

# Chapter 10 : Jesus in the reflected light of glory

In Chapter 9, we looked at how the early disciples came to look upon the risen, exalted Jesus. It is in the light of this that they came to look again at Jesus of Nazareth, seeing him as

- The Incarnation of God's Wisdom
- The Incarnation of God's Word
- The Lord - the one in whom YHWH was 'reconciling the world to himself'
- The Saviour of the world

## The Fullness of God's Wisdom

- 'Christ, the power and **wisdom** of God'(1Corinthians 2:24).
- He reveals the goal of existence and the means of achieving this goal
  - 'Christ, the image of God'(2Corinthians 4:4).
  - 'Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust,
    - we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven'(1Cor 15:49)
- An early Christian hymn speaking of the risen Christ in terms taken from the Wisdom literature: 'He is the image of the invisible God the firstborn of all creation; for in him were created all things ... all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together'(Colossians 1:15-17).

## Jesus – God’s Word-made-flesh (God’s ‘Incarnate Word’) (Catechism n. 456-463)

In the light of their post-crucifixion experiences, Jesus’ disciples continued to reflect on Jesus and on how he mediated God to them. Jesus had promised them that he would give them his Spirit and ‘when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth’(John 6:12-13). As they reflected on their experience with Jesus they came to see Jesus as a ‘sacrament’ – a symbol of God. John has Jesus say:

‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’(John 14:9).

## 1. Jesus – God's Word-made-flesh

- God's Word is God as effecting God's will and so revealing God.
  - 'The word that goes forth from my mouth does not return to me empty without carrying out my will; and succeeding in what it was sent to do' (Isaiah 55:11).
  - 'While gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, your all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, carrying the sharp sword of your authentic command' (Wisdom 18:14-16).

- God's Word issues from God's Wisdom,
- reveals God's Wisdom
- teaches God's Wisdom.
- God's Wisdom is God reflected in the beauty and order of creation, of history, of the Torah, and finally of the exalted Jesus.
- God's Word is God bringing about this beauty and this order, especially through the words of the prophets and most especially through the teaching of Jesus

## John 1:1-10

In the beginning was the Word  
and the Word was towards God, and the Word was God.  
In the beginning the Word was towards God.

All things came into being through the Word.  
Without the Word not one thing came into being.

What came into being in the Word was life,  
and life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness did not overcome it ...

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

The Word was in the world.  
The world came into being through the Word.  
Yet the world did not know the Word.

John 1:11 'The Word came to what was God's own,  
and God's own people did not accept the Word.



Moses said, "Oh, let me behold your Presence!" And the LORD answered, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name LORD ... but you cannot see my face, for man may not see Me and live."

And the LORD said, "See, there is a place near Me. Station yourself on the rock, and as my Presence passes by. I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you will see My back; but My face must not be seen" (Exodus 33:18-23 JPS)





## John 1:12-13

But to all who did welcome  
the Word, and believe,

the Word gave power to  
become children of God,

born not of human generation  
[‘bloods’]

or of human striving  
[‘the will of the flesh’]

or of male power,

but of God.


## John 1:14

‘And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of the gift of truth.’

- Jesus is God’s perfect human word – God’s Word-made-flesh
- He received everything from God - life, word, Spirit.
- His Word and Spirit reveal God as LOVE

## John 1:17

‘The Law [Torah] indeed was given through Moses; the gift of Truth came through Jesus the Christ.’

 The picture can't be displayed.



John 1:18

‘No one has ever seen God. It is God’s only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, who has made Him known.’

n.425 1John 1:1-4

‘We declare to you what was from the beginning,  
what we have heard,  
what we have seen with our eyes,  
what we have looked at and touched with our hands,  
concerning the word of life—

this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it,  
and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father  
and was revealed to us—

we declare to you what we have seen and heard  
so that you also may have fellowship with us;  
and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.  
We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.’

The opening words of John's Prologue echo the opening words of the Book of Genesis ('In the beginning'), for John wishes to invite us to look anew at the purpose of creation and at the relationship we are meant to have with God our creator who sustains us in existence and offers us a share in his being. But first he takes us outside time and space to contemplate a Word already uttered in the eternal mystery of God's being (We will return to this when we reflect on the dogma of the Holy Trinity).

