



this moment matters

A POEM FOR HOLY SATURDAY by Avery Arden

they wanted—no, they needed
to touch you one last time.

so they trudged the tombward path
with their perfumes and their spices
their strips of cloth to cocoon your body in
for its final transformation back to dust

their shoulders almost broken with grief,
heavy as the cross
that crushed the life from your flesh.

let me fall in step behind them.
let me take my place in that line
of broken hearts bearing a cross of
grief together.
let me shoulder my share of the burden

and let me not rush
to the first fingers of dawn, frail and trembling,
reaching past a rolled-back stone
to empty space where your corpse
should be—

no. let me linger in the moment when
your corpse still lies there
and anguish fractures the air
into splinters that cut the lungs.

this moment matters:
your brown body
with the breath pressed out
by the inexorable boot of Empire
matters.

and the moment that comes after
cannot ease this one.

it never has, and it never will, for

there are still bodies broken,
breathless, beaten down
by Empire's brutality or else its apathy.

and you, with us to the last,
still lie among them—you hold
them close
and share their final exhalation
be it in a hospital bed, the street, a cell.

so let me not sprint to sunrise
when your body can *still* be found
nestled with cold bodies in their graves.

blessed be the hands
that carry the spices and perfumes,
water and cloth!
blessed, blessed be the throats
worn rough with sobs
yet refusing to be silenced,
broadcasting the crime lest some
claim ignorance.

i'll not dishonor them by racing past
to the future reunion of
form to dust, breath to body,
lover to loved
before they're ready.

keep watch! soak in! be present
with them!
this moment is holy.

About this poem

I wrote this poem on Holy Saturday, 2020, in those early days of the pandemic when, isolated in our homes, we were steeped in uncertainty and dread. In such a time as this, would Easter's defiant hope and joy even be able to reach us?

Here and now, as the boot of state violence that crushed God Incarnate continues to press down on all whom society leaves vulnerable, my prayer is this: that even as we act against such powers, we make space in our resistance for remembrance and rest—to linger in the shadow of the tomb with those not ready to look beyond it yet.

If you share this poem publicly, please credit it to Avery Arden and link to my website, *Binary-Breaking Worship*: binarybreakingworship.com. I also invite you to email me at queerlychristian36@gmail.com to let me know how you're using it!



About the author

Avery Arden (they/ze) is an autistic, genderqueer minister living near Atlanta, Georgia, with their wife and two cats. They graduated from Louisville Seminary with an MDiv in 2019 and now serve on the board of More Light Presbyterians. A firm believer that binaries are meant to be broken, Avery's work integrates their Catholic roots, Presbyterian branches, and love for all things liminal. Their ministry centers around trans and disability theologies, as well as practical efforts to lead faith communities ever closer to God's all-welcoming, universally-accessible Kin(g)dom. Check out their book, *The Kin-dom in the Rubble* (2018) for poetry exploring these same themes.

For a full list of where you can find Avery's work—including *Blessed Are the Binary Breakers*, a multifaith podcast of transgender stories, their *Disabled AND Blessed* YouTube series, and liturgy uplifting the infinite variety of both humans and God—visit linktr.ee/queerlychristian.

