



### **Resurrection**

From the Isenheim Altarpiece  
by  
Matthias Grunewald 1512-16

The large multi panel altarpiece of which this is a panel was created for the Monastery of St Anthony in Isenheim, near Colmar (Alsace). The Antonine monks took care of sufferers from the plague and various severe skin diseases. Brought into the chapel by their carers the sick could contemplate a Crucifixion in which Christ's contorted anguished body is covered in sores and blood – and also this joyous and triumphant Risen Christ.

The gospel of the resurrection speaks into those places and environments of despair, where people don't believe change is possible and don't believe that God's rule can already be real in the hearts and the lives of human beings. It speaks into an environment where people assume we're moving towards a death that is simply the end of every story, and our relationship with God – if we have one – is just in this life. It speaks against a view of prayer that is anxious, fearful and takes for granted that God is a long way off. It speaks into and against an environment in which the body, the material world, is underrated and abused.

In all these ways Christ calls us to speak to a world that desperately needs the good news of the resurrection.

Rowan Williams – *The Sign and the Sacrifice, The Meaning of the Cross and Resurrection* (2017)

## Emergency Foliage



*Image credit: Photo by [Jack Bassingthwaite](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

“Green shoots” are starting to show. This was the memorable pronouncement from NHS England’s medical director at a daily press conference a week or so ago. In the following Q&A, journalists pressed for clarity on what seemed a prematurely hopeful statement. Caveats and conditions were added. We are ‘not out of the woods’. Indeed, there’s a good chance we’re not even fully in the woods yet. The metaphor reminded me that just 12 weeks ago, a very different crisis was unfolding on my newsfeed. ‘Black summer’ saw bushfires rip through Australia on an unprecedented scale in the worst blazes seen for at least a decade. I used to live in Australia, and many of my friends and family there experienced thick black smoke descend and strange day long twilights. The crisis of this moment feels altogether different.

As newsreaders remind us, we are living in ‘unprecedented times’, and the Holy Week of 2020 may be unlike any other in our lifetimes. Pulled into remembrance of the Easter story at a time when themes of life, death and sacrifice are in full colour and at the forefront of our minds, what does this story mean in the midst of our pandemic?

The days and months ahead will be strange and deeply painful but the story of resurrection offers a hope that life will, somehow, always come from the ashes.

The 2019/20 wildfires leave much of Australia’s forests scorched and silent but amongst these blackened branches what ecologists refer to as “emergency foliage” can already be seen, growing from hollowed trunks, providing a boost of photosynthesis until canopy leaves can grow. It may well be too early for our own green shoots but new life emerges from the darkest places. Good Friday and Holy Saturday may endure longer in our hearts than many of us might imagine, but Easter Sunday will come.

*Lizzie Stanley is Head of Communications at Theos*