In the beginning this Word was already with God, sharing in the being of God. From the beginning to the end of the Gospel John wants us to hold in our minds and hearts the picture of this intimate communion of God and the Word, for the Gospel is about how this Word, made flesh in Jesus, reveals the true nature of God as love, and invites us to share in the communion which we are here contemplating

In reminding us that everything that has come into being has its existence through the Word, John is saying that creation is essentially an act of revelation. In creating, God is revealing the communion of love that he enjoys with the eternal Word. This is God's glory and it is this that is expressed in creation. The splendour of God's being, the love he shares with the Word, radiates throughout creation. This is why it is full of the glory of God.

‘Life’ for John always means communion with God – a communion that is not limited to space and time nor brought to an end by physical death. Here he is stating that the life we are designed to experience is the life of the Word. Later we will hear Jesus say:

‘I am the life’(14:6).

He will also say:

‘I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly’(10:10).

This life is the life which he receives ‘in the beginning’ from the Father:

‘Just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself’(5:26).



John assures us that the Word of God is present at the heart of creation, calling on God the creator of all and summoning everything and everyone into divine communion.

This Word of God is present everywhere. In Jesus we see the Word present among us in a new way, in 'flesh': sharing in the weakness, the vulnerability, and, in a particular way, the death that is part of our being as humans.

When Moses prayed to see God's glory (Exodus 33:18), he was told:

'You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live' (Exodus 33:20).

He was given the Law and so, as it were, he saw God's 'back'. He saw the path he was to follow in order to respond to God's offer of covenant love, but he could not see God's face. The Beloved Disciple has seen the face of Jesus. He has gazed on him and Jesus' words have found a home in his heart.

In telling us that we see the glory of the Word in the flesh of Jesus, John is saying that it is precisely in the weakness of human flesh that we see God's Word, God's Wisdom, God's Glory fully revealed. Who God is and what God calls us to be is finally and fully revealed in Jesus, who shares our human condition, who knows weariness and misunderstanding, who suffers betrayal and rejection, and who suffers a terrible death by crucifixion. It is above all when we look upon Jesus on the cross that we behold

‘the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’(2Corinthians 4:6).

As God's Word (Paul speaks of him as 'the New Adam'), Jesus reveals who we human beings really are. Jesus' communion with God is the perfect realisation of what it is to be human. Created in God's likeness, we are to be, like Jesus, 'towards God'(John 1:1), 'in the bosom of the Father'(John 1:18). We are to be a word of God to each other, to creation. We are made to transcend ourselves in the self-giving that is love. It is this human self-transcendence that has reached its perfect fulfilment in Jesus. Because of Jesus I may dare to believe that God has promised to give himself to me.

In Jesus we experience the presence and action of God (this is Jesus 'divine nature'). In Jesus we see a human being present and acting and responding whole-heartedly to grace (this is Jesus' human nature').

We understand ourselves best when we see ourselves as created to be the self-expression of God which we see in the man Jesus. In Jesus we find in the flesh that which is the most blessed realisation of the highest possible communion with God that a human being can experience. Jesus is God's perfect word to us, and the complete human response to God. It is in the light of Jesus that we really begin to understand what it means to be human. Jesus shows us who we really are: people called to share in Jesus' divinity – his complete communion with the God he calls 'Father'. We are to believe this now. We will see it when God is 'all in all'.

## Jesus – The Lord (Catechism 446-451)

Earlier we noted that the risen Christ was called ‘Lord’. We noted also that the term ‘Lord’(Greek: Kyrios) was used in the Greek Version of the Hebrew Scriptures to translate the divine name YHWH. His disciples came to call Jesus ‘Lord’ as an assertion that his Spirit is the Spirit of God, of YHWH, who is exercising his redemptive action in and through Jesus. As Paul says:

‘in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself’(2Corinthians 5:19).

YHWH, the Redeemer God, is redeeming through Jesus.

'I AM' in John's Gospel



Exodus 3:14

'I am who I am'

εγω ειμι 'Ο ΩΝ

'I AM. Do not be afraid' (6:2 – Jesus walking on the lake).

'If you do not believe that I AM, you will die in your sins' (8:24).

'When you have lifted up the Son of Man you will know that I AM' (8:28).

'Before Abraham ever was, I AM' (8:58).

(13:19).

'I tell you this now so that when it happens you may believe that I AM.'

'Jesus said: Who are you looking for? They said: Jesus of Nazareth'.  
Jesus replied: 'I AM' (18:6).



