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Brahms' Requiem// Why We Reflect on Jesus’ Last Week

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| **John Stonestreet and Dr. Glenn Sunshine** |

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| [**Brahms' Requiem**](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBntV2-MK5V1-WJV7CgFxtW2StVMM8th0bbW55G1Gx63SSR-W269QM699HRhhW8Fr2VW1RtbhjW8TsgHm1j90Z_N6l-lK-rkB26W1mKSWd7PbmTqW18vng16dZLMWW3KbYY65D4Tk8W4jFS081NSf-sV75CLM2Lg6_wN3B4-ph1YL-qW7xLVkc7p06nMW47Jcz47ScxWLW3Vw1yh81RzXdW3kmTWy8vwgQhW6QsQHn1hMX-CW6khkV-3dpxx9W5MfrTT40875RW4tRpcP7XqTTm39Wr1) |

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| On Good Friday, 1867, a complete version of Johannes Brahms’ “German Requiem” premiered at Bremen Cathedral. (Brahms would add an additional movement to the piece in 1868.) The “German” in the title is notable. |
| The text for traditional requiems came from the Catholic Requiem Mass and were thus in Latin. Brahms, however, rejected the language and the structure and content of the Requiem Mass. Instead, he used texts from Luther’s translation of the Bible, which he had learned growing up in the Lutheran Church.And yet, by most accounts, Brahms was “a freethinker” rather than a believer. For example, the German Requiem does not contain texts that deal with salvation through Christ. What then, are Christians to make of his masterful choral and orchestral music?For background, the piece seems to have been inspired by the loss of people close to Brahms. In 1856, roughly 10 years before the composition premiered, Brahms’ close friend Robert Schumann died. Some of the music composed by Brahms in the wake of his death was later incorporated into the Requiem. In 1865, Brahms’ mother died. Her loss seems to have been a strong impetus for the work.The traditional requiem begins with a prayer for the dead: “Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them.” By contrast, the German Requiem begins with a quotation from the Beatitudes: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This focus on how life is lived sets the tone for five of the seven movements, each of which move from mourning and anxiety to comfort.Although the texts do point to God as the source of comfort, Brahms refused to include verses dealing with salvation. Karl Reinthaler, who conducted the piece’s premiere in Bremen, asked Brahms to include more explicitly religious texts. He refused, [saying](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBnth2-MJwV1-WJV7CgVBDVSBpd_6TCzP3W62YHfF6B61mkW3HS5d59bxGPNW6Tkwfj8twFkPVWKtgV2cb0k3W2Yzr2W1lTQK_W6dMhP93bGJ6YW6C7HCw6Blnx8W8_zbhk5RM0mJW6jTPrb5KQT9lW3nMf_k8gxBrtW3rxBtr4RdnYDW56TJcy5rY-0RW8HjJFr2n8TLBW6ns_6z19NtqsN2bqhJRFjgkK3m0f1),*As far as the text is concerned, I confess that I would gladly omit even the word German [from the title] and instead use Human; also with my best knowledge and will I would dispense with passages like John 3:16. On the other hand, I have chosen one thing or another because I am a musician, because I needed it, and because with my venerable authors I can’t delete or dispute anything. But I had better stop before I say too much.*This disturbed Reinthaler. So, in order to point clearly to the believer’s source of hope, he chose to add “I Know that my Redeemer Liveth” from Handel’s Messiah to the Good Friday performance.Brahm’s refusal to include texts that talked of Jesus or salvation revealed his humanistic orientation. In fact, Antonin Dvorak, Brahms’ protégé and a devout Catholic, [commented about his mentor](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBntV2-MK5V1-WJV7CgHfzW1shDP67dwDwhW1L36kT6PFTMQN1qRTm9Y571JW1jN2ql5z_9yQW453TCq1dggsPW1zTh813Zc8_JW4-dvXz4nCrsqW3Y0tBk4c2qT4VHrMQx6WF212N78whVZK4f_ZW1Wk78T8rlfGFW9cqC2t29JfkXW4Jsm1g6zdKCDN3bn449KmhKyW7S4Skr6T2kLHW7Cj5h71-vm93W6-WGc774K1X_W2jsVVv6Rv_kVN1tlVBTLNzktW3cCknt2c0W7W31hp1), “Such a man, such a fine soul—and he believes in nothing! He believes in nothing!”And yet, when Brahms wanted to offer comfort to the grieving, he turned to the Bible. The German Requiem contains an impressive collection of Scriptures, including verses from Psalms, Isaiah, John, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, and Revelation, as well as the Wisdom of Solomon and Sirach from the Apocrypha. |

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| Consider the text from the first two verses:*Blessed are they that mourn,**for they shall be comforted.**They who sow in tears,**shall reap in joy.**Go forth and cry,**bearing precious seed,**and come with joy**bearing their sheaves**For all flesh is as grass,**and the glory of man**like flowers.**The grass withers**and the flower falls. Therefore be patient, dear brothers,**for the coming of the Lord.**Behold, the husbandman waits**for the delicious fruits of the earth**and is patient for it, until he receives**the morning rain and evening rain. But the word of the Lord endures for eternity.* *The redeemed of the Lord will come again,and come to Zion with a shout;eternal joy shall be upon her head;They shall take joy and gladness,and sorrow and sighing must depart.*Brahms obviously found consolation in the Bible, though he rejected its fundamental message. Just as God spoke through the pagan Balaam, even as he refused to obey God, Brahms’ Requiem gives beautiful voice to the words of Scripture despite his rejection of Christ. For all those who do know the way of salvation, the German Requiem not only provides a magnificent biblical setting to offer comfort and consolation, but also a place from which to point to the wider truths of where hope is truly found.This *Breakpoint* was co-authored by Dr. Glenn Sunshine. For more resources to live like a Christian in this cultural moment, go to [colsoncenter.org](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393W1YBns-4M_1vMW7_ts637Wg-6LW7zlNLx2kJrRCW6J8K863_Y2ptW1J74SG7jx1X2N45WxsmjDLL8W9gWl095WF2cwW5lbXjL4-XLgmW8DZnh974jjXdW61Dd_Z15sXFgW2RfhYK3QkjQGW3FGyTv4blYV7W3dH93b8rm03JW4cd9Hp1pyJVjW8zY1-21v1g6tW5typj_19KYGG103). |

