

5th December 2023

Shadows

**“The true moment of shadow is the moment
in which you see the point of light in the sky.”**

Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow*, 1973

Some years ago, I wrote two hymns about Joseph. The first, *Good Joseph*, set to the familiar melody *Kingsfold*, I included in my “Thought for the Day” two years ago. (If you'd like a copy, just let me know.)

The second, *Who am I?* tries to search Joseph's mind. Set to a traditional English tune, *Scarlet Ribbons*, it could simply be used as a congregational hymn. But, as set out below, it could also be sung a) by two voices, alternating with the two halves of each verse; or b) one voice taking the first half of each verse (as Joseph) with a small group or the congregation taking the second part, God's response to Joseph's questions. In addition, it could be utilised as a spoken reflective dialogue, perhaps as part of a Christmas drama. One way or another, doesn't Joseph deserve to be out of the shadows for a time?

Who am I that I should listen to a new, disturbing word,
shaken from my restful slumber by this voice my heart has heard?
*You're the Joseph I've awakened. Trust, and you will understand.
Come, believing in God's message ... you're the one who's in my plan.*

Who am I that I should travel, ordered by a foreign power,
to my family home with Mary, near her promised birthing hour?
*You're the Joseph I believe in. Come! Accept this is the way
you must take to wait for Jesus ... you're the one I need today.*

Who am I, reluctant hero, wondering at a father's worth,
hiding in a stable's shadows, questioning a Saviour's birth?
*You're the Joseph who is needed, though the call may not be clear.
Without you there's something missing ... you're the one who must be here.*

Who am I, this fearful outcast, fleeing from a tyrant's sword?
How can I, a human father, care for one who's Christ the Lord?
*You're the Joseph, my protector of the Saviour I have given.
In your arms you carry wonder; you're my earthly link to heaven.*

You and I are Joseph sometimes. “Who am I?” to be worthy of God's call, we ask with him. So perhaps we can hear God's response too: “You're the one I need. Come out of the shadows and stand in my Light today.”

A prayer for today

You believe in me, Lord, as you believed in Joseph. Help me to believe in myself. Amen