

ONE-YEAR LECTIONARY

THE WORD IN *Song*



Hymn of the Day Studies for
HOLY WEEK



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD

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All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Lutheran Service Book 442 | study by John G. Fleischmann

Introduction

It was an exciting day. Jesus — the one who had taught with authority, performed miracles and recently raised Lazarus from the dead — was coming to Jerusalem.

The crowds wanted a glimpse of this one whom they thought would make a fantastic king of Israel. They knew of no other person like Him. So, they greeted Him as He entered Jerusalem for the last time, crying for Him to save them and lavishing Him with a royal greeting of palms and praises.

The hymn “All Glory, Laud, and Honor,” traditionally used as the processional hymn on Palm Sunday, recaptures the scene of the “multitude of pilgrims” greeting Jesus at His triumphal entry, joining our praise with theirs as we hail Jesus as our King.

- What are some of the images that this hymn draws in your mind?
- What is the significance of the triumphal entry for Jesus?

Exploring the Scriptures

Read the account of the first Palm Sunday in John 12:12–15.

- What kind of king did the people assume Jesus to be?
- When they cried, “Save us now” (the meaning of the word “Hosanna”), what do you think they meant?
- In verse 13, there are some very familiar words. Where are they found in our liturgy?
- What do we mean when we sing them? How is this different from what the crowd meant?

Read John 18:33–38, which is the exchange between Jesus and Pontius Pilate.

- What does Jesus say about His kingdom?
- What kind of king was truly sitting on the donkey’s colt?

Palm Sunday is also known as the Sunday of the Passion. On this day, the Church reads one of three Passion accounts (Matt. 26:1–27:66; Mark 14:1–15:47; or Luke 22:1–23:56). These accounts reveal to us the true reason that Jesus came into this world — to suffer and die for us so that our sins are forgiven. Read Matt. 27:23; Mark 15:14; and Luke 23:20.

- What word is the crowd shouting now? How is this different from what they said at the triumphal entry?
- What does this tell you about the tide of public opinion when it comes to Jesus?
- How have you done the same in your life?
- How do we live sanctified lives that avoid the sin of denying Jesus?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

This hymn, written by St. Theodulf (762–821) of Orleans, France, has been sung in varying forms in the Church since the ninth century.

- How does singing this ancient hymn on Palm Sunday link us to the Church of all time?
- Why is this important?

According to legend, Theodulf, imprisoned for complicity in a plot to overthrow King Louis I, composed this hymn in his jail cell and sang it as the king processed through the town. Upon hearing it, Louis ordered the release of Theodulf.

While this legend cannot be confirmed, the hymn beautifully paints the picture of the triumphal entry.

The crowds in Jerusalem did not comprehend that Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world. We do. This is reflected in each stanza as Theodulf beautifully weaves the uninformed praises of the Hebrews with those whom the Holy Spirit has now called, gathered, enlightened and sanctified. We blend our voices with the Church in heaven and the Church on earth because Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

- What are the three kingdoms of Jesus? (Hint: Refer to the explanation of “The Offices of Christ” in the Second Article in *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, pp. 124–7.)
- How are you a part of each?

Text

In stanza 1, Jesus is called “the King of Israel / And David’s royal Son.”

- What is the prophetic meaning of Jesus being the King of Israel and David’s royal Son?

The first stanza not only declares that Jesus is *the* Christ, but that He is *our* King and Blessed One.

In stanza 2, the chorus of angels is joined with the voice of the Church in praise. Such cosmic worship leaves no confusion as to who this King is. Read Ps. 24:10.

- Who is the “King of glory”?
- How does all of creation join us in praising Jesus on high?

The third stanza cites the praise of the people on the first Palm Sunday. They did not understand that Jesus was the King of glory.

- How are “our praise and prayer and anthems” different from theirs? How are they the same?

Making the Connection

There is an irony in this hymn. While the people hailed Jesus as their king on Sunday, they had no idea what the following Friday held.

This irony is expressed in our liturgy on Palm Sunday, where we quickly turn from the entrance Gospel to our main Gospel and hear the account of Jesus’ Passion and death.

This irony is also expressed in our lives. Because of the resurrection, we know how our personal “story” will end — living and reigning with Jesus forever in heaven. And yet, we face the suffering and struggles that each day brings.

In Closing

The multitude of pilgrims in Jerusalem were excited that Jesus came to their city. They wanted to make Him king. Without realizing it, they did! They saw to it that He was crucified. All hope of an earthly reign was dashed by the cross. But this is precisely where Jesus’ reign begins. After becoming obedient unto death, He is exalted by God the Father above everything.

Jesus’ reign is now in heaven. There, He sits at God’s right hand for His Church. His reign is present in the Church today through the forgiveness of sins brought to us in Word and Sacrament. And His reign is over the world to which He will one day return to judge the living and the dead.

