Three Days

Music by
Gustav Holst

Text by
M.D. Ridge

Arranged by
Jeffrey Honoré

FROM THE RECORDING
A Light in Darkness
OCTAVO PACKET #11905
CD #11466
Performance Notes

In February 1999, Richard Clarke commissioned this new text on Holst’s great tune THAXTED for his choir to sing at Easter. Let us “unpack” its meaning in order to sing with understanding.

“Three Days” begins in history, in the period of transition after Jesus’ death. The first verse connects us, believers of the present day, with the Lord’s followers during that time of confusion and uncertainty: Our Lord is dead. What will we do now? Will the Romans kill us too? John’s gospel relates that “the disciples had locked the doors of the place where they were for fear” (Jn. 20:19). It could well have been the same upper room where they had shared his Last Supper.

In verse two, the women discovered the empty tomb. All four gospels agree on the disciples’ reluctance to believe the Lord had risen; the story seemed like nonsense (“the dead do not arise”) and, besides, who could believe hysterical women? Yet who had stood by the cross? Who had braved the soldiers to anoint the Lord’s body in the tomb? The men had fled and hid. The evangelists themselves couldn’t get the names of the women straight, except for Mary Magdalene. We present-day Christians may also be slow to believe, but verse two transitions from history into a strong, personal affirmation of faith in the risen Lord, present here in bread and wine and community.

Christ has died and is risen. Though the Body of Christ is still being crucified wherever there is war or violence or injustice, death is not the end. We who have known sorrow know delight. We rise with Christ. We rejoice.

—M.D.R.

This beautiful and descriptive text is set to a noble and sturdy tune that carries the weight of these most holy events of our faith. Take your time. Sing carefully from the depths of your personal experience of our Christ. Feel the sorrow and despair (verse 1); the bright light of early morning dawn (verse 2); and the supreme joy of new life (verse 3). Use the indicated dynamics to their fullest extent. The build from verse 1 to 3 is a gradual crescendo, a musical expression of resurrection.

The brass and timpani add to, but must never dominate, the sound of the human voice. As the best option, have your assembly (if they know the tune) join in on verse 3.

—J.H.
Three Days
for Richard Clarke

THAXTED, 13 13 13 11 13 13
Tune by Gustav Holst (1874–1932)
Arranged by Jeffrey Honoré

M. D. Ridge

INTRO  With breadth and strength (  = ca. 69)

Trumpet
I & II in C

Trombone
I & II

Timpani
in B♭, E♭

Organ
Sw.
8', 4' flutes

Ped. 16', 8'

Tpt

Trb

Timp

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Instrument parts are available from the publisher, edition 70263.
VERSE 1

1. Three days our world was broken; the Lord of life lay dead.

1. “Take up your cross,” he told us who followed where he led.

1. Would we now hang in torment with thieves on every side,

Three Days
Three Days

Three days we clung together where he had washed our feet.

Three days we hid in silence, in bitter fear and grief.

1. our Pass o ver shattered, our hope cruci fied?

1. Three days we clung togeth er where he had washed our feet.

Three Days
Three Days

2. His
tomb, they said, was
A
S
emp

ty, his bro
ken bod
y gone.

VERSE 2
Soprano/Alto

2. Three___days—and on the third___day, the wom-en came at dawn.

2. His___tomb, they said, was emp-ty, his bro-ken bod-y gone.
Three Days
(no breath)
2. he walks among us, and with our own eyes
(no breath)
we've
Timp
48 Tpt
(open boxes) + 2'
T
B a rise
S
A
2. Who could believe their story? The dead do not arise, yet

2. burning bright within us, we've seen his glory shine.

2. seen him at this table; we've shared his bread and wine. Hearts

Three Days
VERSE 3: \((d = ca. 64)\)

Three days our world was broken and in an instant healed,
Three Days

– mxt.

3. Two thousand years are one day in God’s eternal sight,

3. God’s covenant of mercy in mystery revealed.
Though still Christ's body suffers, pierced daily by the sword,

3. and yesterday's sorrows are this day's delight,

3. Though still Christ's body suffers, pierced daily by the sword,
3. yet death has no dominion: the risen Christ is
Three Days

(Hymn Version*)

M. D. Ridge

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*Melody and keyboard.
Three Days

1. our Pass - o - ver shattered, our hope cruci - fied?  
2. yet he walks among us, and with our own eyes  
3. and yes - ter - day’s sorrows are this day’s de - light.

1. Three days we hid in si - lence, in bit - ter fear and grief.  
2. we’ve seen him at this ta - ble, we’ve shared his bread and wine.  
3. Though still Christ’s bod - y suf - fers, pierced dai - ly by the sword,

1. Three days we clung to - geth - er where he had washed our feet.  
2. Hearts burn - ing bright with - in us, we’ve seen his glo - ry shine.  
3. yet death has no do - min - ion: the ris - en Christ is Lord!
Assembly Edition

THREE DAYS

1. Three__ days our world was bro__ ken; the
2. Three__ days and on the third__ day, the
3. Three__ days our world was bro__ ken and

1. Lord of life lay dead. “Take__ up your cross,” he
2. wom__ en came at dawn. His__ tomb, they said, was
3. in an in__ stant healed, God’s__ co__ v__ e n t of

1. told__ us who fol__ lowed where he led. Would__
2. emp__ ty, his bro__ ken bod__ y gone. Who__
3. mer__ cy in mys__ ter y re__ vealed. Two__

1. we now hang in tor__ ment with thieves on ev__ ry side,
2. could be li__ eve in this sto__ ry? The__ dead do not a__ rise,
3. thou__ sand years are one day in God’s e__ ter nal sight,

1. our Pass__ o__ ver shat__ tered, our hope__ cruci__ fied?
2. yet he walks a__ mong us, and w__ ith our own eyes
3. and yes__ ter day’s sor__ rows are this__ day’s de__ light.

1. Three__ days we hid in si__ lence, in
2. we’ve__ seen him at this ta__ ble; we’ve
3. Though__ still Christ’s bod__ y suf__ fers, pierced

1. bit__ ter fear and grief. Three__ days we clung to.
2. shared his bread and wine. Hearts__ burn__ ing bright with
3. dai__ ly by the sword, yet__ death has no do__ 

1. gath__ er where he had washed our feet.
2. in__ us, we’ve seen his glo__ ry shine.
3. min__ ion: the ris__ en Christ is Lord!

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