

## Easter 7

“Christ Is the World’s Redeemer” (*Lutheran Service Book* #539)

The Easter Season is nearing an end on the Seventh Sunday of Easter. The Church has a “week of weeks” (49 days) of celebration of our Lord’s resurrection. It is fitting, then, that this hymn was chosen for this day. It is attributed to Columba, Irish missionary to Scotland, who lived 521 to 597. In the first stanza he writes eight descriptions of Christ covering the entire Christian life: “the world’s Redeemer”, “font of heavenly wisdom”, “our trust and hope secure”, protector and Lord, our “health while we are living,” and finally “our life when we shall die.” Here we have a miniature outline of Christ’s presence and power in our life from birth and baptism to the time that we leave this world and enter eternal life.

In confirmation class we learn of Christ’s state of humiliation and state of exaltation. St. Paul summarizes this in Philippians 2:8-11: “...and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...” (ESV). In this great parabola, the Lord Jesus Christ descends from the highest position in the universe to become man and to die on the cross, and then is resurrected, ascends into heaven, and is seated once more at the right hand of the Father.

Stanzas 2 and 3 of the hymn follow the same theme with a poetic description of Good Friday: “Then Christ the cross ascended to save a world undone and, suffering for the sinful, our full redemption won.” It moves on to Easter: “Down through the realm of darkness He strode in victory and at the hour appointed He rose triumphantly.” It ends with Ascension Day: “And now, to heaven ascended, He sits upon the throne whence He had ne’er departed, His Father’s and His own.”

What glorious words! Here we see the great sweep of God’s plan of salvation: Jesus, the very Son of God, the King of Kings, emptied Himself by laying aside His glory and majesty and took on frail human flesh. In our world He was mocked, accused, beaten, scourged, and sentenced to death. He suffered the most shameful of deaths, not because of His guilt, but because of our sin. But the good news is that Christ was raised on the third day. And, because Christ lives, we live also!

On this Seventh Sunday of Easter we can shout once again, “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!” We can sing our praise to the Trinity and end with the last words of Columba’s doxology, “Let all the worlds give answer: Amen! So let it be.”

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Christ is the world's Redeemer, the lover of the pure,  
The font of heav'nly wisdom, our trust and hope secure,  
The armor of His soldiers, the Lord of earth and sky,  
Our health while we are living, our life when we shall die.

Christ has our host surrounded with clouds of martyrs bright,  
Who wave their palms in triumph and fire us for the fight.  
Then Christ the cross ascended to save a world undone  
And, suffering for the sinful, our full redemption won.

Down through the realm of darkness He strode in victory,  
And at the hour appointed He rose triumphantly.  
And now, to heav'n ascended, He sits upon the throne  
Whence He had ne'er departed, His Father's and His own.

Glory to God the Father, the unbegotten One,  
All honor be to Jesus, His sole-begotten Son,  
And to the Holy Spirit—the perfect Trinity,  
Let all the worlds give answer: Amen! So let it be.

Text: *Lutheran Service Book* #539. These four stanzas are a translation of "Christus redemptor gentium", the second section of a much longer Latin hymn usually attributed to St. Columba (521-597). The English translation was made by Duncan Macgregor as he prepared to preach for a service remembering St. Columba in Iona, Scotland (where Columba had founded a monastery) in 1897. Though centuries of invasion and warfare ravaged the island, Iona itself retained a reputation as a holy place. In 1938 George MacLeod, a Glasgow minister, rebuilt the abbey and established the Iona Community, an ecumenical group which remains active and influential today. "In Silent Pain the Eternal Son"/LSB 432 is a recent Lenten hymn from that community.