

***No blue-cloud cloth:
but a stranger's handkerchief,
a raffled tunic,
a torn curtain
and a borrowed shroud.***

The readings and music are interspersed with times of silence.

We hear *The Garments of God* by Jessica Powers

God sits on a chair of darkness in my soul.
He is God alone, supreme in His majesty.
I sit at his feet, a child in the dark beside Him;
my joy is aware of His glance and my sorrow is tempted
to nest on the thought that His face is turned from me.
He is clothed in the robes of His mercy,
voluminous garments
not velvet or silk and affable to the touch,
but fabric strong for a frantic hand to clutch,
and I hold to it fast with the fingers of my will.
Here is my cry of faith, my deep avowal
to the Divinity that I am dust.
Advertisement
Here is the loud profession of my trust.
I will not go abroad
to the hills of speech or the hinterlands of music
for a crier to walk in my soul where all is still.
I have this potent prayer through good or ill:
here in the dark I clutch the garments of God

We hear *Total Eclipse* (Handel, from the opera *Samson*)

Total eclipse! No sun, no moon!
All dark amidst the blaze of noon!
Oh, glorious light! No cheering ray
to glad my eyes with welcome day!
Why thus deprived Thy prime decree?
Sun, moon, and stars are dark to me!

Material Lives (1)

Textiles are with us from birth to death: from swaddling clothes to winding sheet, as someone once put it. We are washed, dried, comforted, clothed, kept warm, by cloth. Cloth can keep out the light or keep us from seeing the dark. Textiles reflect our income, our care, our role, our status and belonging. Their quality, colour and purpose help to define us. Our clothing and our choice of the textiles with which we surround ourselves speak as clearly as our voices about who we are and how we see or present ourselves. The clothes people wear can identify them in their role, reassure, make visible, frighten or encourage distance.

The Gospel stories reflect that centrality of textiles and cloth. Swaddling clothes, shepherds watching over the producers of wool, in miracles, and in the layers of clothing worn by a travelling preacher and his followers.

Lace: Hollow Knight (Silksong)

We hear *The Tapestry Maker* (Scottish Trad, author unknown)

My life is but a weaving between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colours he weaveth steadily.
Oft' times He weaveth sorrow; and I in foolish pride
forget He sees the upper and I the underside.
Not 'til the loom is silent and shuttles cease to fly
will God unroll the canvas and reveal the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skilful hand
as the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned
He knows, He loves, He cares; nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
who leave the choice to Him.

We hear *Hymn to God the Father* (Donne, Brittain)

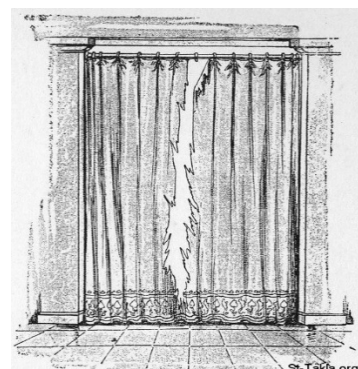
Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which is my sin though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive those sins, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done:
for I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin by which I've won
Others to sin? And made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two: but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done:
for I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thy self, that at my death thy Son
shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And having done that, thou hast done, I fear no more.

Material Lives (2)

The story of the Passion and Resurrection are textile heavy across the Gospels. The cloaks on the back of the donkey. The cloth laid out for the Passover meal. The towel to dry the washed feet. The removal of clothes to reduce and humiliate. The comforting cloth offered by a woman in the crowd. The sponge with vinegar. The lots drawn for the tunic. And then the torn curtain – a moment of dramatic intervention. A holy place unveiled and a point made. Then the necessary and prosaic wrapping of a body in a shroud offered by a stranger. And finally the mystery of the folded grave clothes, and the garments covering the risen Christ – which somehow make him unrecognisable to a close friend.



*Further verses of **Total Eclipse** are sung to a familiar tune.*

I search God's Word, and there I see
the day will come when signs these be;
The moon confounded, sun ashamed,
the stars withdrawn, the heav'ns in flame;
The oceans roar as nations fight,
and clouds and smoke turn day to night.

O Lord, You are our strength and stay,
protect us in that awful day;
When heav'n departs, a worn out scroll,
when islands move from pole to pole;
When rocks and mountains cannot save
the guilty from the yawning grave.

But those who call upon the Lord,
his arm will save, will help afford;
He is a refuge, covert, tower,
not hell or earth can overpower;
For those washed clean in Jesus' blood,
he keeps them safe above the flood.

Death be not proud (Donne, Britten)

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow
And soonest our best men with thee do go
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell
And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

The Prayers: A Litany of the Shroud

Lord, have mercy **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, have mercy **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, have mercy **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, hear us. **Christ, graciously hear us.**

God our Father in heaven, **have mercy on us.***

(*Have mercy on us is repeated after each invocation.)

God the Son, Redeemer of the world....

God the Holy Spirit....

Holy Trinity, one God....

Bani بانی founder and foundation of all creation...

Sami سامی servant of all...

'afi عفی love incarnate...

Hadi هادی our guide on our journey...

Bari باری weight bearer, source of strength..

Fadi فادی sacrifice....

Shafi شافی our intermediary and support....

Hami حامی advocate and source of hope...

Heart of Jesus, source of justice and love
full of goodness, well-spring of all virtue.....

Heart of Jesus, worthy of all praise, centre of all hearts,
treasure-house of wisdom and knowledge.....

Heart of Jesus, in whom there dwells the fullness of God,
in whom the Father is well pleased.....

Heart of Jesus, generous to all who turn to you,
atonement for our sins, overwhelmed with insults,
broken for our sins....

Heart of Jesus, obedient even to death, pierced by a lance...

Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation,
our life and resurrection....

Heart of Jesus, our peace and reconciliation,
victim of our sins, salvation of all who trust in you...

Heart of Jesus, hope of all who die in you,
delight of all the saints....

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, gentle and humble of heart,

touch our hearts and make them like your own.

Material Lives (3)

Flax is the crop that keeps on giving: its oil,
its seeds and then the final product, the
strands that can become linen.

It can produce a strong yet soft material,
suitable for clothing that touches the skin,
a lining for other heavier fabrics, for bedding,
for furnishing. It takes dye very well, and is
hard-wearing and re-usable. Its name has
become a generic name for cloth: fine linen,
bedlinen... both swaddling clothes and shrouds.

Growing flax nurtures and nourishes the soil it grows in.

There are projects out there which have a vision of flax
fields in every community, growing a useful multipurpose
crop for the benefit of all: for work, for care, for food, for
clothing. For hope for a more sustainable future.



He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven WB Yeats

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Bring me all your dreams, you dreamers

Bring me all your

Heart melodies

That I may wrap them

In a blue cloud-cloth.

Away from the too-rough fingers

Of the world.