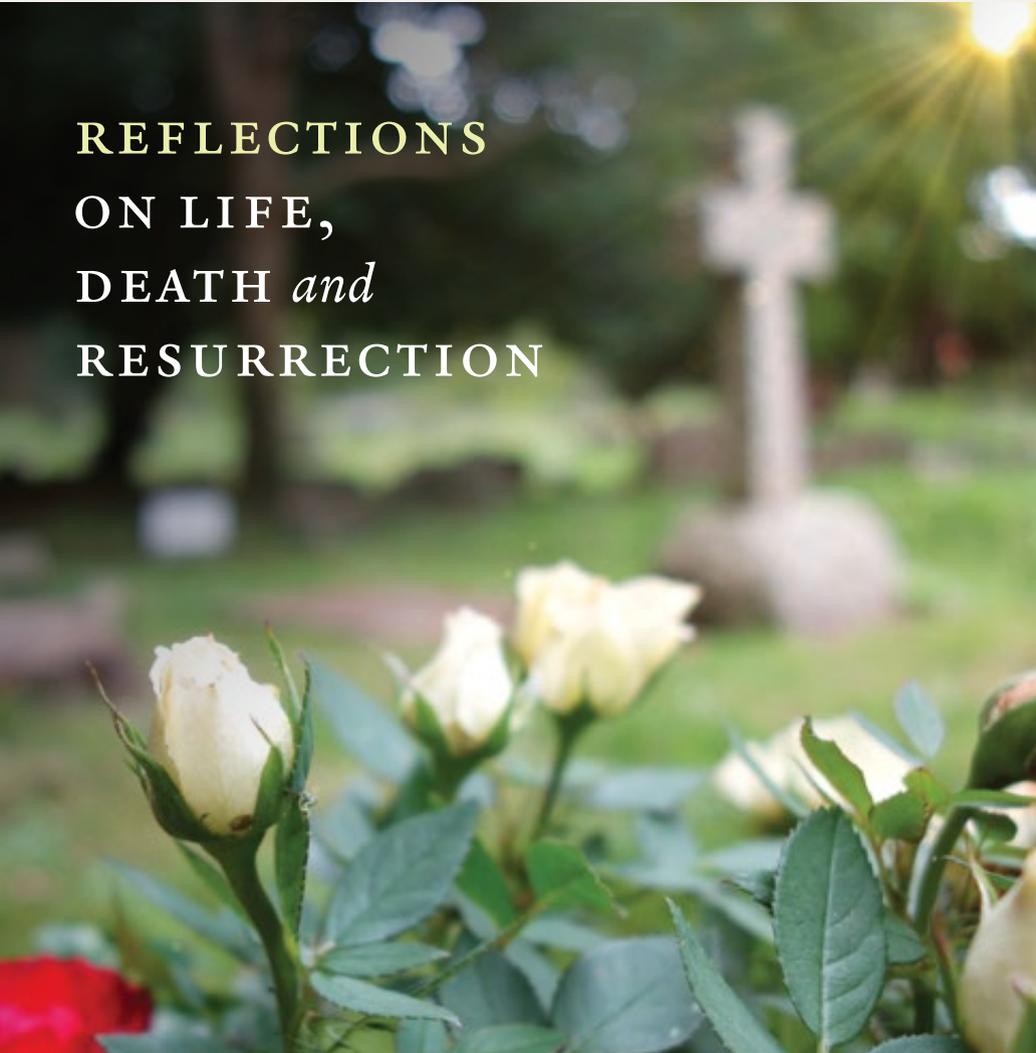


If these were silent

REFLECTIONS
ON LIFE,
DEATH *and*
RESURRECTION

A photograph of a cemetery. In the foreground, there are several yellow roses in various stages of bloom, with green leaves. In the background, a white cross is visible, slightly out of focus. The scene is lit with soft, natural light, suggesting a sunny day. The overall mood is contemplative and peaceful.

CAROL GEISLER

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the day we now call Palm Sunday, some of the Pharisees complained about the noisy acclaim of Jesus' disciples. The Savior replied, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19:40). The faithful who have fallen asleep in Jesus now live in his presence as their bodies are laid to rest to await the resurrection on the Last Day. Yet while these saints, at least from our earthly perspective, have fallen silent, stones cry out in praise. In cemeteries everywhere, engraved monuments and headstones cry out in witness to the faith in which these believers lived and died. The memorials, hymns and Scripture verses that shape the titles and themes of these devotions were taken from stone cemetery markers.¹ These stones, some new, others old and worn, continually cry out in the joyful faith and confident hope that marked the lives of the saints whose bodies rest there to await the Second Coming of the Lord. Come, Lord Jesus!

1. While Christian memorials and headstones are found in cemeteries everywhere, the inscriptions used in these devotions are found in the cemetery of St. John's Lutheran Church in Orange, California. The devotions' titles reflect, in whole or in part, these engraved inscriptions.

The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold
of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? PSALM 27:1*

We welcome the coming of night and with it, the darkness that brings a field of stars, cool air and refreshing sleep. But much that is unknown hides in darkness, and we may fear hidden dangers or long, lonely hours.

Facing death, even with faith in Christ Jesus, we may fear what is hidden and unknown to us. But for our God and Savior even “the night is as bright as day, for darkness is as light” to him (Psalm 139:12). Jesus endured for us the darkness of death and the grave, and in the light of the first Easter morning, he rose bodily from death, overcoming sin, death and Satan, victorious over all the powers of darkness. Through faith in Jesus’ name we have forgiveness, eternal life and the certain promise of our bodily resurrection on the Last Day. Our risen and conquering Lord is our stronghold, our fortress, in life *and* in death. Of whom shall we be afraid?

*Jesus, in life and death you are my
light and my salvation. Amen.*

READ: PSALM 27; I JOHN 1:5-9



SOME PHARISEES COMPLAINED ABOUT THE LOUD WELCOME GIVEN TO JESUS WHEN HE ENTERED JERUSALEM ON PALM SUNDAY. The Lord answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out” (Luke 19:40). Faithful believers who fall asleep in Jesus live in his presence as their bodies are laid to rest to await the resurrection on the Last Day. Yet while the faithful, at least from an earthly point of view, have fallen silent, stones cry out in praise. In cemeteries, the verses and memorials engraved on monuments and headstones cry out in witness to the faith and hope in which these believers lived and died. These devotions are based on those engraved words of witness.