

# R. Douglas Helvering

## BUT SEEK THY SHEEP

for mixed chorus with piano

Poetry by Christina Rossetti

*For the Adult Choir at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church*



[www.rdouglashelvering.com](http://www.rdouglashelvering.com)

Dr. **R. Douglas Helvering**, DMA (b. 1977) is a composer, arranger, conductor, and educator. His music has been featured at major national, regional, and state conventions as well as at prestigious venues worldwide including the historic Carnegie Hall in New York. He is currently serving as Associate Professor at the famed Westminster Choir College in Princeton, NJ and as Music Minister at Prince of Peace Lutheran church in Princeton, NJ. His music has been widely acclaimed by performers, scholars, and audiences around the world for its artistry and emotional appeal.

Poet **Christina Rossetti** (1830-1894) was born in London, the youngest of four children, to Italian parents. She is best known for her ballads and mystic religious lyrics. Her poetry is marked by symbolism and intense feeling. In 1866 she published *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems*, which includes this piece's poem that she titled 'Good Friday'.

This poem provides a moving encapsulation of a person of faith's response to the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. Rossetti is lamenting the hardness of the human heart, that it is possible to contemplate the crucifixion and not weep in terrible grief as did the women at the cross, Saint Peter, and nature itself. This dichotomy is represented in the contrast between a stone (unfeeling and unmoved) and a sheep (willing to follow). In the end, we recognize that even a stone-hearted person is worthy of grace and care by the Good Shepherd. No heart is so stony, no sheep is so lost, that it is beyond redemption. Just as Moses striking the rock in the Old Testament gave water, and therefore life, to his people, so Christ (who is greater than Moses) smiting the rock will nourish and inspire even the hardest of hearts.

### Good Friday

Am I a stone, and not a sheep,  
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,  
To number drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,  
And yet not weep?  
Not so those women loved  
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;  
Not so fallen Peter, weeping bitterly;  
Not so the thief was moved;  
Not so the Sun and Moon  
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,  
A horror of great darkness at broad noon -  
I, only I.  
Yet give not o'er,  
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;  
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more  
And smite a rock.

for the Adult Choir at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Princeton Junction, NJ

# But Seek Thy Sheep

Christina Rossetti

for SATB chorus and piano

R. Douglas Helvering

**Penitently** (♩=60)

Piano

4

Pno.

8

Choir

*mp*

Am I a stone, and not a sheep that I can

*mp*

Pno.

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13

Choir

stand, O Christ, be-neath Thy cross, to

Pno.

16

Choir

num - ber drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,

drop by drop Thy blood's slow loss,

Pno.

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

20

Choir

and yet not weep?

Pno.

*p*

Ped.

24

Pno.

Ped.

28

Pno.

*mf*

gaining intensity

Ped.

**Intense** (♩=72)

31 *f*

Choir

Not so those wom - en loved, who, with ex - ceed - ing grief la -

Pno. *f*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

35

Choir

men - ted Thee;

*f*

Not so, — Pet - er,

Pno.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

39

Choir

fall - en Pet - er weep - ing bitt - er - ly;

Pno.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

*poco a poco accel.*

43 *mf*

Choir

Not so the thief was moved;

*mf*

Not so the Sun and Moon

Pno. *mf*

Ped.

47 *f*

Choir

Which hide their fac - es

*f*

in a star - less sky,

Pno. *f*

Ped.

*holding back*

*molto rit.*

51

**Choir**

*ff* A hor - ror of great dark - ness *mf* at broad noon, *p*

*ff* A hor - ror of great dark - ness *mf* at broad noon, *p*

**Pno.**

*ff* *mf* *p*

*Ped.* *Ped.*

**With utmost humility (= 60)**

55

**Choir**

*p* I, on - ly I. *mp* I, on - ly I. *mf*

*p* I, on - ly I. *mp* I, on - ly I. *mf*

**Pno.**

*8va* *mp* *mf*

*8vb*



59 *p* *mp* *mf*

Choir

I, on-ly I. I, on-ly I.

*p* *mp* *mf*

I, on-ly I. I, on-ly I.

*8va*

*p* *mp* *mf*

Pno.

*8vb*

Ped.

63 *mp* *mf* *f*

Choir

I, on-ly I. I, on-ly I.

*mp* *mf* *f*

I, on-ly I. I, on-ly I.

*mp* *mf* *f*

Pno.

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

*poco rit.*      *a tempo*

67

*mp*      *p*

Choir

on - ly I.

*mp*      *p*

on - ly I.

Pno.

*mp*      *p*

Ped.

71

*mp*

Choir

Yet give not o'er, but seek Thy sheep, seek Thy sheep, — true.

*mp*

Yet give not o'er, but seek Thy sheep, seek Thy sheep, — true.

Pno.

*mp*

75

Choir

Shep - herd of the flock; Great - er than

Pno.

78

Choir

Mos - es, turn and look once more

*mf* turn and look once *molto rit.*

Pno.

*mf*

Timeless (♩=52)

82

*mp*

Choir

and smite a rock, \_\_\_\_\_ and smite a

*mp*

and smite a rock, \_\_\_\_\_ and smite a

Pno.

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_ Ped. \_\_\_\_\_ Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

85

Choir

rock. \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

rock. \_\_\_\_\_

*p*

Pno.

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_ Ped. \_\_\_\_\_