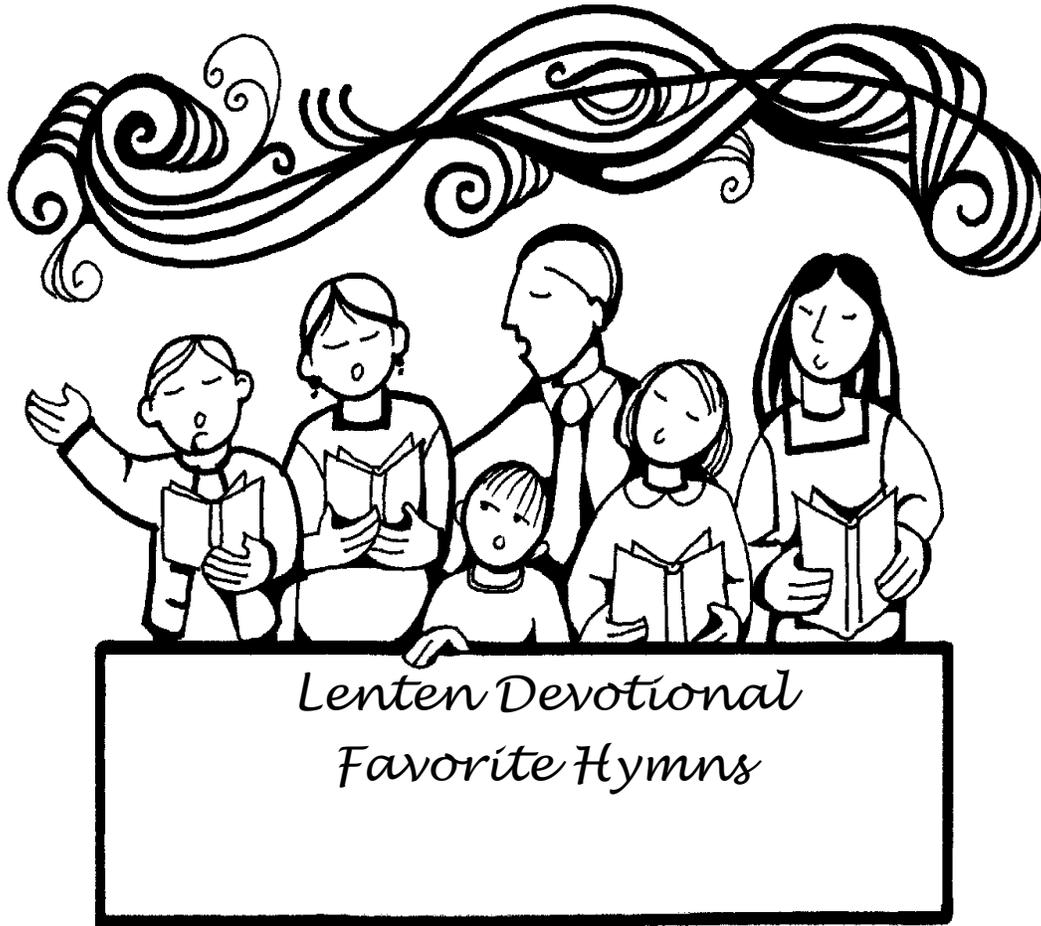


2019



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

205 S. Garner St., State College PA 16803 www.glcpa.org

Lent 2019

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is a penitential season of forty days (not counting Sundays), designed to prepare us for the joys of Easter. Grace will offer extra worship opportunities during Lent. Our schedule will be as follows:

12:15 p.m. Wednesday Lunchtime Lenten Worship (until 12:45 p.m.)

With weekly celebration of Holy Communion. This short service should fit into a working lunch hour as well as allow worshippers the opportunity to attend weekday worship without nighttime travel.

6:30 p.m. Wednesday Lenten Prayer

This mid-week evening service is designed around the Church's traditional practices of evening prayer, but includes intentional space for the inclusion of families and children. It is an inspiring and accessible 50 minute worship experience.

WEDNESDAY LENTEN WORSHIP: Sermon series on Psalm 34

March 13 - Worship at 12:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
March 20 - Worship at 12:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
March 27 - Worship at 12:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
April 3 - Worship at 12:15 p.m.; Ecumenical Concert 7:00p.m.
April 10 - Worship at 12:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
April 17 - Worship at 12:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDIES (11:00 a.m.)

March 13 - Epiphanies in Luke's Gospel
March 20 - Lectionary Study
March 27 - Lectionary Study
April 3 - Seven Last Words of Christ
April 10 - Lectionary Study
April 17 - Lectionary Study

The Rev Scott E. Schul Senior Pastor
The Rev. Carolyn K. Hetrick Assoc. Pastor

Organizing Your Devotional Time

Just as there is no one way to prayer, there is no one way to make use of this devotional book. Some will choose to meditate on a devotional each day, at a set hour. Others will read more than one devotional at a time. Still others will combine these reflections with other discipleship practices. All of those approaches are valid and worthwhile. Do what works best for you.

One suggested format is as follows:

1. Pray the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

2. Recite the Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

3. Read the Devotional

4. Conclude with either Luther's Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer

Morning Prayer: I give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected me through the night from all harm and danger. I ask that you would also protect me today from sin and all evil, so that my life and actions may please you. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening Prayer: I give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected me today. I ask you to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously to protect me tonight. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me.

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

We Come to You for Healing, Lord (617)

I was disappointed when the red hymnal, the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, came onto the scene in 2006. I loved the former, green hymnal, the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. It was introduced in 1978 when Steve entered seminary at Gettysburg. It followed us to the three parishes we were lucky enough to be part of. Steve and I each had our own leather copy with our name embossed in gold on the cover. I used my copy at home and in church. I even knew the page numbers of my favorite hymns.

As you can imagine, I was not real happy with the new hymnal. It had flimsy pages, complicated indexes and no familiar page numbers for my favorite hymns. My appreciation for this hymnal changed, however, when I sang this brand new hymn written by Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr. Steve and I knew Dr. Stuempfle during our time in Gettysburg. He served as a professor, the dean and the president of the seminary. He was also a prolific hymn writer. But more than that, he was a caring pastor. He had a compassionate presence that made you feel special. When I saw him at a seminary graduation twenty years after Steve graduated, he still remembered my name.

Dr. Stuempfle died from ALS – Lou Gehrig’s disease. He suffered physically those last years of his life. In this hymn he cries for healing. He calls on Jesus to heal those on earth now just as his Lord healed those in ancient times. He acknowledges the wakeful nights and suffering days of those that are ill. He prays for patience and calming peace. We can identify with these pleas when we suffer and when those we love suffer. But Dr. Stuempfle also sees the upside of illness. He acknowledges the work of doctors, nurses and friends during distress and suffering. Finally, he expresses his trust in the grace of God to heal and sustain. Through it all, you can sense his strong faith and his encouragement to all of us who suffer.

When I sing this hymn, I see Dr. Stuempfle’s face and warm smile and I am reminded of his strong witness. I also am reminded that sometimes singing a new song from a new hymnal is not so bad.

Dear Lord, thank you for the work and witness of Dr. Herman G. Stuempfle and of all hymn writers. Provide us with patience, calming peace and grace when we suffer. In Jesus’ name. Amen

Lois Lynn

Thursday, March 7, 2019

“When Morning Guilds the Skies”

This hymn, “When Morning Guilds the Skies,” is a German hymn from the 19th century. It first was noticed in the Catholic Songbook for Public Worship. Edward Caswell, a Roman Catholic priest from England, is noted for translating the hymn from German to English in 1854 and 1858. The 1858 version has become the one located in most hymnals today. It originated in Wurzburg near Frankfurt where the hills’ and streams’ beauty most likely stirred the writer to praise God for these natural scenes.

It is memorable to me from an early age of three to four years old. The Sunday morning worship service that our family attended was an Evangelical United Brethren congregation. Each Sunday the worship service began with the choir proceeding into the sanctuary singing this hymn. It has always brought that image to mind when I hear it played or sung. What an impression to stay with me all these years! It certainly illustrates the fact that what is said and done with our children at this young age creates life-long memories.

The hymn reminds me of family, my own, as well as the church family of which we are matter if we are at work or leisure, the wonder of God’s love supports us and causes the heart to rise in song, praising all we see “thro all ages long.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we always be praising you, not only in the good times of our lives, but also in the difficult ones. In Jesus Christ be praised. Amen

Kathryn Mackes

Friday, March 8, 2019

Just as I am

*Just as I am without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Simple, beautiful words set to a simple beautiful tune, Just As I Am was written in 1834 by Victorian hymn writer Charlotte Elliott. She had suffered from a serious illness in her early 30's which left her unable to live on her own and so she spent her years watching the everyday activities of those around her without being able to participate in any way. Depression plagued her as she struggled to find meaning for her very limited life, but she had been counseled to "Come to Christ just as you are" by a friend and clung to the knowledge that Jesus had given his life for her and that she was loved and accepted just as she was. And so, we have her hymn to guide us to sing, "O Lamb of God, I come, I come".