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| [**Why We Reflect on Jesus’ Last Week**](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBntB2-MJQV1-WJV7CgJzyW50cqy42vglgTN80bcm_MnCG-W4X0jmJ8WQk66W4vfvFX1flN8sVQ2Ltm3ClWJMW6b2b833rYvmxW7WpX4k4njhFhW1s2FDg8RBL-MW655MwY39XsQ1W54cp8c39QxZ2W5Ck2nJ7fjqjwW3rtGny5FnNmWW4_0GL62qJpZ6W9gs0w02fVY4PW15tvKW4qNf01W5sPhBN4s8V4VW7Tcfw01_F4w_W5QNgc07cfmkq36Nz1) |

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| The events of Holy Week recall those critical last days of Christ on Earth: from His triumphal entry to His Last Supper; from His prayer, anguish, and arrest in the Garden to His trial before Pilate; from His suffering and death on the cross to the joy of the resurrection. |

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| Copy of BP Picture-14 |
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| While every aspect of Christ’s life is worth knowing, the Gospel writers made sure of what we most needed to know. [John wrote that all the books of the world could not hold the stories of Jesus](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBntV2-MK5V1-WJV7CgTXvN1cX2Wb3tNbtN7m8G5qnt_k_W5gkZTJ438y82N1RWd_4ghvn0W76lGTD7pL2fRW70Gp2-5hH-n4W98Zghw22s3YVW5nmCPw4YX5V4W2h-_q22P5CjMW20_KRL4ykJBSW5Jn-C-95fM1lN80lQPsPLZ6NW8Zjcsg8PYpRkW5YmG088MYJlkW5xgb567zR2FNW5qMg3h5Ty_HNW62kqDf7-J2P0W7P-CfF8HXrkfW39TG_t3BdD95W6n8rt32lQcPV3dS71), but he also spent nearly half of his Gospel on that one week. Overall, as much as a quarter of the Gospels are spent on these events we remember during Holy Week.One of the things this tells us is that we’re in far more trouble than we might admit. Moral clarification and better social theory aren’t enough. Our plight is so dire that it required the arrest, torture, and death of the perfect Son of God. Our need is great. Thank God, Hisgrace is greater still. |

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| ***More from the Colson Center...*** |

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| **Re-Mythologizing Easter | Matt Burnett** Christ’s Resurrection is the turning point that reminds us our world’s history is a story that ends in hope. But appreciating stories requires imagination! Shane welcomes Anglican pastor Matt Burnett to explore how imagination can illuminate redemption, worship, and catechesis. [Listen to the discussion>>](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBntV2-MK5V1-WJV7CgV_yW79gYcs31PX65W35Cxtt8l4HbfW1Q-RlH8b8CB0W83lRlz7sqJg2W5gyzFp6NMyq8N3NrZXD-4wz_W6cgHL691fcNBVtY4Fl6hbzXnW4ZYfyn4X4f7tW4b7pXG6Q8MshW2sD-1y88YzWmW21tg3y4P3NnKW7bhM4-45Qf2rW1NNLZ-8xV6-xW48tx0l2fkMKNW49nWvm5RynzDW3VGMl-2YrTy3W6CS2sR4czHKSW82Sr8q3rY6hwW52wGqw1vXnP-3g461) |
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| **S3 15: From Isolated to Reaching Out With Emily Colson** The lockdown of the last few years affected all of us in one way or another. Emily Colson and her son Max, who has autism, were stripped of outside community and the team who helped them. Desperate to find things for Max to do, Emily cleared the dining room table, got out all the paints, and let Max play with the colors. What happened after that has surprised everyone. Join us as we hear Emily and Max’s journey of how God has loved and led them through this all.  [Listen to the interview>>](https://email.breakpoint.org/e3t/Ctc/2K%2B113/cCDWX04/VVVVwf1YlzX7W6gtSHG3LQVZNW65wf3Z4Z4393N1YBnv92-MKpV1-WJV7CgFQcW98RPdF97Fy81W1Pb1Gh30tV57W2_-Q3c49zbCHN2mhgTwv9gXGW8RZbtd7jz6H5W5m2-287ZsYlRVf1qQC754tsxN1py1Xf-BqjrW1mlD7r1c_5s1W52S0nJ8FS4_4W5Slvmm2mRXs7VxjCKx8vZZ02VLY9MV5wpnhFW8R12Ht4t58cmW3TdDgS8Mzc-qW6S0YxL2H8f6qW4jXH_D69kWn6W6FhBCV2zlQxsMQrSvnCT8cdW8_rHPR8qMWTNW3Fj3Dv8fXXhVW9fShym1JtbnT39-S1) |
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