## 'I AM' in John's Gospel (continued)



1. 'I AM the bread of life'(6:51).
2. 'I AM the light of the world'(8:12).
3. 'I AM the gate of the sheepfold'(10:7).
4. 'I AM the good shepherd'(10:11).
5. 'I AM the resurrection'(11:25).
6. 'I AM the way, the truth and the life'(14:6).
7. 'I AM the vine'(15:5).

### 3. God

- In the New Testament 'God' refers to the One whom Jesus called 'Abba'.

'The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory ...' (Ephesians 1:17).

'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, a gentle Father and the God of all consolation ...' (2Corinthians 1:3).

'In his great love God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has given us a new birth as his "sons" by raising Jesus Christ from the dead' (1Peter 1:3).

'There is one God, the Father, from who all things come and for whom we exist. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things come and through whom we exist' (1Corinthians 8:6).

'There is only one God, and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus' (1Timothy 2:5).

- Jesus speaks about and prays to God. The following are from John:

‘On the Son of Man, the Father, **God** himself, has set his seal’(6:27).

‘The one who comes from God has seen the Father’(6:46).

‘My glory is conferred by the Father, by the one of whom you say:  
“He is our **God**”’(8:48).

‘Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands.  
and that he had come from **God** and was returning to **God**’(13:3).

‘Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God,  
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’(17:3).

‘Tell the brothers that I am ascending to my Father and your Father,  
to **my God and your God**’(20:17).

- Some New Testament texts seem to use the title 'God' of Jesus - a usage found at the beginning of the second century in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, and throughout the later centuries to the present.
  - Some manuscripts have 'God the only Son' in John's prologue (1:18).
  - When Thomas exclaims 'My Lord and my God' (John 20:28) is he declaring his faith that in Jesus he recognises the presence and action of God?
  - '... the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ' (2Pet 1:1).
- There is no intention of contradicting monotheism. Rather, these texts seem to be asserting the complete communion in being between God and Jesus - a key theme in John's Gospel in which Jesus declares: 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (John 10:48; 14:10; 14:11).

Jesus experienced an intimate communion with God - the kind of communion which we are all called to and which is the experience we look forward to at the conclusion of our life's journey. We speak of it as the 'beatific vision', for there is no place in it any more for suffering, for doubt, for sin, for death. Jesus' direct communion with God was not yet 'beatific', for he experienced ignorance and doubt and death - not sin, for, unlike us, he always said 'Yes' to grace. But his disciples knew him as having a unique communion with the one he called Father.

We are not in a position to speak of how Jesus understood this when he reflected on his experience. But it is clear that he was conscious of this communion, and that it was this that attracted disciples to him and that opened up for them the promise and the hope. He revealed God to them, and he revealed communion with God - the communion for which we all long - as the goal that God is offering us in his Son.

## 4. Saviour of the World

- ‘My eyes have seen the **salvation** which you have prepared
- for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans
  
- and the glory of your people, **Israel**’ (Luke 2:30-32).
  
- ‘I have come that they may live and live to the full’ (John 10:10).
- Jesus liberated people
  - from fear – The storm, the Gadarene, Jairus’s daughter (Mark 4 - 5).
  
  - from false images and concepts of God.
  
  - from traditions that failed as ‘religion’.

- Jesus is our brother, our leader, our shepherd
- Jesus is 'the saviour of the world' (John 4:42).
- 'the only one by whom we can be saved' (Acts 4:12).
- But 'Jesus could work no miracle in Nazareth.
- He was amazed at their lack of faith' (Mark 6:5-6).



- ‘We conclude our study of the New Testament with the Beloved Disciple contemplating the pierced side of Jesus on the cross,
- and with Thomas putting his hand into Jesus’ wounds.
- Contemplating with the Beloved Disciple we may come to see Jesus
- as he saw him, as the revelation of God and of ourselves.
- Committing ourselves with Thomas to compassionate involvement
- with the suffering we may come to recognise our ‘Lord and God’
- in the obedient, humble and faithful Jesus of Nazareth.
- Having come to this grace-filled insight into the meaning of our existence, we may build a world that reflects the will of God:
- an orchestra in which every instrument is sensitive to every other instrument, and in which the resultant harmony gives glory to God;
- a garden in which the contributing perfumes of every flower
- give off a fragrance that is a perfect offering to God,
- expressing the communion for which we all long.’