Martin Luther also struggled, not with a physical illness, but with the feeling that he could never be good enough to earn God's love and acceptance. No amount of prayer, fasting, sacrifice ever seemed to be enough. How he struggled to realize that God's love is freely given through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. What amazing power came with his acceptance of God's gift of love through Jesus.

Just as I am, those are the words that give me joy today. I love the second verse of this hymn.

*Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

On my own, I cannot be the person I want to be, the person who reflects God's perfect love, the person who lives a blameless life, who has no doubts but trusts always. It is in verse 5 that I find the assurance I need.

*Just as I am Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

"Just as we are" we are loved, accepted, forgiven, saved through God's message of love in our Savior Jesus. Glory be to God!

Let us pray...

*Just as I am, thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

Nancy Reinert

Saturday, March 9, 2019

“How Great Thou Art”

It is my favorite hymn because it glorifies our God for being a wonderful creator, our kind and benevolent Savior who sent out His only son to die for our sins and the eternal and great Father for promising us a permanent, glorious home in heaven. These are captured very appropriately in the four verses of this hymn.

First two verses: Everyone, including an atheist, who sees the magnificent and beautiful world in front of us cannot refrain from being amazed by the complex but awesome nature of everything in this world, including all the creatures such as the birds, animals and human beings, the sun, moon, planets and stars. But only the believers like us can give credit for all these creations and thanks to our great almighty God. He not only created everything, but also cares for every one of them: “Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God.”

Third verse: This is what we celebrate and thank God for during the Lenten season. Our almighty God loves us so much that, in order to save us, He sent His only begotten son to this earth, to suffer and die on the cross for our sins. This is an unquestionable proof of his unlimited love for all of us. None of the gods, in Hinduism and Islam and other religions, did that for the salvation of their believers. Should we not be grateful forever to our Father because of this?

Fourth verse: This verse reminds us about our Father’s loving assurance of heaven to all of us, which will be our final destination, and of our eternal life in it. Jesus said, “I am coming quickly.” When He comes, He will take us to heaven which will be our home forever and where we will all be together with all those believers who died before us, like Donald Christian, Pat Ishler, Betta Kriner, and others, and sing praises forever to our God: “How great thou art!”

Prayer: Dear God, Thank you for your amazing creation. Thank you for your son, our savior, Jesus Christ and for the promise of Eternal Life.

Jeya Chandra

Sunday March 10, 2019

Gospel Luke 4:1-13

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.' "

⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.' "

⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'

¹¹and

'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.' "

¹²Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Monday, March 11, 2019

Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

Ever. Not just sometimes, not just when the time is right, not just when expected, not just when we feel it. The Holy Spirit is EVER dwelling within us and everywhere.

I've often made the error of seeing the movement of the Holy Spirit as a special, occasional happening. I'm not alone in this: "Come, Holy Spirit!" we say, or we say "The Spirit is moving now!" We say this as if the Spirit of God is sometimes here, but sometimes gone from here. About this we couldn't be more wrong. The Holy Spirit is more apparent at some times than at others, but never gone for good.

Whatever the Spirit is doing, it is *ever* doing. And look at these verbs, these words of doing: dwelling. Brooding. Raising. Living. Striving. Forming. Working. Quickening. Strengthening. Absolving. Binding. It's a busy and multifaceted Spirit. And the things this Spirit is doing, it does in us—in each of us and in the collective us.

Then there's this line: "Holy Spirit, ever forming in the church the mind of Christ." I read this line as a challenge. What is in the mind of Christ? Are we sure it's what we think it is? Since the church began, we humans have been trying to enact our vision of what is on Christ's mind. We get it wrong, we reform, we revise, all with the Spirit's help and guidance. What would Christ have us do? How would Christ see our own situation. Surely we have enacted many misreadings of Christ's mind over the centuries, but we have hope of doing it better. The Spirit is *ever forming* in us the mind of Christ. The Holy Spirit is ever pushing us, ever prompting us, and ever available to us, empowering us to better and better know and express Christ's mind in our lives and our societies.

Did I mention this hymn is fun to sing? All those moving eighth notes!

Let us pray...

Holy Spirit, you "ever dwell" in me. Help me to perceive you and to respond to you. Move me when you move in me, and move *us* as a community when you move in us. Amen.

Anne Whitney

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Hear I Am Lord

The verses of this hymn are God's words of invitation. He introduces Himself by reminding us how He created the world and never forgot His creation. The verses remind us of the creation story (sea, sky, and stars) and the Exodus (wind, flame, and manna/bread). But who will help in sharing His light, word, and life to others? The conviction is voiced in Isaiah 6 and 1 Samuel 3: "Here I am, send me". As we sing these words, we are joining in that commitment to serve God and follow His call. It is a personal call and prayer put to song.

When I hear and sing this song, I am reminded of my college years singing this song and all of the years in between. In college, the words were meaningful. I didn't know where life would lead, where I would be, or what I would be doing. But the words of the refrain voiced my commitment to listen and follow God's call. Now that I am three times older (!), I still do not know what is ahead but I have the assurance that God will lead me if I listen.

This song was written in 1979 and published in 1981. It was a new song when I first sang it in college. At that time, there was a change and renewal of liturgical music with the introduction of guitar accompaniment. The song is simple without harmony, adding to the personal conversation between God and me. Through the years I have heard this song played with guitar, piano, and organ. I have sung this song in Illinois, California, and Pennsylvania. I have sung the song as a student, adult, and parent. Remembering these different settings, locations, and life situations emphasizes the timelessness and timelessness of God's calling and my response. Here I am Lord... if You lead me.

Let us pray...

Dear Lord, guide me and lead me. Here I am; show me Your way.

Laura Pauley

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

“I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry”

As I write this in January, my family just traveled to western New York to attend a funeral for Woody, a very best friend for 50 years. He was a strong Christian man who had a positive impact on our family. We worshiped together for 30 years. During the service, this contemporary hymn was sung. It is one of my favorites. I am not able to sing this hymn all the way through without some tears. Unlike most hymns, the lyrics are written in the imagined conversational voice of God, reassuring us of His presence throughout the changing stages of our lives. I know that Woody believed that God walked with him every day.

I would like this hymn to be sung at my funeral. It is a comfort to think that God has been with us each and every day of our lives and that God will be there with love and care (and one more surprise) when our earthly days are done. Rest in peace, Woody. The best is yet to come. Surprise!

Prayer: Thank you, God, for being there for my borne cry, for promising to be there for my final sigh, and for each breath in between. Your care makes life not only possible but also a good thing. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen

Herman Harrington

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Great is Thy Faithfulness

I love hymns and my list of favorite hymns is long; choosing just one to write about was difficult. The beauty of hymns to me is that singing them imbeds the lyrics in my mind. Then, when one is in a circumstance that evokes those lyrics, they pop into your mind and the hymn is there to support you. Because of that I chose to write about this particular hymn, Great is Thy Faithfulness, because it has a perennial aptness. In almost any circumstance of life its words offer just what you need to hear.

The chorus is *“Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy Faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!”*

The words of the hymn are drawn partially from Lamentations. This Old Testament book, and indeed chapter 3, from which the lyrics are drawn, is what one would expect from Lamentations - gloom and doom and suffering. But right in the middle of the chapter, verses 22 and 23, appears this bright light:

*²² The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,^[b]
his mercies never come to an end;
²³ they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness. (NRSV)*

Like the writer of Lamentations, in the midst of joy or sorrow, this hymn calls me to reflect on the eternal unchanging presence of God (*“as Thou hast been, thou forever wilt be”*). It reminds me that He can and will provide the necessary mercy to meet every situation (*“strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow”*). It also reminds me that what He will provide is all I need, not all I want, and that all that I really need is what comes from Him. When days are dark, when we despair, or when we rejoice, *“morning by morning,”* without fail, God’s help and presence are and forever will be with us.

Father God, Thank you for the wonderful words of this hymn, for those who wrote it and for the writer of Lamentations who inspired it. Thank you that the words are imprinted on my soul so that I can call on their promises when I need them. Help me remember to call them to mind when I am in the midst of discouragement and help me remember each morning to praise your faithfulness and appreciate my many blessings. In the name of your Son, Jesus Amen.

