

SOME THOUGHTS BEFORE EASTER

from David Young, April, 2025

As I write, Easter approaches, with its focus on the resurrection of Jesus, and on the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life of the Christian believer. This links with my feelings about the land of Greece and my many visits there, sometimes alone for my ministry, sometimes with my wife for holidays.



"Christos anesti" – Christ has risen

Although many lovely places have brought me times of earthly happiness, why is it that nowhere is as special as Greece in springtime? Why does it seem to me that my times of greatest earthly happiness have been on holiday there with my wife Margaret?

Visits to that fair land ceased with the coming of covid restrictions in 2020, and looking back with longing – nay, with *hiraeth* - I have pondered this question a lot, and I think there are three factors which made Greece in spring, including Crete, special to me:

- You find coast, mountains, river gorges, waysides, ruins, meadows, and even some churches (illustrated below in that order) riotously awash with the colours of many wild flowers:





















- the sky is blue, and the sun warm but not yet unpleasantly hot;
- I had the uninterrupted companionship of my wife.

These features resemble feelings in the dawn of our lives' maturity, when our sense of newness, when age seems irrelevantly remote, death is something that happens only to other people, and one finds and begins to know the woman one will love for the rest of one's earthly journey – as I 'found' Margaret, and she me, in 1970, now fifty-five years ago – in fact, at Easter.



Margaret, Frittenden, 1970



Margaret, Greece 2011

Will our experience be in any way or measure comparable to my joy and happiness in spring-time in Greece, when we shall rise immortal and imperishable on the day of Christ's return, and share a resurrection like his? For the new heavens and new earth which God will bring into being will surely be even lovelier even than Greece in spring. Eternity will stretch before us with its rich promises of unfading bliss, and there will be love and companionship deeper and richer than any known in this age of the world.

As Isaac Watts put it:

There everlasting spring abides,
and never-withering flowers;
death, like a narrow sea, divides
that heavenly land from ours.

Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
stand dressed in living green;
so to the Jews old Canaan stood,
while Jordan rolled between.

And we need to consider some words of Adelaide Procter:

I thank thee more that all our joy
Is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain;
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain.



The Christian's times of purest happiness in this life are given as pointers to what lies before very believer, even though in this temporary mortal life they must come to an end.

God has arranged it so: this life's happiness, as Adelaide Procter says, is spoiled by the thorns and thistles that mar it, or as Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation," but our best times point the Christian towards "a kingdom that cannot be shaken ... an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading," as the Bible puts it.

And for the non-Christian? Let these things serve as an invitation to receive the promise of that same inheritance by coming in faith to Jesus, who paid the price for it in his death and resurrection at that first Easter so many years ago.