We give the last word to Paul: 'I live now in faith, faith in the Son of God loving me and giving himself for me. I cannot give up God's gift'(Galatians 2:21).



## The Deer's Cry

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The Deer's Cry  
Shaun Davey

I arise today  
through the  
strength  
of heaven

Light of sun,  
radiance of moon  
Splendour of fire



speed of lightning  
Swiftness of wind,  
depth of the sea

Stability of earth,  
firmness of rock



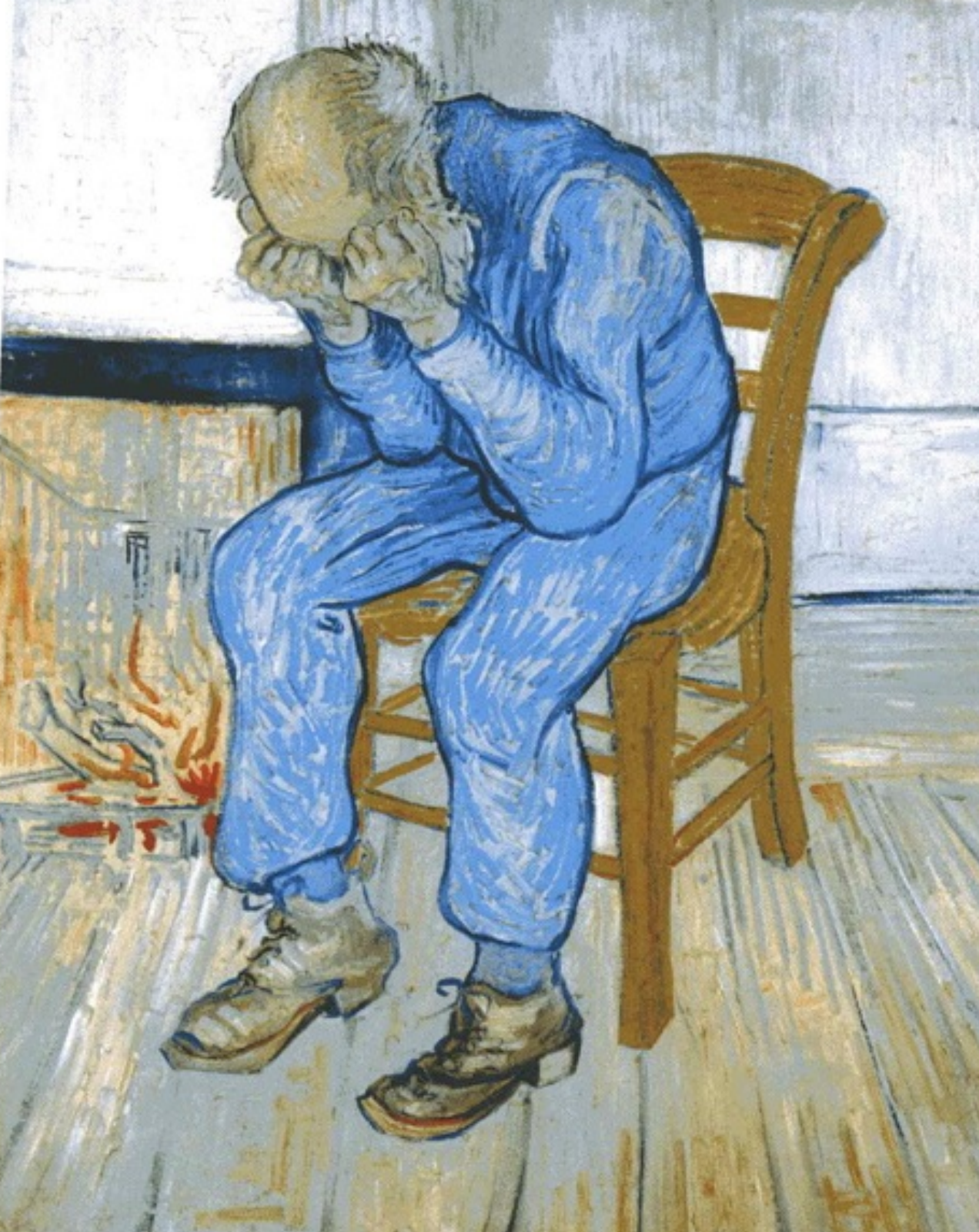


