

1. A Poem

Mirage

by Christina Rossetti

The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silent harp there, wrung and snapped
For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.

**What do you find in the prayerful mystery of this poem?
Does it resonate with either of today's readings at all?
Does it teach us anything about welcoming 'outsiders'?**

2. 'Democratising' space

Paying tribute to the late actor Albert Finney, the director Michael Apted said that unlike many of his fellow actors, on a film set Finney was as interested in 'the second electrician' as in his fellow stars. And the musician Martin Hanley spoke of his 'democratising any space he entered'. Finney shared something of Jeremiah's hope that 'they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest', and points perhaps to ways in which Jesus 'will draw all people to myself'.

**How may we 'democratise our space' - other spaces around us
as well as the church building?**

3. Meant to stay

Talking about 'ThePortersGate' work on a new music album called 'Neighbor Songs' – all about welcome, hospitality and community, Lane Cowin says:

“Is the church a place where we are welcoming deeply and we are forming communities where people don't just feel safe or welcome for a short time, but actually feel like they are meant to stay?”

**What do you think of that?
How can we make people feel they are meant to stay?**

4. Written on the heart

David Edgar's play *Written on the Heart*, about the King James Version sets the translation of the Bible into English in its religious and political context. William Tyndale, executed for his radicalism, wanted a complete break with the elitist past. In the play, he is imagined saying of the elevated language of the KJV, 'Why translate into an ancient tongue?' Lancelot Andrewes, who died in his bed as Bishop of Winchester, retorts, 'What, you would have us ape the blabber of the streets?' Amid controversy and coercion, the elderly Archdeacon pleads, 'For truly, only love and mercy comprehend the law. And he who has not that written on his heart shall never truly come to Christ, though all the angels taught him. And God forbid it should be otherwise.'

**Discuss! :)
Can our Bible translation exclude people? Should it be able to?**

5. Empty inner courts

The Greeks in Jerusalem for the Passover (second reading) are attracted by some Jewish beliefs and practices but resistant to others. Jesus interests them, but they must look forward to when his death and resurrection will enable everyone to do his Father's work. Jews and Greeks will be equally welcome, no longer separated by a Temple with inner and outer courts. We know from Hebrews that it took courage for Christians, certainly Jews and probably Gentiles, to let go of that Temple. Those of us who worship in churches are delighted to welcome others to share our ways. But the inner courts of our churches seem rather empty, and even those who admire Jesus' life and respect his teaching seem content to remain in the outer courts of the world.

Hmmm ... what should we do?