

**At the Foot of the Cross:
George Herbert's
"The Sacrifice"**



March 13, 2019

***The Temple* (1633)**

"The Sacrifice"

Stanzas 9-15:

Most True to Those Who Are My Greatest Grief

Entire poem available at: www.tinyurl.com/herbert2019

Stanzas 9-15:

Most True to Those Who Are My Greatest Grief

- 9 Arise, arise, they come. Look how they run.
 Alas! what haste they make to be undone!
 How with their lanterns do they seek the sun!
 Was ever grief like mine?
- 10 With clubs and staves they seek me, as a thief,
 Who am the way of truth, the true relief;
 Most true to those, who are my greatest grief:
 Was ever grief like mine?
- 11 *Judas*, dost thou betray me with a kiss?
 Canst thou find hell about my lips? and miss
 Of life, just at the gates of life and bliss?
 Was ever grief like mine?
- 12 See, they lay hold on me, not with the hands
 Of faith, but fury: yet at their commands
 I suffer binding, who have loos'd their bands
 Was ever grief like mine?

13 All my Disciples fly; fear puts a bar
Betwixt my friends and me. They leave the star,
That brought the wise men of the East from far.
Was ever grief like mine?

14 Then from one ruler to another bound
They lead me; urging, that it was not sound
What I taught: Comments would the text confound.
Was ever grief like mine?

15 The Priest and rulers all false witness seek
'Gainst him, who seeks not life, but is the meek
And ready Paschal Lamb of this great week:
Was ever grief like mine?

- 9 Arise, arise, they come. Look how they run.
Alas! what haste they make to be undone!
How with their lanterns do they seek the sun!
 Was ever grief like mine?
- 10 With clubs and staves they seek me, as a thief,
Who am the way of truth, the true relief;
Most true to those, who are my greatest grief:
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- 11 *Judas*, dost thou betray me with a kiss?
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Of life, just at the gates of life and bliss?
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- 12 See, they lay hold on me, not with the hands
Of faith, but fury: yet at their commands
I suffer binding, who have loos'd their bands
 Was ever grief like mine?

“Arise, wake up, My brothers,” 9

here come the guards running.

Oh, My! what speed and zeal they have to take Me down!

They scan the darkness with lanterns

as they look for the Light of the world.

Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

They push forward with clubs and batons, prepared to meet 10

Me—a thief—who is the Way of Truth, stealing nothing

but their lives from the grave,

I remain true to these who hit Me square with this great grief.

Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

“*Judas*, do you kiss Me as a signal of betrayal?” 11

Do you really see hell on My lips?

Have you missed seeing Me as the *Gate of Life and Joy*?”

Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

The guards take hold of Me in a good fury 12

rather than a good fight of faith;

They command that I am bound—

the One who loosed their chains.

Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

13 All my Disciples fly; fear puts a bar
Betwixt my friends and me. They leave the star,
That brought the wise men of the East from far.
Was ever grief like mine?

14 Then from one ruler to another bound
They lead me; urging, that it was not sound
What I taught: Comments would the text confound.
Was ever grief like mine?

15 The Priest and rulers all false witness seek
'Gainst him, who seeks not life, but is the meek
And ready Paschal Lamb of this great week:
Was ever grief like mine?

All My faithful followers make a run for it; 13
The coast isn't clear, so My friends steer clear—
As if they're on the opposite course
of the Wise Men who followed the Star.
Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

Then they parade Me in shackles from one ruler to another; 14
They testify that My teaching was false—
Even though the Word would prove otherwise.
Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

The Priest and Rulers look to round up the usual witnesses 15
who will agree to speak falsely against Me;
I—who didn't come to save His own skin—
But rather let Himself be the Passover Feast's lamb chop.
Is there anybody out there with a grief like Mine?

Questions for Conversation

1 Poetry often grabs our attention through rhythm and combinations of words. Even if the meaning is at first elusive, a line will cause us to stop, chew on it, and reflect. What line from Herbert's "The Temple" does that for you tonight?

2 If you had to speculate, why does that line grab you?

3 Stanza 13 says: "My friends steer clear." We often feel the pressure from friends, culture, etc., to "steer clear" of religion in conversation. Can you think of a time when you "steered clear" of Jesus (like pretending you didn't believe in Jesus, just kept quiet about it, etc.)?

4 How does the rest of Stanza 13 give us a different perspective on "steering clear" of Jesus? Why was it OK (culturally acceptable) for the Wise Men to "steer towards" the Star?

Acknowledgements

Text of "The Sacrifice" from George Herbert, *The Country Parson, The Temple*. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
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