Alice Griffin

Friday, March 15, 2019

It is Well with My Soul

Horatio Spafford wrote the words to my favorite hymn. Spafford had everything a man could want, a successful business, a loving wife and five beautiful children.

But, like Old Testament Job, tragedy struck. His son died of pneumonia in 1871, the same year his business was lost in the great Chicago fire. He rebuilt his business.

Then, in November of 1873, Mrs. Spafford and their four daughters were aboard a French ocean liner traveling to Europe while Mr. Spafford stayed behind to solve a business problem. Their ship collided with an iron-hulled Scottish ship, and despite Mrs. Spafford's best efforts to save them, all four daughters were lost as the vessel sank into the ocean.

Anna Spafford was later rescued and taken to Wales where she wired her husband to tell him the tragic news.

He booked passage on the next available ship to join with and comfort his wife. On this passage, the ship's captain showed Spafford the area where his four children had been lost. It was soon afterward that he wrote these words:

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well with my soul.

Whatever our lot, whether our lives are flowing as smoothly as a peaceful river or we are tumbled ad lost on a storm-tossed sea, we have a Lord and Savior to hold us close in His love. His name is Jesus. He suffered the sorrows of sin for our sakes and, as if that is not enough, He leads us to life eternal where "peace like a river" is everlasting.

Let us pray...

Lord, even when my soul is in turmoil, when my body and spirit are aching, I praise You for Your everlasting love and your promise of eternal peace.

Nancy Reinert

Saturday, March 16, 2019

I Love to Tell the Story

As a child, I was blessed with many wonderful experiences. I vividly recall riding on the hay wagon at harvest time at my maternal grandparents' farm, the wind and sun in my face, and eating ice cream on the porch of my paternal grandparents' home, ice cream made in their dairy behind the house. Another of those special memories involves a pajama party and singing. Add to that an *intergenerational* pajama party with *hymn* singing. What an interesting blend, I thought, as a ten-year-old.

My paternal grandmother was a proud member of the Eastern Star, a sorority of sorts for Christian women popular in the 1950's. One summer they planned an overnight gathering for members and their grandchildren. I don't recall too many specifics from the event other than staying up very late and giggling a lot. What I do remember quite vividly, though, is gathering around the piano to sing...hymns! I was one of the first to suggest a title, and without hesitating I requested "I Love to Tell the Story." I had sung that hymn in church with my parents countless times, and I was always drawn to the lovely melody. It made me smile. And so we sang, with great enthusiasm and I sat proudly on the piano bench, savoring "my song."

As I grew older, I began to pay closer attention to the words. They were simple yet profound. To me, they beautifully captured who we were as Christians: we believe deeply in "unseen things above," we hold dear the story of "Jesus and His glory," and we know firsthand about "Jesus and His love." I realized it wasn't just the tune that made me smile, but the words, too, for they brought me comfort.

It's funny. As we grow older, sweet childhood memories still bring us joy, and the old, old hymns still satisfy a "longing as nothing else can do." I still get goose bumps when I hear the opening notes played on the organ here at Grace and we begin singing those familiar words as a congregation. I feel as though I'm wrapped in a warm blanket, enveloped in the promise of Jesus' love...and hope...and grace.

Let us pray...

Dear Lord, help us to always remember the promise of your love and to live our lives with that joy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Polly Dee Keiser McWilliams

Sunday March 17, 2019

Gospel Luke 13:31-35

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to [Jesus,] “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³²He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”

Monday, March 18, 2019

How Great Thou Art

When does a hymn become a gateway into the popular music of our time? "How Great Thou Art" is clearly one of those hymns. People hum it, sing it, and it sticks in their minds. You can hear a great rendition of the hymn sung by Carrie Underwood & Vince Gill at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2T1csHUGF4> It is a hymn that easily makes the crossover between popular music and religious hymn, but there is no mistaking it as a Christian hymn.

The hymn began as a poem written in Swedish in 1855 by Carl Gustav Boberg. It was entitled "O Store Gud" or as literally translated "O Great God". The poem was eventually combined with a Swedish folk tune in 1888 (a mere 33 years later) and, as they say, the rest is history. It was translated into German, then Russian, and finally into English by an English missionary visiting in Russia.

Boberg is said to have gotten his inspiration for the hymn from Psalm 8. I've reproduced several verses of Psalm 8 below:

LORD, our Lord,
 how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
 in the heavens.
Through the praise of children and infants
 you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
 to silence the foe and the avenger.

The final verse of the psalm, verse 8 is the culmination of the psalm and leads us back to the theme of this hymn. It refrains "Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

This beautiful hymn expresses the essence of our faith. Boberg's poem of faith, derived from the Psalms, fermented for 33 years, then miraculously combined with a memorable tune that has become the favorite of generations of Christians. Translated many times it reached fame with its English translation. It has been sung by some of the greatest voices in history including Charlie Daniels, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Burl Ives, Elvis Presley, Roy Rogers, and my all-time favorite version by George Beverly Shea.

Let's close with the words of Evangelist Billy Graham. He said: "The reason I like 'How Great Thou Art' is because it glorifies God. It turns Christian's eyes toward God, rather than upon themselves. I use it as often as possible because it is such a God-honoring song."

Let us pray...

Lord, help us to always turn our eyes toward you as we sing this beautiful song and throughout our days.

Robert Griffin

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

On Eagle's Wings

On Eagle's Wings is one of the more recent hymns. It was written Michael Joncas in 1979. George and I first heard and sang it in a Catholic Church in Florida a few years ago and George said at the time that it was one he wanted for his funeral. When planning for it recently, that was the first hymn I chose. I could just see him being born up on eagles wings. I am sure he is up there shining like the sun.

But there is so much more to this song. The verses are reassuring. "You who dwell in the shadow of the Lord, who abide in His shadow for life ". "Under His wings your refuge, His faithfulness your shield". "You need not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come." These verses seem so much more appropriate for me.

With a beautiful tune for its background, the chorus is:

And He will bear you up on eagle's wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of his hand.

Found on page 787 in our hymnal, it has become one of my favorite hymns.

Let us pray...

Dear God, help us all to be confident of Your care and be faithful to You, that when our time comes we may be raised up with You eternally.

Joann McCormick

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

How Great Thou Art, Hymn 856

Sometimes it is difficult to decide on a favorite hymn – there are so many beautiful hymns in our book. Some touch us by melody, others by their message. Sometimes our hearts smile when we hear the organ introduce a familiar melody that we love to sing. It is that way with me when we sing “How Great Thou Art” in church. While I love the melody, I really love the words. To me the hymn tells a story. It begins with our appreciation of God’s creation – the stars, the thunder, God’s power in the universe. It moves to the appreciation of nature around us. It reaches a height in the third verse when we realize what God has done for us – He provided for our salvation through the suffering and death of his son, Jesus. The final verse expresses the joy that we will experience when Jesus comes to take us home. The verses fill our hearts with gratitude and the chorus shouts with joy to our God!

Dear Heavenly Father, How Great Thou Art! We can see you in every aspect of our lives – Please help us to always seek you and to always express our gratitude to you. Thank you for those who can put our thoughts and feelings into beautiful music. Amen.

Carolyn Fishburn

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Were You There

Were You There is the quintessential Good Friday hymn. I have heard it played instrumentally, sung by the congregation and performed by soloists as long as I can remember, but only on Good Friday. The music is haunting and the text is stirring. It leaves one in a somber mood and convicted of one's own continuing failure to be at the cross. The five verses in our hymnal are:

*Were you there when they crucified my Lord
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree
Were you there when they pierced him in the side
Were you there when the sun refused to shine
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb*

Although different versions of the hymn have slightly different verses, they all stop at the tomb. There is no joy in this hymn, it isn't yet Easter, no one has come to the tomb, it is bleak, heart-breaking Good Friday.

So why does this hymn tug at our hearts? Because without immersing ourselves in the death of Christ, we can't rejoice in His Resurrection. Or, as it is often said, "You can't have an Easter without a Good Friday". The depth of our joy will reflect the depth of our despair. On Good Friday, we need to sit with solemnity and grief, we need to picture ourselves at the foot of the cross, we need to absorb the suffering of our Lord. In this way we prepare ourselves for rejoicing and celebrating when Easter comes and our Lord rises triumphant from that tomb.

Let us pray...

Lord, help me not to hurry through the pain of Good Friday to get to the joy of Easter. Let me be still and remember that when you were on the cross, you were there for me. Amen.