I arise today  
through God's strength  
to pilot me

God's eye to  
look before me

God's wisdom  
to guide me

God's way to  
lie before me  
God's shield  
to protect me



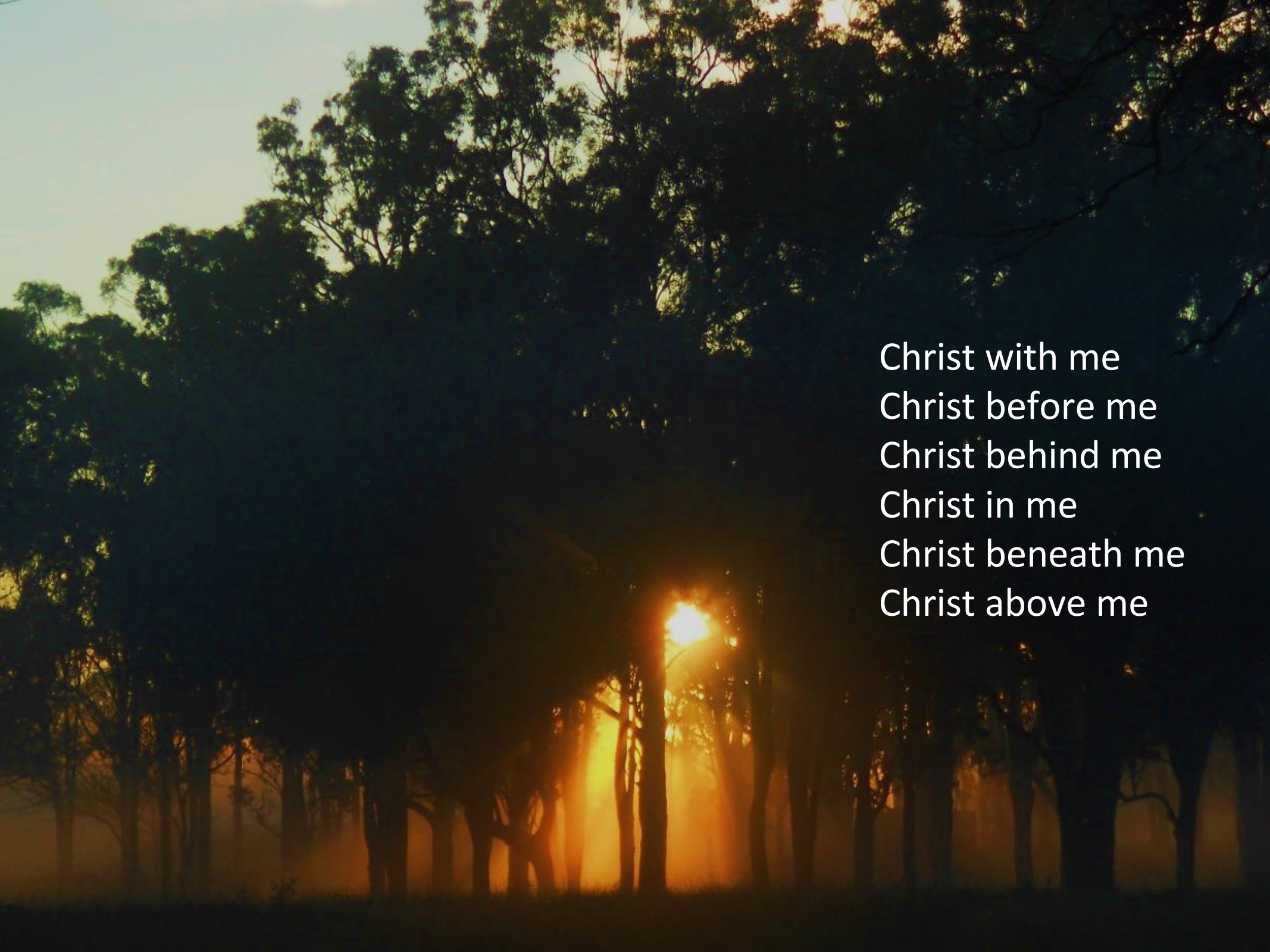
From all who shall  
wish me ill afar and a-near

Alone and in a multitude

Against every cruel,  
merciless power

That may oppose  
my body and soul





Christ with me  
Christ before me  
Christ behind me  
Christ in me  
Christ beneath me  
Christ above me



