

Season of Renewal – poems for Lent

Selected by Revd Dr Alison Morgan

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look, he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, a river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.

On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The Sky. Many people
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.



R.S. Thomas

Is this a Fast, to keep
the larder leane?
and deane
from fat of Veales and Sheep?

Is it to quit the dish
of Flesh, yet still
to fill
the platter high with fish?

Is it to fast an houre
or rag'd go,
or show
a down cast look, and sour?

No: 'tis a fast, to dole
thy sheaf of wheat
and meat
unto the hungry soule.

It is to fast from strife,
from old debate
and hate:
to circumcise thy life.

To shew a heart grief-rent;
to starve thy sin,
not Bin
and that's to keep thy Lent.



Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

Indifference

When Jesus came to Birmingham
they simply passed him by.
They never hurt a hair of him
they simply let him die.
For men had grown more tender
and they would not give him pain.
They only just passed down the street
and left him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, 'Forgive them, for they
know not what they do.'
And still it rained the wintry rain
that drenched him through and through.
The crowds went home and left the streets
without a soul to see.
And Jesus crouched against a wall
and cried for Calvary.



Studdart Kennedy

A Little More

Each minute of a further light
Draws me towards perspective Spring.
I fold the minutes back each night,
I hear the gossiping

Of birds whose instinct carries time,
A watch tucked in the flourished breast.
It ticks the second they must climb
Into a narrow nest.

So birds. But I am not thus powered.
Impulse has gone. My measured cells
Of brain and knowledge are too stored
And trust to birds and bells.

Yet longer light is fetching me
To hopes I have no reason for.
A further lease of light each day
Suggests irrational more.



Elizabeth Jennings

The release

It was so still that day
and cold: the hills
brown shoulder to shoulder
seemed too old

to recall
when the slam of a hammer
on the vile nails



rang through those high lands

But suddenly
the sound ceased

and seamless as Christ's brown robe
all the leaves of the forest fell quietly;
and the injured one rose up
freed of his grave clothes.

John Crossley

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds reax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too.
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet stil the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.



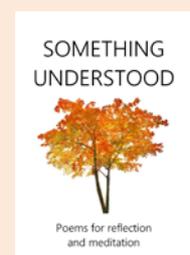
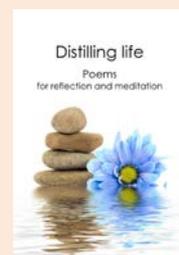
Philip Larkin

For further reading:

Distilling Life : Poems for Reflection and Meditation, edited by Martin Cavender and Alison Morgan, ReSource 2012

Something Understood : Poems for Reflection and Meditation, edited by Alison Morgan, The Mathetes Trust 2017

Available from www.alisonmorgan.co.uk or
<https://mathetetrust.org/publications/>



Also try:

David Adam, *Knowing & Growing – a Lent course to lengthen our lives*, Kevin Mayhew 2003 (for Studdard Kennedy)

John Crossley, *Questions about seabirds*, Asita Books 1998

Elizabeth Jennings, *Collected Poems*, Carcanet 1987

Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, Faber 1990

R S Thomas, *Later Poems 1972-82*, Papermac 1984