Alice Griffin

Friday, March 22, 2019

I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry

I have always loved this hymn. The first time I heard the "Boring Cry", it was sung in response to a baptism at our church. I think it very appropriate in two ways. One is of God telling how He loves us from the time we take our first breath and continues to love and watch over us throughout our lives. The second being, just as our Heavenly Father loves and cares for His children, earthly parents also love and care for their children from birth. We are there for our children, watching them grow to adulthood. We are there to teach and guide them to make choices that would please God. We tell them we are proud of their accomplishments and are there to help pick up the pieces when they make mistakes.

God is always with us as we are for our children. He rejoices when he is pleased with us. He is there with us every step of the way and He will take care of us always.

I like to think of this hymn as one of God's love songs to humans. He wants a relationship with us. We are his children.

He invites us to accept Him into our lives. As children of God, we want to please Him and live our lives in ways that will glorify His name only. I try to serve God in all that He asks of me. I do not always give Him cause to rejoice, but I will keep trying and asking for His help daily.

Let us pray...

Dear Father, whose love for us is like that of a mother. Thank you for being there for us during our good or bad times. We ask You to keep us focused on serving and pleasing you always. Please never give up on us when we fail to please you. Help us get back on the path You have chosen for us. In your Son's Name we pray. Amen.

Bonnie Burris

Saturday, March 23, 2019

Jesus Loves Me

There are so many hymns written about Jesus, but the one that invokes many memories for me is the hymn Jesus Loves Me. It is three short verses with a Refrain, but in them so much is revealed about our lives as Christians.

The first verse is taught to all young children at an early age, whether at home or at church, telling them they belong to Him, He is strong and will take care of them. It also reminds us we are all His children, no matter what age, and we all are weak, whether it be in body, mind, or spirit.

The second verse makes us aware of why he died, opening heaven's gates, washing away our sins, and letting us enter as a child of God. In our life here on earth, if we will let Him, He will wash away all of our fears, loneliness, sadness, and daily worries. All we need to do is let Him come into our lives.

The third verse is my favorite, saying He will stay close beside me all the way (all my life). When I pray and walk through my daily activities, I truly feel Jesus is beside me and guiding me in all my decisions. And, I do believe that when I die, He will take me home on high—I know, because the Bible tells me so!

Three wise men at Grace have told us the following many times:

- As always, we are blessed here at Grace.
- Keep your eye on Jesus!

Isn't it so?

Let us pray...

Dear Jesus, Thank you for loving me in my weakness and staying close beside me always.

Sharon Rivell

Sunday March 24, 2019

Gospel Luke 13:1-9

¹At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.²

[Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?”

³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

⁶Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

Monday, March 25, 2019

“Jesus, Remember Me”: ELW #616

My trip to Israel in January 2017 produced innumerable spiritual highlights for me, but one of the most memorable was a visit to the Church of Saint Anne in Jerusalem. The church building was constructed by Crusaders in 1138, near the famous Pools of Bethesda and atop a grotto where it is believed Mary (the mother of Jesus) was born. It is named in honor of Mary's mother. From the outside, the church looks rather plain, like a stone medieval fortress. It is the inside, however, which really makes it spectacular. The acoustics are amazing.

As our tour group stood in the church's nave, I couldn't resist the urge to put those acoustics to the test. And so I started our group singing “Jesus, Remember Me.” It's a simple song, written for the Taizé brothers in France. They are an ecumenical movement of Protestants and Catholics who seek to unify the church through elegantly simple and contemplative worship and song. The hymn's words come from the twenty-third chapter of Luke's Gospel; they are the prayerful words the thief on the cross said to Jesus as the thief sought forgiveness and eternal life.

It was a moment of sublime holiness and unity to stand alongside my friends – many of whom are also Lutheran pastors – and sing those ancient words in that equally ancient church. Our song seemed to reverberate through those old stones and carry all the way to God's ears in heaven. I will never forget it.

But this beautiful and singable hymn also ensures that I won't forget that I too am the thief on the cross. I too merit nothing from my Lord. Yet my mere trust in his promise and my faith that he is the Son of God provides all the assurance I need. Indeed, Jesus *does* remember me. He remembers me *every day*, and thanks to his grace and mercy, he will remember me in a *very special way* one day when I enter into his heavenly kingdom. The same is true for *you*. Thanks be to God.

Prayer:

Gracious Lord, I am a sinner. You know that, and when I'm honest with myself, I know it too. But never allow me to grow despondent in my sin. Transform my heart so that I can arise from my sins and, by your grace, become the person you made me to be. Fill me with hope. Remember me. And never let me forget that when I come into your kingdom, you will be there to greet and embrace me. In humble, joyful gratitude I pray in your sacred name. Amen.

Rev. Scott E. Schul

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

This Is My Father's World #824

I was helping with Sunday School one Sunday and we watched a video entitled, "Are you listening?". The child narrator on the video was asking us to listen to God through different parts of God's world. For example, the narrator said, "God speaks to us all the time. He speaks through a beautiful sunset. Listen." and pictures of beautiful sunsets awed us on the screen. The narrator also said, "God speaks to us in a quiet whisper. Listen.", as we viewed a picture of a peaceful rolling stream and listened to the calm trickling of the water over rocks. And then the narrator said, "He shouts. Listen.", as we heard and saw pictures of a storm with loud thunder, crashing lightning, and strong winds. The narrator gave us numerous examples of where we could hear God, such as through our hearts, through music, through being with other people, through hugs, through his huge creation (pictures of wilderness), and through his smallest creation (pictures of ants). The video ended with this question, "God is speaking, are you listening?".

Before we viewed this video in Sunday School, I had been feeling a desire to "hear" from God and wouldn't it be nice if he could talk to me! This video at Sunday School helped me realize that God may be speaking to me all the time, but am I really "listening"?

The words in the hymn, "This Is My Father's World" remind me of that video in Sunday School. The author of the text, Maltbie D. Babcock, talks about listening to nature sing and to the music of the spheres (sun, moon, and planets). The words in the hymn also create an image of resting in God's hands by resting in the rocks, trees, skies, and seas. The author is listening to all God's creation and connecting to God through it. In particular it says, "In the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me everywhere."

Through what is God speaking to you?

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the times you have spoken to me. Thank you for your creation where I can connect to you. When I am yearning to hear your voice to give me direction, hope, or peace please help me to listen when you speak. Amen.

Susan Buda

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

I Love to Tell the Story

Every time I hear the hymn, "I Love to Tell the Story", fond thoughts of my mother come to mind.

Mom was a Sunday School teacher for 35 years at our Lutheran congregation in Bloomsburg. Preparing lessons to share her love of Jesus through Bible stories was one of the great joys in her life. Many hours during the week were spent finding interesting ways to bring the lesson to life for her students. Some Saturday afternoons I would help her by tracing and cutting figures from special paper for the lesson the next morning. Other times I was her student for word games or quizzes to time how long it would take her students in her class.

One Sunday morning, our congregation was having a celebration to welcome our new minister immediately following Sunday School classes. Much planning had gone into the event. Everyone in the congregation was anticipating a special program. Mom arrived early in her classroom to be certain that all the details of the lesson that day were ready for class to begin on time. Throughout the hour her students were thinking more about cake and ice cream than about the Bible story. Mom planned her lesson to end right on time for youth to leave for the Fellowship Hall, but it wasn't soon enough for one 5th grader.

Jimmy had been disruptive throughout the morning. A Bible quiz with prizes didn't even interest him. As the final minutes of Sunday School counted down, Mom tried one more way to hold the attention of her class by asking Jimmy to read the 23rd Psalm aloud. The young boy quickly grabbed his Bible and opened it to the familiar passage then read: "The Lord is My Shepherd.....that is all we need to know."

Let us pray...

Dear Lord,

Help me to boldly tell the old, old story that Jesus is my shepherd to friends and neighbors who many not have heard of Jesus's love and salvation.

May my words and actions every day in every way show the love I have for you.

Amen

Anne Rohrbach

Thursday, March 28, 2019

Great is Thy Faithfulness

Throughout my married life, I have lived through a small stack of bibles. Tucked within these bibles are notes, programs, and quotes from moments and people I want to keep close. Alongside Holy Scripture, my bibles contain a lifetime of family and of God's enduring love and faithfulness.

The Living Bible, a green leather book, was our first bible. Gifted by my parents for Christmas 1971 (two weeks after our wedding), this bible is inscribed in my father's hand: "This book is like a gold mine. It takes a little digging to get the ore out and the trials of life refine it into golden truth that is life itself." So true, Dad, so true.

In a well-worn **Harper Study Bible**, is a hand-drawn bookmark complete with robot and boyishly scrawled sentiment and a copy of the poem "Heaven's Special Child," encouragement offered during a season when I most needed it.

