take good care !

Bob