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LOUISE GLÜCK

WINTER MORNING

1.
Today, when I woke up, I asked myself
why did Christ die? Who knows
the meaning of such questions?
It was a winter morning, unbelievably cold.
So the thoughts went on,
from each question came
another question, like a twig from a branch,
like a branch from a black trunk.
2.
At a time like this
a young woman traveled through the desert settlements
looking neither forward nor backward,
sitting in perfect composure on the tired animal
as the child stirred, still sealed in its profound attachment—
The husband walked slightly ahead, older, out of place;
increasingly, the mule stumbled, the path becoming
difficult in darkness, though they persisted
in a world like our world, not ruled
by man but by a statue in heaven—
3.
Above the crowds representing
humankind, the lost
citizens of a remote time,
the insulted body
raised on a cross like a criminal
to die publicly
above Jerusalem, the shimmering city
while in great flocks
birds circled the body, not partial
to this form over the others
since men were all alike,
defeated by the air,
whereas in air
the body of a bird becomes a banner:
But the lesson that was needed
was another lesson.
4.

In untrustworthy springtime
he was seen moving
among us like one of us
in green Judea, covered with the veil of life,
among the olive trees, among the many shapes
blurred by spring,
stopping to eat and rest, in obvious need,
among the thousand flowers,
some planted, some distributed by wind,
like all men, seeking
recognition on earth,
so that he spoke to the disciples
in a man’s voice, lifting his intact hand:
was it the wind that spoke?
Or stroked Mary’s hair, until she raised her eyes
no longer wounded
by his coldness, by his needless destruction
of the flesh which was her fulfillment—
This was not the sun.
This was Christ in his cocoon of light:
so they swore. And there were other witnesses
though they were all blind,
they were all swayed by love—
5.
Winters are long here.
The road a dark gray, the maples gray, silvered with lichen,
and the sun low on the horizon,
white on blue; at sunset, vivid orange-red.
When I shut my eyes, it vanishes.
When I open my eyes, it reappears.
Outside, spring rain, a pulse, a film on the window.
And suddenly it is summer, all puzzling fruit and light.