For Mother's Day 1992, my family gave me a *New Revised Standard Version* of the **Life Application Bible** with my name embossed on it. Never properly curated, that bible is stuffed. In it are letters from my grandparents, a poem from my husband, a hand-written letter from my Dad, photos of my grandchildren, my favorite uncle's obituary, and the funeral home flier for both my parents. All this elicits a wash of love and remembrance.

Finally, the bible I now use, a slim **English Standard Version**. *The Word In Season* is opened inside it, along with a volume of my father's prayers, edited, organized and self-published by my brother for a family Christmas gift. There is a quote from Thomas Merton, a bookmark made in The Disciples' class, a few cards from friends and family, and the "Full Circle Prayer" to use with the prayer beads we made at a Women of Grace retreat. The bible is neater, cleaner, less tattered and worn than the ones which have come before. Interesting....

One very special item filed in what are truly "family" bibles is the bulletin for the reaffirmation of vows for my parents' 50th wedding anniversary. The first hymn Mom and Dad chose for their golden anniversary celebration was "Great is Thy Faithfulness." A genuine family favorite, we sang that hymn at my brother's ordination, as well as, for Mom and Dad's funerals. My throat thickens and my eyes mist every time that hymn is sung. The message never disappoints.

In the midst of the ordinary moments of life, it is easy to lose sight of God's design and hand shaping our lives. God never turns. God never changes. God's compassion and love for us never ends. Leafing back through my bibles, I so clearly see tangible evidence of my Father's great faithfulness through the love of family, the encouragement of friends, and the right words at the right time: "All I have needed Thy hand hath provided...."

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father, We are so grateful for your faithfulness, constant love, and for all the mornings of mercies you have provided. Amen

Ellen Herman Campbell

Friday, March 29, 2019

Will You Come and Follow Me?

Jesus asks- "Will you come and follow me?" I imagine Jesus' call to those first disciples and his call to us. They and we know the wild ride it can be. It starts out simply enough with "come and follow" but quickly plunges into "will you go where you DON'T know and never be the same?" Sometimes I really want to know, don't you?

I take comfort in the lives of the saints across time who also heard, "Will you let my name be known" and "my life be grown- in you?" I want to, but sometimes it may not be so. Christ calls us "leave your self behind" and "care for cruel and kind." "Risk the hostile stare." Each of these tasks is about surrendering a sense of self. Amidst the unknown, we DO know how hard it is to care for the cruel, and it's daunting to do as Jesus asks. Following the gospel disrupts and disturbs, and people can hurl negativity at acts of compassion.

No wonder the hymn has Jesus imploring-"let me answer prayer." How else will any of us have the courage, the patience, the energy without that constant connection? Christ is in us and we in him. This hymn burrows deep into the heart of the gospel and the heart of each of us. Help the blinded see, the prisoners be freed, and kiss the unclean into wholeness. And then-admit to what Jesus means in our lives. What if we don't know? What if we just don't? We're in good company.

Why is this hymn a favorite?

Because I adore the questions Jesus asks- will you love the you you hide, and quell the fear inside?" Jesus does even when we don't or can't. That's grace. It's what helps us use the faith we've found and continue to find, to reshape the world around. Jesus promises his sight, his touch and his sound are there for us all. Jesus calls us to the path of the cross, forging a relationship that is heart to heart- we are deeply known and loved and saved. And we're called to share this love.

Let us pray...

Lord your summons echoes true, help us turn and follow you. In your company we'll go where your love and footsteps show, help us move and live and grow in you and you in us.

Pastor Carolyn Hetrick

Saturday, March 30, 2019

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

When I pick up my phone during worship, I am not always looking at Facebook or checking my email. I also jot down the names of hymns I enjoy. Usually I like ones that choke me up or make me cry – the ones that move me. I got the idea to write them down when my mother died. I never gave the hymns much thought. I knew there were some that I like, but I could never remember which ones. But my mother - she had a list of songs that she wanted us to sing at her funeral. I have fond memories of her listening to hymns by Tennessee Ernie Ford in the car. Well, to be honest they are not fond memories, but memories just the same. This was a woman who knew her hymns and that inspired me.

I reviewed my list of favorite hymns and found – *Lord, Whose Humble Love in Service*. I looked on the internet for a recording that I could listen to for inspiration. I clicked on a link that sounded like a group of people recorded it in the basement of a church with a cassette recorder on top of the piano – and it was perfect. The lines that choke me up are - *still children wander homeless, still the hungry cry, still the captives long for freedom, still in grief we mourn*. Even with all we do to help others in this world – **STILL**.

As a church, we do so much to help those around us. This Lenten season, I challenge you to take a different perspective on your service. There are so many marginalized people in this country. For some it is easy for us to help, others more difficult due to our own bias. Please think of these groups and discover the one you find most difficult to help. I am not going to give examples because I want you to discover this for yourself. For some a group pops right into your head. For others you will need to dig deeper. But I am sure if you search your heart you will discover a group that you think or feel, don't need or deserve help. Then please start with a Google search and fall into a "rabbit hole" of learning about this group. Learn all you can. Discover why you find it hard to help these people and learn why they need your help most of all. If you stop with a deeper understanding of these people and their needs, you will have met my challenge. But what would God think if you took it a step further and acted on what you have learned?

Let us Pray...

Dear good and gracious God. Without you I am a lost soul, searching for meaning in this life. Thank you for all that I am and have because of you. Help me to grow and learn no matter what stage of life I am in. Guide me as I discover and act on ways to help others in the world. Amen.

Rachel Griel

Sunday, March 31, 2019

Gospel Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: ^{11b}"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' ³¹Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

Monday, April 1, 2019

Go My Children, With My Blessing

Being baptised we learn how much God loves us and we know that God cures all of our ills and forgives all of our sins. God tells us that we are never alone.

God is with us all of the time. Being baptised we are nourished by God and shown how to love one another and to serve those in need. God allows us to be joyful and free.

God's baptism sends us on our way.

Let us pray...

Dear God you have granted me my baptism and I have been nourished by your words and I am joyful and free to do your will. Amen

Paul Mackes

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

For the beauty of the Earth, For the beauty of the skies

Recently I was seated at a front window table in the Barnes and Noble café enjoying a cup of chai tea and reading my newest book purchase. The hum of activity around me created a soothing background noise level. After some minutes I became aware that the atmosphere around me had changed. Conversations had become hushed and the movement of others in the café had nearly ceased. Curious, I looked up to see what had happened to alter the area activity. To my surprise I found people staring out the large windows, just watching something outside. When I turned my head to look the view nearly took my breath away.

It was a magnificent sunset that had stopped customers in their tracks. God's paintbrush had splashed rosy pinks across the blue sky of early evening. The horizon was lit with soft touches of sun gold. Four winter-bare trees stood out in dark silhouette against the color-blended sky. For a few precious minutes normal human activity yielded to the amazing display of God's sunset gift. Even the checkout clerk had crossed the store to stand silently watching. It was as though God was filling our eyes and our souls with His pure love in the form of a beautiful sunset.

For the love which from our birth

Over and around us lies

We are surrounded by the perfect love of God manifested in His Son our Savior Jesus just as the sky surrounds our Earth. We are born into His love and live in it here and for eternity. It is the sky that constantly reminds me of this each time I remember to look up. The sky surrounds Earth and God's love surrounds us. As we take our first birth breaths He claims us and holds us and, no matter what, He does not let go. Sometimes our skies are sunny and calm; at other times fierce winds drive the stormy clouds that threaten our well being. God is there whatever our circumstance. His love surrounds, protects, strengthens, guides. We have only to trust and believe.

Let us pray...

Lord of all, to Thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour of the day and of the night

Hill and vale and tree and flower, sun and moon and stars of light

Christ, our Lord to Thee we raise this our sacrifice of praise.

Nancy Reinert

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Borning Cry

This song was not in the Lutheran hymnals that I grew up with. I first heard this song in a small Methodist Church in Warrior's Mark PA. It was a solo sung by my friend, Sally. Sally has a beautiful voice and I always enjoyed her music, but that day, this song really spoke to me in a way no other had before. Perhaps it was because I had recently given birth to my son, so "borning cry" was particularly fresh in my mind and meaningful to me. However, this song doesn't only refer to birth and baptism, it reminds us of God's enduring presence.

The thought that God is with me (and you) from borning cry to death is comforting and reassuring. God rejoiced when we were baptized! He eagerly awaits to see our life unfold. I especially love the reminder that God is with you when you wander off "in a blaze of light to see where demons dwell". God understand those rebellious teenagers and is with them! The song continues to tell us that God is cheering us on and comforting us through darkness.

For me this evokes the image of God as a loving parent figure and a constant reassuring presence throughout life. I am glad that this wonderful hymn is now included in in the Lutheran hymnal

Dear God, Thank you for being with me throughout all stages of my life. I am grateful for your enduring presence and boundless love.

