



He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth.' And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. (John 11:43-44)

In the days just preceding the Passion of our Lord, He continued to heal and to touch sinners with healing mercies. On His weary way to Calvary, He healed blind Bartemaeus just outside the gates of Jericho by restoring both his sight and his soul as well. He healed the woman with an issue of blood of twelve years duration, and He called the dead and odorous body of Lazarus, entombed for four days, out from the stoned-cold tomb and commanded that his grave clothes be removed and "*set him free.*"

This hymn is particularly applicable to our Lenten observation. It involves the resurrection to life of one dead and without hope. Now Jesus is on His way to die in our stead that we, too, might live anew and, not for a short earthly life, but eternally with the Father in Heaven.

The hymn is composed by Hardwicke D. Rawnsley in 1922. He was Anglican cleric and writer. The music is named, *Gibbons*, by Orlando Gibbons.

Lord Jesu, Who At Lazarus' Tomb

*Lord Jesu, who at Lazarus' tomb
To weeping friends from death's dark womb
Didst bring new joy to life,
Grant to the friends who stand forlorn
A vision of that larger morn
Where peace has conquered strife.*

*May we behold across the bar
The dear immortals as they are,
Empowered in act and will,
With purer eyes to see their King,
With fuller hearts His praise to sing,
With strength to help us still;*

*Not fettered now by fleshly bond,
But tireless in the great beyond,
And growing day by day.
Can we not make their gladness ours,
And share their thoughts, their added powers,
And follow as we pray?*

*O Holy Ghost, the strength and guide
Of those who to this earth have died,
But live more near to God,
Give us Thy grace to follow on,
Till we with them the crown have won
Who duty's paths have trod.*

Lord Jesu, who at Lazarus' tomb To weeping friends from death's dark womb Didst bring new joy to life, Grant to the friends who stand forlorn A vision of that larger morn Where peace has conquered strife. It is no mystery that men and women mourn and weep at the death of a friend or brother, but it is altogether contrary to the faith and nature of Christ to weep over death in His presence. Death cannot exist where Jesus speaks to it. So why did Jesus groan in His spirit? *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.* John 11:33 (KJV) I believe it was because these were His closest friends at Bethany - Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. When He saw Mary and Martha who knew Him best, along with the company of mourners all weeping, His tender soul was touched grievously at their little faith. He had not come to see a dead body of His friend, Lazarus, but Lazarus alive from death and set free. We all harbor unhealthy views of death. If we are Christian, we may be sure that Christ will raise our loved ones in Him as well.

May we behold across the bar The dear immortals as they are, Empowered in act and will, With purer eyes to see their King, With fuller hearts His praise to sing, With strength to help us still; Across the bar of Jordan's Stormy Banks we may behold our dear parents, or others in whom our love is vested, with the spiritual eyes of God's Word. It is sealed and final! Those who die in Christ never truly die - they are transformed in the *twinkling of an eye*. (1 Cor 15:52) Here is an extract of a poem I wrote a few years back that addresses the matter;

*I am made to go a'wandering
Down the amber mists of old,
And behold the flowers of summer
As my younger days unfold.*

*In the glimmer of the faces
Of my family, friends, and kin
Who have left for better pasture
And forgotten all that's been.*

*I see a light of mystery
Hidden deep behind the scene
Of a greater love and comfort
Than for man has ever been.*

*The love of God caresses
Their weary heads and hearts
As they smile behind the vapors
At the love His Hand imparts.*

Not fettered now by fleshly bond, But tireless in the great beyond, And growing day by day. Can we not make their gladness ours, And share their thoughts, their added powers, And follow as we pray? When Christ spoke Lazarus' name in calling him forth from the tomb, He called him by name since even the dead hear the voice calling to resurrection life. Sadly, the ears of the living are not always as keen in hearing. Lazarus came forth from the tomb by the power of our Lord's Voice. He was fettered, head to foot, by the grave wrappings still typical of the Middle Eastern burial tradition. Yet, he came forth. Jesus calls us to a rebirth of life eternal; and, at the same time, He commands that we be set free just as He did Lazarus: *Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.* (John 11:44) He removes our filthy rags of sin and makes us FREE!

O Holy Ghost, the strength and guide Of those who to this earth have died, But live more near to God, Give us Thy grace to follow on, Till we with them the crown have won Who duty's paths have trod. Hopefully, you have experienced already a death to the world and sin, and a new birth in Christ - the same of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus that fateful night in Jerusalem. Naturally, just as Christ died FOR our sins, we must die TO those sins when we experience that new birth in Christ. Just remember this: all who know not Christ are already dead in trespasses and sin, so how could their presumed wills be free? (Ephesians 5) The path of our duty is clearly marked by the ruts made by the cross of our Lord; for we take up our own crosses daily to follow Him - and we follow all the way to Calvary's demeaning brow. All who have done so in this life, leave their borrowed tombs (as did our Lord) and walk anew in Eternal bliss.

Have you taken up your cross?

Will you follow all the way to your borrowed tomb?

He did!