



But please note this: it is love with all its accompanying pain and passion that has given him most reason to hope, even though love has been a sorrow and though hope has been temporarily 'blinded by its tears'. He has, you might say, been 'wounded by love' and, for all its pain, thereafter possessed of some sort of promise that the future will, indeed must, in some way or another, turn out to be kind:

and clear

Above the storm the heavens wait to be seen.

The followers of Jesus, you might say, had been 'wounded by love'. Though they did not perceive it at the time, Jesus was the conduit of God's love to them, and they, for all their fallibility and failure, loved him and, through him, loved (possibly unknowingly) the Father. And then Good Friday came along. Jesus parted from them, was wrenched from them, in the most ugly and terrifying fashion. They all deserted him, and went away in despair.

The sorrow of true love is a great sorrow  
And true love parting blackens a bright morrow.

Then, on the Sunday, they understood that:

their despair

Is but hope blinded by its tears, and clear  
Above the storm the heavens wait to be seen.

He appeared to them! But note this. According to the New Testament accounts, he appeared at first *only* to them. It was only those who had been wounded by his love, already possessed of some sort of promise that the future would be kind, who, in spite of their hope having being temporarily blinded by its tears, could actually 'see' him.

Our human loving, for all the pain that it can involve, naturally generates hope. Could it be that it always anticipates, and prepares us for, a greater vision? For those first disciples, it was the sight of the Risen Lord. For us perhaps it will be the vision of God, and the seeing of things in the perspective of heaven. Edward Thomas would probably not have warmed to that sort of language. But there is a tiny suggestion of it in his poem:

and clear

Above the storm the heavens wait to be seen.

There are centenaries other than that of Edward Thomas that I might have mentioned this morning. It is six hundred years ago, in 1417, according to some of the best estimates, that the East Anglian recluse, Dame Julian of Norwich died. T S Eliot, in his Four Quartets, brought her now most well-known words to our attention. 'All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well' – words of profound hope written against a background of plague, war, religious persecution and social disruption. Or perhaps I might have mentioned the hundredth anniversary of the birth of another 'Dame', Dame Vera Lynn, born in 1917, the year of Edward Thomas's death, who, during the dark days of the Second World War touched the hearts of many with her words of hope in: 'There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover' and her 'We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when'.