Michelle Peiffer

Thursday, April 4, 2019

“Day by Day”: ELW #790

In the 2016 edition of Grace’s Lenten devotional, I wrote about the hymn, “Children of the Heavenly Father,” which was written by Lina Sandell-Berg (1832-1903), a Swedish Lutheran lay woman who penned over 2,000 hymns. The famed Swedish Lutheran preacher Carl Olof Rosenius once said that “no one can sing of the free gift of grace like Lina Sandell.” Indeed, she was an important and highly-regarded voice of Scandinavian Lutheranism in her day, and remains an important proclaimer of grace in our day. Four of her hymn texts can be found in our Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal, including my subject this year, “Day by Day.”

As Gracia Grindal observes in her outstanding biography of Lutheran women hymn writers (“Preaching from Home”), the inspiration for “Day by Day” came to Lina from a story she read about the pendulum of a clock who wearied of his constant work. The clock face comforted the pendulum by noting that the pendulum had to go only one more time, and it would always have a moment before it had to beat again. Similarly, as Lina’s beautiful text assures us, day by day, our Lord will provide what we need so that we can persevere in our mortal journey. The hymn’s title comes from a portion of Deuteronomy 33:25, which provides in part that “as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.”

Life is so busy. Our responsibilities and duties overwhelm us as we get pulled in so many different directions. We try as best we can to balance home, work, and leisure time, but too often in our attempt to be all things to all people all of the time, the only thing we accomplish is to exhaust our bodies and souls. And so this hymn provides crucial counsel and comfort by re-centering us on our Lord. It begins by gently noting that, “Day by day, your mercies, Lord, attend me, bringing comfort to my anxious soul.” The hymn’s final verse likewise provides merciful medicine for our weary hearts, proclaiming in part that “day by day, no matter what betide me, you will hold me ever in your hand.”

Do you feel overwhelmed? Turn to Jesus. With his help, just focus on making it through this day. He loves you and will hold you up. Your Grace family loves you too. Call on us so that we also can surround and support you.

Prayer:

Precious Jesus, when we feel overwhelmed, reach out to us. Hold us closely and keep us moving forward, one day at a time. Give us hope, assurance, and peace even as you blanket us in your merciful love. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Scott E. Schul

Friday, April 5, 2019

Here I Am, Lord

A hymn that has the most profound impact on me is "Here I Am, Lord." I typically call it one of my favorites, but I am not sure why, since it always makes me cry. When I sing the verses, I feel like God is speaking to me, telling us about His goodness and reassuring us that He will always be there for us. His awesomeness makes me feel loved. The refrain makes me think of a person talking to God and asking Him if it is time for him/her to go to heaven to be with God. That evokes mixed feelings. Would it be better to leave the people you love on earth to be with the One you love in heaven?

My mother loved going to church, especially singing hymns. Never do I sit in church without thinking of her and feeling her presence next to me. When I first heard this hymn, she was already gone from me in mind if not in spirit. I know she would have loved this song. I also know, if she were able, she would have gladly told God, "Here I am." We sang this hymn at her memorial service. Singing it reminds me of that day. Even though it has been 14 years, I still miss her greatly. However, while the hymn always brings tears, it also makes me feel close to her. It reminds me of her love for God and the church. It reminds me that she is in heaven with God and with my dad. Those thoughts bring me comfort.

Dear God, Thank you for enabling me to be clear of mind so that I can have wonderful memories of my mother. Help me to trust in you and follow you so that I can one day be reunited with her. Help me to be ready when I hear you call. Amen.

Leslie Elder

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Morning Has Broken

I am not a morning person, never have been. As a child, trying to wake me up for school was a near impossible task. My father was often tasked with getting me up. His favorite threat was ice cubes down the back. After we moved to State College in 1980, he discovered a new way to wake me up. One of the local radio stations would start their broadcast day with Morning Has Broken by Yusuf Islam, formally known as Cat Stevens. Dad started standing in my doorway singing, slightly off-key, "Morning has broken, like the first morning. Blackbird has spoken, like the first bird." It would work, I'd get up and begrudgingly start my day. He bought the 45 of the song and would play it in the morning on the stereo in the living room.

My father died in the early morning hours on a cold December morning in 2010. Pastor Lynn asked were there any hymns that dad liked that we could sing during his funeral. Without hesitation I said, "Morning Has Broken". Praise for the singing. I miss the singing; I miss my dad.

After a dark and bleak winter, we buried Dad in March, on a clear cold day. I dare say it was a beautiful day. A welcome relief from the darkness of our mourning. Much like Lent, a period of dark somberness, we awake on Easter morning to a bright new day. "Praise with elation, praise every morning. God's recreation of the new day."

Let us pray...

Dear Lord, thank you for every new morning. Thank you for Easter and the promise of a new day in heaven.

Carole Donald

Sunday April 7, 2019

Gospel John 12:1-8

¹Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ²There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Monday, April 8, 2019

Just As I Am, Without One Plea...O Lamb of God, I Come, I Come

I did a little research. This hymn was written in 1835 by Charlotte Elliott. She was an invalid, often standing on the sidelines, struggling with her worthiness to come to God. Counsel by a trusted reverend to "come just as you are" led her to a spiritual life of peace and the gift of this beautiful hymn.

My love of this hymn takes a slightly different tone. When I was in college, struggling with college social life versus church on Sunday, a close friend invited me home for the weekend. A devout member of a different Christian faith, she took me to a dinner and program at church on Saturday night. As we were leaving, she said, "now we don't need to go to church tomorrow." What a concept – were there checkmarks on a master plan? If we had enough checkmarks were we good Christians?

Some years later, I heard a sermon in which the pastor said, "You know, God doesn't need you to go to church." This was followed by the revelation that there is only one person that NEEDS me to go church and that is me. I need to go with my "many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without" so He can welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve."

Some ask "You mean the only way to receive God's grace is in church on Sunday morning?" Of course not! God's Grace is everywhere and is ours for the asking but there is something about pulling into the driveway at the corner of Beaver and Garner and entering the church with 100 or more others. There is something about kneeling for confession knowing full well the forgiveness is already there. There is something about the "refocusing" that happens with the readings and sermons. And then, the powerful "the Body of Christ given for you," and "the Blood of Christ shed for you" that so boldly reminds us of the cost of His Grace. I need that and so, "...I come, I come."

Let us pray...

Thank you God, for the gift of forgiveness, the gift of peace.

Lynn Rogers

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

“Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”

I can't say there are many hymns I know by heart, but this is one of them. It speaks to me when I feel low, helpless, and unforgiven. For me, it contains passionate pleas to the Holy Spirit and some of my most frequent prayer supplications.

The first verse asks for the Holy Spirit to come into my heart and move through all my pulses. Being a nurse, I can picture the Holy Spirit doing that. I see the Spirit moving through my body, mind, and soul. Then, the hymn asks for strength to help my weaknesses and asks the Spirit to make me love God as I ought to. It doesn't say help me love God but make me love God. The importance of loving God is paramount, and it is something I want to do.

The second verse speaks to my desire not for ecstatic experiences of God, but just for the removal of the “dimness of my soul.” I don't need mountaintop experiences of God. Sometimes I just need the feeling that I am cared about and protected. Isn't that true for all of us?

The third verse asks God two rhetorical questions: Haven't you asked me to love you? Haven't you asked for all of me--soul, heart, strength and mind? It makes me say to myself, “What is the matter with me? Why can't I simply cling to the cross? Why do I try to do it all myself? “

Finally, in the last verse, the hymn asks for a perfect union with God. It asks for my “heart to be the altar and your love the flame.” For me, this is asking God to set me on fire with His love to serve Him as I ought to.

George Crowley (1780-1860), the author of this hymn, truly wrote a sung prayer. He was an Anglican minister who served in Ireland and England. He wrote several hymns, but this is the only one to have survived. I'm glad it did.

Prayerfully read each verse now and see if it speaks to you.

Help me, God. Allow your Holy Spirit to infuse me and help me be what I am supposed to be and what is most pleasing to you. Remind me of the important things in life: clinging to the cross, loving you, and loving others. Amen.

Lois Lynn

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Shine, Jesus, Shine

Graham Kendrick wrote the exuberant hymn “Lord the Light of Your Love (Shine, Jesus, Shine).” In the first verse we sing: *“Lord, the light of your love in shining, In the midst of the darkness shining. Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us.”* The chorus picks up on this thought of Christ’s Light: *“Shine, Jesus, shine. Fill this land with the Father’s Glory.”*

I grew up in a small Presbyterian church and I remember hymns sung with power and hymns sung with reverence, but seldom were hymns sung with exuberance. A choral amen ended every hymn and sometimes this seemed to squelch the tempo of the hymn. However, this hymn written by Kendrick must be sung with a lilt in your voice. In it we are calling on Jesus to shine His loving light upon us and upon the path we are walking. The hymn describes the Lord as having an “awesome presence” and a “kingly brightness.” It calls on His radiance to bring us out of the shadows and to consume our darkness.

