

8th July 2020

Curtains

**“Yea, but we found him bald too, like lead, accents uncertain:
‘Time to taste life,’ another would have said, ‘Up with the curtain.’”**

Robert Browning, A Grammarian’s Funeral

We’re all familiar with curtains. Even though clever lighting, *Venetian* or *Austrian* blinds, modern or ancient shutters, or even personal preference, may make the need for curtains less important, we all know what curtains do. We close them when it’s dark, to keep out prying eyes and make a room feel cosy; we draw them across a child’s bedroom window so they can be settled on the brightest of evenings; we pull them shut to protect us from the sun’s glare; “black-out” curtains were familiar during World War II so no glimmers of light could guide enemy planes to their target.

We talk about “curtain up” in a theatre at the start of a show; Churchill coined the phrase “The Iron Curtain” for the cold-war dividing line across Europe; and when it’s the end of an enterprise, usually in a bad way, we say, “That’s curtains for them.” So we know about curtains.

We’re told in Mark 15:37 & 38 that when Jesus “breathed his last”, “the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.” In the ancient temple in Jerusalem, there was a curtain, embroidered with angels, which separated off the “Most Holy Place” – believed to be the dwelling place of God. Only the High Priest could go behind the curtain and be where God was, and even then, it would only be once a year.

Today, I hear God saying again, “I have torn the curtain in two”, not in the sense of a physical curtain being ripped asunder, but in a revelation of his presence – no God hiding behind a curtain, in our churches or anywhere else; no holiness out of sight; no presence only for special occasions; no blessedness only for those and such as those to know. Here is a God who tears down the curtains and lets his Light shine, heralds the beginning of a new show, and reveals his eternal living presence to us all.

Curtain up or curtain taken down, curtain torn or curtain opened, this is God’s truth: I am not hidden; I cannot be shut away.

A prayer for today

Ever-present God, take the curtains from my eyes, so that I might see you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly today. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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