Christ on my right, Christ on my left  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down

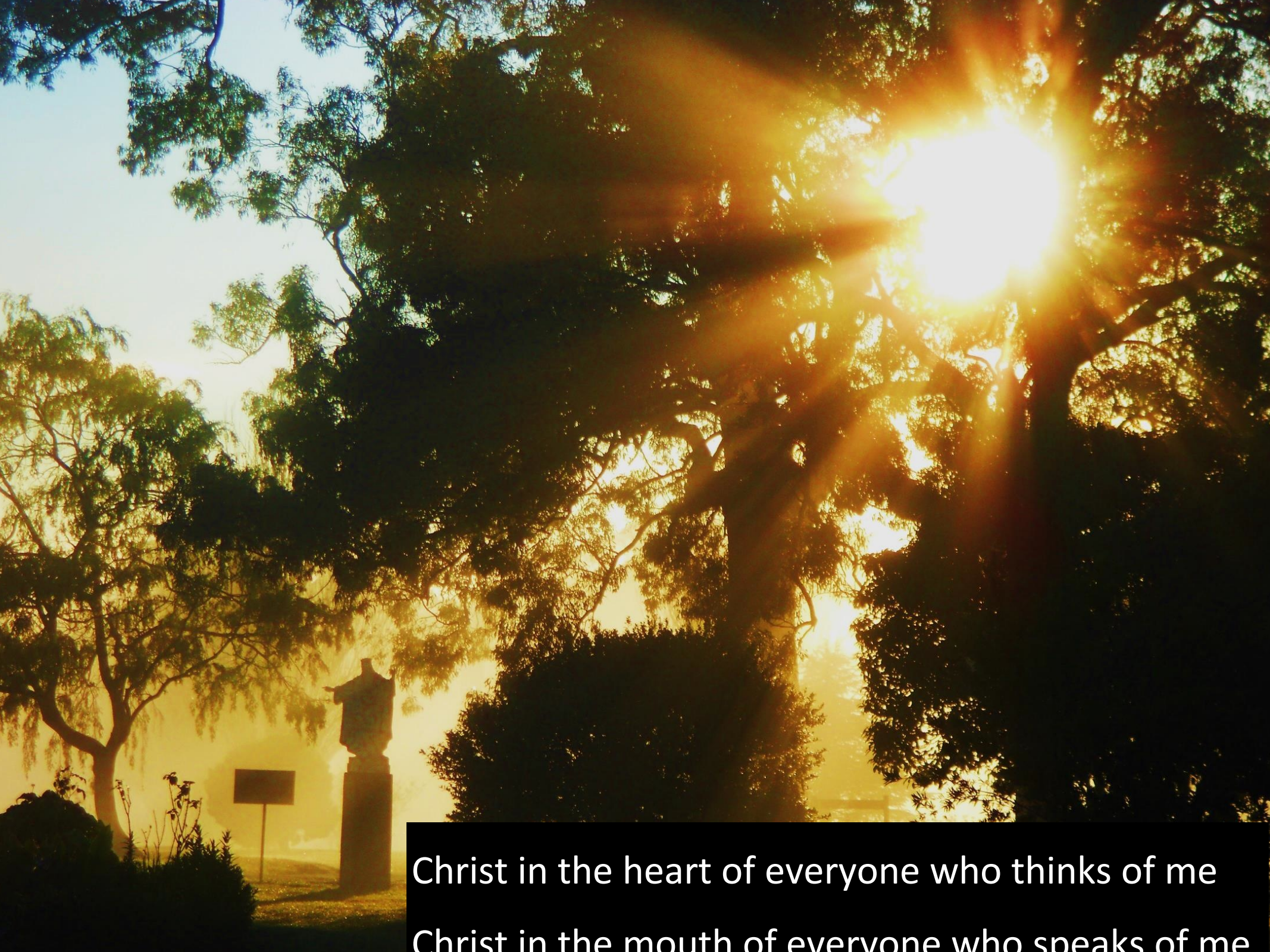
A large, bushy plant with numerous small white flowers is the central focus of the image. It is situated on a green lawn in front of a building with a series of stone arches. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The text is overlaid on the image in white and cyan colors.

Christ  
when I arise

Christ  
to shield me

Christ when I arise

Christ to shield me



Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me



I arise today