This hymn gives us the rich and glorious promise of Jesus’ presence. If we are celebrating, Jesus is the joy in our hearts. If we are in darkness, Jesus is the path out of despair. Call on Jesus and let His love fill your need, be it strength or guidance or forgiveness. Shine, Jesus, shine!

To close in prayer... *“Dear Lord, fill me today with your love. Shine your light on the path I need to take and give me the wisdom, patience and courage to do your will. Amen”*

Thursday, April 11, 2019

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

I knew what was coming.

Tears in each eye seemed to be waiting to roll down my cheeks.

It was Sunday, February 17th and the Grace choir was concluding *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*. I watched and listened as choir director Jayne Glocke led the choir toward the conclusion. I knew what was coming.

A number of years ago Laurel Sanders had asked me if I would like to be part of a small ensemble to sing at a worship service. I believe at some point my wife, Ellen, had mentioned to Laurel that I had a good voice. I tentatively agreed not knowing what I was getting myself into. It had been since junior high school that I had sung in a choir. I had my doubts.

The song we were to sing: *Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence*. As we practiced I wondered if I would be able to keep up with the others in our small group but they were kind to me and to each other and Laurel was very, very supportive. The day arrived and we sang and it went quite well. I was relieved.

Through practice and in singing during worship I came to love the cadence, the soaring highs and the lyrics. This hymn rose immediately to the top of my personal favorites!

Back to February 17th. As I put on my coat to head home, I congratulated Alice Griffin on the choir's effort that day. Alice said to me, "Jayne told us, Let's see if this brings anyone to tears." I said to her, "You were successful."

Let us pray...

Dear Lord, thank you for hymns and for our choir!

Jim Campbell

Friday, April 12, 2019

Go My Children, with My Blessing

This hymn has always warmed my soul. It reminds me that despite my short comings, despite my sins, Jesus love me. This is a hymn of discipleship. Its tune and verse are an ongoing reminder that God loves me; that God cares for and about me. It serves as a clear testimony that I do not live in isolation. That with all who have gone before as well as those with whom I live this day, I am on a pilgrim's journey of discovery and hope. Within the words of this hymn is the reminder that by virtue of my baptism I am called into community. I am called to worship, called to make a joyful noise, called to share the Good News of Jesus. I do these things not simply because someone has said I must, but because I have heard again and again the story of Jesus and believe I am called into community with those who may not have heard as well as with others who have.

I feel most connected to Jesus when I gather for worship on a Sunday morning. Through Word and Sacrament, hymn and verse I hear time and again of God's grace, God's forgiveness. That whether awake or asleep, God is with us. That by virtue of our Baptism, by no merit of our own, God has blessed us and made us one in Him. Within the community, within the congregation we call Grace Lutheran, our call is to share to Good News of Jesus thus extending the depth and breath of the community of believers. Here in the words of the hymn we hear not only that we are blessed but that we are to be a blessing. Together filled with the Spirit's power we are sent out knowing we are not alone. That Jesus is with us, here and now.

Let us pray...

Holy Lord, may we always remember that you are not relegated to the past, only a part of someone else's experience; rather You are in the here and now with all who call you Lord. It is such a comfort to realize anew that You continue to journey with us. Today and all the days to follow may we feel the strength and courage to go, do, to be disciples of Jesus believing full well we go with Your blessing.

Rev. Dennis E Snider

Saturday, April 13, 2019

IF YOU BUT TRUST IN GOD TO GUIDE YOU #769

This hymn has helped me through difficult times. I have also prayed the verses for others who are suffering through trials in their lives.

Some of us have suffered through addictions such as alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, or shopping. to name a few. There is help out there for everyone. Be it counselors, friends, or self-help groups. Pastor Miller was a great help for me. When I went east to teach, I found help among counselors, friends, and self-help groups to name three.

Also, while teaching, I found children from abusive or dysfunctional families, divorce, death a terminal illness, and a variety of other sorrows. I found myself in court about a ten-year-old child who was facing such trials. Again, there is hope and prayer has helped ~ for myself and others who may suffer.

In this hymn, the first three verses address the above issues and many more. The last six words are what I have held close to my heart.

Prayer: Lord, we are so grateful for your promise that if we just trust in you, you will never forsake us in our hour of need. Amen.

Dottie Roberts

Sunday, March 14, 2019

I Come to the Garden Alone

“I come to the garden alone...”

“And He walks with me and He talks with me.

And He tells me I am His own.”

I have written about my favorite hymn, “Morning Has Broken” in previous issues of the Lenten Devotionals. So, I cast about for a longtime for another, and then I remembered Granma Wilcox and her favorite hymn, this one.

Ida Wilcox was my late husband’s grandmother. I met her one weekend when we were still in college when he drove us from Shippensburg to Lewistown, his hometown, to meet his family. On this Sunday we went to Milheim where Grandma Wilcox lived.

She was a small stout bustling Pennsylvania Dutch woman who spoke with a thick Dutch accent. I was still a fast-talking Philadelphia girl. We could barely understand each other in fact she often had to turn to Charles and ask, “what did she say?”

She was one of the most loving women I have ever known. She doted on my husband. When he was a child, he spent many happy summer weeks at her house. In the evening, they would sit on the porch swing listening for the whippoorwill. Before bed, she would read to him from the huge German/English Bible. She became a widow in the 1920’s when her husband died of diabetes. A few years later, her eldest daughter died of a blood poisoning. She had many burdens, but she also had a garden.

So, she went to her large garden alone. Through the Depression, it had helped keep her family fed. When she walked there, I suppose she prayed that Jesus would protect her children and strengthen her to go on. We know for sure what He told her—That she belonged to Him, and she believed Him with all her heart.

Toward the end of Grandma’s life, my mother-in-law offered to take her to anyplace in the USA that she would like to see. Ida chose the Everglades. At the time, I thought it was a strange choice. Now I see it was a kind of garden too, a kind she never walked in this side of heaven.

Let us pray...

Dear Heavenly Father, Bless me with Ida’s faith and love.

Barbara Hackenberry

Monday, April 15, 2019

O Master, Let Me Walk with You

My favorite hymn is "O Master, Let Me Walk with You". The first verse goes like this: "O Master let me walk with you in lowly paths of service true." Being a Christian is sometimes hard to do, but for me "lowly service" is the easy part. I love to help others in need. Volunteering has been one of my lifelong passions. You do it for free because it makes you feel good to see a smile of appreciation on another's face. This is your compensation instead of money for a job. In High School, I volunteered for the Poster Club, Student Council and sang in Boys Choir. I remember selling ice cream and hot dogs at football and basketball events. The Boys Choir sang a variety of songs, but we always ended singing the Lord's Prayer. It always was very emotional and inspirational. Seemed like service to me! Just try to imagine that even being permitted [today](#) !

After I graduated from college and finally got a job, I worked for the United States Department of Agriculture. It was a Civil SERVICE job. We served the farmers and people of the US by doing research to solve problems in food production. I was well paid, but when I got to talk with farmers, it was a good feeling. Once, I visited a farmer in Georgia who had a problem with spittlebugs on the grass he fed his cows. He had read some of the papers I wrote about the spittlebug and was asking questions and said "You said this or that in your paper". I was shocked and pleased that I had helped him with his problem. I didn't realize the effect my research was having.

Since I retired I have found my true calling to serve others. First and foremost is my position as usher at Grace and later as a member of Helping Hands. Our trips to New Jersey to rebuild houses damaged by Hurricane Sandy have been a wonderful experience for all of us. Not only have we helped people get back in their homes, but we have all become good life-long friends as well. Also my volunteering at the hospital has been very satisfying. I have made many new friends and greatly enjoy helping at the Emergency Entrance and the Mt. Nittany grill.

Getting back to the hymn, the words "Tell me your secret, help me bear the strain of toil the fret of care." This is a gift of God and it has followed me all through my years. My life has been mostly good and I thank the Maker who walked beside me all the way.

Let us pray...

The Lord be with you. May you serve him with a joyful heart. God bless.

