

April Fool!

It seems appropriate that April Fools' Day falls in the middle of Holy Week this year. Jesus has often been seen as a 'holy fool', upsetting his betters with his disconcertingly direct approach and deceptively simple wisdom. Now he is caught up in affairs too great for him, and he becomes the fool on the hill, strung up to be the butt of jokes and mockery. His friends and loved ones look in in sadness and despair - has it all come to this?

But those who try to play tricks after noon on April 1st are told with glee 'the fool's on you!' And with Jesus too, after the terrible reverse of Good Friday comes the unexpected twist. One way to understand what happens at Easter is to see it as a great joke played on the forces of darkness and death, and the powers of evil. The one they killed off cannot be kept down, as Charles Causley tells us in *The Ballad of the Bread Man*:

He went round to all the people
A paper crown on his head.
Here is some bread from my father.
Take, eat, he said...

He finished up in the papers.
He came to a very bad end.
He was charged with bringing the living to life.
No man was that prisoner's friend.

They stored him safe as water
Under seven rocks
One Sunday morning he burst out
Like a jack-in-the-box.



Another poet, Maya Angelou, speaks of the defiance of the downtrodden:

You may write me down in history	Just like the moons and like suns
With your bitter, twisted lies,	With the certainty of tides,
You may trod me down in the very dirt	Just like hopes springing high,
But still, like dust, I'll rise.	Still I'll rise.

In the 50 days of the Easter season we celebrate the improbable, impossible rising of Jesus - and we rejoice because we know he is alive and he is with us. We think too of all those who hold onto hope in the face of despair. May the risen life of Jesus give them strength and bring joy to us all.

Simon Witcombe