

The City Church, New York

The Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession – Sunday April 30, 2006

On this day in 1854, English newspaper editor and hymn writer James Montgomery's "morning star was lost in Light [and his] faith vanished in perfect sight" – his words for his passage into Jesus' nearer presence. Let us pray.

God, our Father, our Savior and our Ever Present Comforter: We're alive and we love only because You loved us into life and loving. So it's fitting for us to live every day, loving You and each other, for You loved us to death – even to a cruel death on a cross.

Draw us closer to You in this hour. And for Your healing all the estrangement between You and us, may we, in gratitude, work to heal all estrangement between us and others.

On this, another Easter Sunday – as all Sundays are celebrations of the resurrection – we remember that You not only love us into life in time but You love us into life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Remembering this, we joy in Your peace.

We thank You that we have heard the Good News that You really were in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to Yourself, not counting our sins against us. For such Good News – the very best news the world has ever heard – we're overwhelmed in gratitude and joy.

On this particular day, we pause to thank You for our brother, James, and for the gifts You give us through Your gift of him. We thank You for his life and his work, not only in the ministry of hymn writing, but also in the workaday world of journalism. Thank You for his integrity as an editor and for his courage to speak truly, no matter the cost.

As we read our newspapers and watch the news on television, we learn of people in terrible trouble. It's easy to get so used to bad news that we tune out and think only of ourselves, glad their trouble isn't ours. Lord, distress us over our lack of distress at what others suffer. And instead of our using the bad news to confirm prejudice or increase cynicism, may we see it as a prayer request, so we might weep with those who weep, as Your word says we should. And when Your Presence isn't felt by the distressed, may we be present to be Your Presence in flesh and blood, dollars and cents, time and talent.

Guide us, guard us, that we might live to Your glory and the good of neighbors here and around the world. We pray in Jesus' name, adding the prayer he taught us to pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.