Bob Byers

Tuesday, April 16, 2019

On Eagle's Wings
Jan Michael Joncas
1979

Selecting a hymn that seems to be centered on death, funerals, and the end of life does not seem to be a good choice for our readings. Who wants to be reminded of death? I think it is unfortunate that we have this association with such a beautiful hymn, On Eagle's Wings. It is true that the hymn was originally written as a tribute to the deceased father of a friend. It was written for death, but it is too beautiful to be reserved just for the end of life.

A Catholic priest, Fr. (Jan) Michael Jonas composed the song on his guitar in 1976. He played it many times following the friend's father's funeral, but the hymn was never published until 1979. This beautiful song could have easily been lost to the winds of history.

Many churchgoers think of this as a Catholic hymn since it has become so prominent at Roman Catholic funerals and even Pope's funerals. We should be glad to know that the hymn is found in many contemporary Lutheran hymnals, is sung at mainline Protestant churches and is also used by Pentecostal churches. The hymn was also performed at many of the funerals of the victims of September 11th. Many people who sing the hymn remark that it is hard to sing this hymn because it is hard not to cry as it is sung.

The hymn is based on Psalm 91. The hymn's lyrics are drawn directly from the Scripture's vivid descriptions of God's protection and providence. Verses include the lines "You need not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day," and "For to his angels he has given a command to guard you in all of your ways." Although there are no mentions of eagles in Psalm 91, the chorus written by Fr. Joncas uses the metaphor of the eagle to depict God's high, secure places. The refrain, "And he will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand" bears a strong resemblance to Isaiah 40:31. Both verses and refrain offer comforting images of God's provision for our lives, in life and death.

This beautiful hymn has a message far beyond the ceremonies of death. Understand the words of this hymn and let its melodic song comfort you in both happy and sad times. Gain comfort from the hymn.

Bob Griffin

Wednesday, April 17, 2019

I Love to Tell the Story

When I first heard this hymn, I fell in love with it for its simple tune and beautiful lyrics. It nested in me a desire to share the story of Jesus with those around me, just like the singer in the song. The problem was that while I was growing up, I didn't feel like I did a very good job of that. At my high school, the social environment was not one that was very open to faith discussion. I spent most of those four years with a general feeling that my faith had no place outside of church itself. But I still felt that spreading the gospel was important, so this became a stumbling block for me. How can I be a good Christian if I can't even share the story of Jesus with others?

Even as I left high school, I still didn't feel good about talking about my faith to non-Christians or people I didn't know very well. It felt too out there to just start talking about Jesus and faith, especially when you didn't know how the person you were talking to would react. But one day I heard the words that are often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words." Hearing this made me rethink how I should spread the gospel. For once I considered that serving others through my actions tells the story just as much as using my words. I believe that when we love our neighbor by giving them our time, effort, or our compassion, the story of Jesus and his love is relayed through us to the world. After all, Jesus did tell us that "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, NRSV). And I found that once I focused more on loving my neighbor, talking about my faith didn't feel so out-of-the blue because it was coming from a real place. The love that I showed my neighbor was God's love for me in action, and that love told the story better than any words I could think of.

Let us pray...

Dear God, help me to tell the story of Jesus's love every day through my actions. And when the time comes, give me the words I need to share it with others verbally too. In Jesus' name, AMEN.

John Hall

Thursday, April 18, 2019

Where True Charity and Love Abide (ELW 653)

The older I become, the more I believe the only way we can experience God's love fully is by loving our neighbors.

I remember one Christmas when Graham and I flew home from Germany to visit my parents. One night I had a long talk with my father. I asked him, "Dad, when you die, what do you want your tombstone to say?" Dad said he didn't want a tombstone; when his life ends, his soul would have a new home and his body wouldn't need one. I prodded him again to answer my question. He said, "If people remember me at all, I hope they would say, 'He cared.'" This simple statement touched my heart and made me realize that although he had achieved many things, the only thing he felt was important was that he genuinely cared about people.

Dad often said that if we looked for the good in people, we would find it. As children who grew up in a rural environment, our parents occasionally took us to the city playgrounds and encouraged us to mingle with children of all backgrounds. At home, the front door was open; people often stopped by unannounced and were always welcome. No matter how busy Mom and Dad were, they would stop what they were doing and give their full attention to the needs of their friends, visitors who stopped by, and to my brother and me.

The Hymn *Ubi caritas et amor (Where True Charity and Love Abide)* takes me back to my childhood and the security I felt from a very young age. My parents were strict and expected a lot, yet they were generous and kind. They did their best to show God's love in the way they treated everyone.

I love the chanted version of this hymn because it flows from the heart like a gentle river. The refrain and second verse read, "Where true charity and love abide, God is dwelling there. Since we are all one in the Lord, as we gather, let us be watchful that no strife still divides us."

Dear God,

Open my heart, that your charity and love may dwell in me. Help me to love and respect all of your children equally, as you do. Guide my hands, feet, voice, and work, that they may honor you.

Amen.

Laurel Sanders

Friday, April 19, 2019

When Peace Like a River - #785

We all desire peace. Of course, we desire world peace, but that won't happen without justice. And this hymn is talking about a peace that is personal, a feeling that washes over us and makes us sense that all is well, even when "sorrows like sea billows roll".

I like every stanza of this hymn. Stanzas 2 and 3 remind me of Jesus' love, mercy, grace and sacrifice for me. Stanza 1 tells me that whatever happens to me, especially when life is hard, that I can stand in the eye of that hurricane around me. I can because Jesus will never abandon me - in pain and suffering, be it physical or emotional, Jesus will never leave me. I believe that because I have found it to be true. And I believe it will be true when I die - Jesus will walk me through it.

And stanza 4 - WOW! Won't it be fun when our faith, which at times makes us see dimly, turns to 20/20 sight? Won't it be exciting to see the clouds of mystery rolling back - the clouds rolling away and boom - there are our loved ones with us again, and boom - there are the mysteries of the universe revealed.

Oh, it is so well with my soul. (I think soul just means all is well with my essence, my being, with whatever it is that God will raise at death and clothe with a new body.)

This hymn is also nostalgic for me. As a young boy sitting in the back pew at Grace Lutheran, Bellwood, my dad, who loved to sing, would belt out this hymn. During the refrain we would sing, "It is well, it is well - with my soul, with my soul". But when we came to the last part "It is well", my dad would then sing loudly, "Oh so SWELL with my soul!" Oh how fun to hear him and watch people look around - as if they heard something different, but weren't sure what it was. I can still hear him sing it.

Every time we sing this hymn, at that special time, I sing, "Oh so SWELL!" and I sing it really loud. And people look at me, too. Then I think of my dad and the clouds start to roll back.

Isn't it swell!

Oh God, please, let us all experience your peace, that sense of well-being, even when sea billows roll. In Jesus' name. Amen

Rev. Steve Lynn

Saturday, April 20, 2019

Pass it on

Favorite hymn? Too hard to choose – there are so many beautiful and meaningful ones to choose from. As lay worship leaders, Bob and I enjoy worshipping in different and unique churches in the Allegheny Synod, where other hymnals and worship settings are used, not common to Grace. One church has no organist so they use a synthesizer with prerecorded hymns and is operated with a remote control! Making a “joyful noise” by singing any hymn, with anyone, anywhere and with or without instruments is always heartfelt and meaningful. Most recently, at one country church, the closing congregational hymn was led only by one woman and her guitar. The song was “Pass it on” from the late 60’s, a song we hadn’t sung in decades. The words speak very simply of the importance of sharing God’s message of salvation - the Gospel, with everyone. Matt 28:19-20

*It only takes a spark to get a fire going
And soon all those around can warm up to its glowing
That's how it is with God's love
Once you've experienced it
You spread His love to everyone
You want to pass it on.*

As Good Friday approaches, we will hear again the passionate, compelling last words Jesus spoke from the cross. I would like to share the poignant last words of Lutheran Pastor Martin Schultz before he died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 54, just after he preaching his last sermon.

“...because you live with hope. And when you face your worst moments, you have an inner strength that others may not understand, but they may admire and they may want to know about. Share that faith whenever you can. This is how the church began, this is how the church has continued, and this is how the church will continue to be ... **WE WILL SHARE CHRIST.** We know Him. We love Him... We will make Him known. I wonder what adventures God will put before you this week? Will it be the confidence you have when someone tells you a sad story and you point them in the direction of a Savior who loves them? You will have an opportunity this week to make Christ known. You are baptized, you are a glorious Child of God. God bless as we share Christ and we make him known. Amen.”

Let us pray...

Lord, Jesus, humble us, dwell in our hearts, guide our thoughts and words to always point to you. Show us how to share your love with others in all we do and say. Continue to be the “spark” in our lives as we strive to “Pass it on.” Amen

Lois Voigt

Sunday, April 21, 2019

Gospel Luke 24:1-12

¹On the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