On that day, the devil and everything connected with sin, death and evil will be vanquished in hell, and we will give our eternal King glory, laud and honor forever in heaven.

In stanza 4, we get a glimpse of the true reason Jesus came into Jerusalem: His Passion. This parade will end in a much different way than it began.

Contrary to popular opinion, the cross, not earthly glory, awaits Jesus. To the world, the cross is folly — nothing good could come of it; it makes no sense (1 Cor. 1:18–25). For us, it is everything. Read the Epistle for the Sunday of the Passion: Phil. 2:5–11.

- What does it mean that Jesus is “now high exalted”?
- What hope does this give?

In the final stanza, we pray with confidence that Jesus would receive our praises as He received the praises of old. Acknowledging that our “good and gracious King” does receive them, the hymn ends in powerful adoration just as it began: “All glory, laud, and honor, / To You, Redeemer, King.”

- What are some of the things that keep your heart from singing?
- What comfort does this hymn offer you?

We sing the word “king” nine times in this hymn in the refrain and the verses.

- How is Jesus “king” in your life right now?
- Are there areas of your life where you’re still the king? If so, what are they? How can they be changed with the power of the Holy Spirit?

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 442.

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Palm Sunday).

A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

Lutheran Service Book 438 | study by Marion Lars Hendrickson

Introduction

Martin Luther declared that Isaiah 53 “is the foremost passage on the suffering and resurrection of Christ, and there is hardly another like it” (AE 17:215). The cross of Jesus is the complete exposure of human sin, our sin, in Christ’s own flesh. As often as we may successfully hide our sin from others and from ourselves, there is no hiding at the cross. We are exposed.

Yet when we see the cross of Jesus for what it truly is, we no longer shy away from the truth about our sin. There is no longer any gain to hiding it. “With his wounds we are healed” (Is. 53:5). No longer must we hide in fear from the accusations of God’s Law. These accusations no longer bring

God’s wrathful judgment upon us. Instead, at the cross, God’s wrath and just judgment are fully met in Jesus Christ for us.

- Is it easy or difficult to think about your own sin? Why or why not?
- What do you think: Is it the seriousness of your own sin that teaches you the grateful joy for Christ’s crucifixion, or is it the cross of Jesus that teaches you the dreadful seriousness of your own sin?

Exploring the Scriptures

Read Is. 53:1–3. Christians since the first days of the Church have interpreted the Suffering Servant in this passage to be Jesus.

- Give examples of how the descriptions in these verses fit the description of Jesus.
- If Jesus had “no beauty that we should desire him,” what sort of beauty does He embody that we can sing of Him with words such as “Beautiful Savior”?

Read Is. 53:4–6. These verses get to the heart of the chapter.

- What is the purpose of Jesus’ suffering and death?
- Who lays this suffering and death on Him? What does this tell us about the crucifixion of Jesus?
- Notice the use of the pronouns “we,” “our” and “us.” Who is also included with those pronouns?

- The substitutionary nature of Jesus’ death is clearly portrayed in this text, especially in verse 5. What is the great comfort for us in these words? Do the words create discomfort in us? Why or why not?

Read Is. 53:10–12. The mood of the passage changes here.

- What phrases in these verses point to the resurrection of Jesus?
- The benefits in the completion of this sacrifice are directed toward the one who suffers, namely, Jesus. If Jesus has taken what is ours (namely, our sin), how does He give us what is His?
- Philipp Melancthon wrote, “To know Christ is to know His benefits” (*Loci Communes*). What are the benefits that come to us by Jesus’ death? Are these benefits described in these verses?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Reading any biography of Paul Gerhardt (1607–76) quickly reveals that this Lutheran pastor and hymn writer was a “suffering servant” of the Lord. His father died while he was a boy. During his time of studies at the University of Wittenberg, the Thirty Years’ War raged around him. He suffered at the hands of the governing authorities in his work in the Holy Ministry because of his faithfulness to the Lutheran Confessions. His wife and all but one of his children died before him.

Still, even at age 70, this “theologian sifted in Satan’s sieve,” as a portrait epitaph reads, could write about the joy that was his in serving his Lord.

- From what you know of the Gospel of Christ, what is the source of Gerhardt’s joy?
- Luther wrote, “[The Gospel] teaches us, not how to get rid of evil and to enjoy peace but how to live with it and yet conquer it.” What does he mean?

Text

Stanza 1 captures the silence and the innocence with which Jesus goes to His sacrificial death. The Gospels also record Jesus' silence in the face of His accusers and tormenters.

- What is the significance of this silence? Does divine silence imply judgment? Why or why not?

The stanza ends with the words "All this I gladly suffer."

- How is this response of joy revealed in Jesus' own words and actions?
- How does this phrase express Gerhardt's own view of his call to suffer for the sake of Christ?
- How about you?

Stanza 1 also alludes to the Passover, to the sacrificial lamb without blemish. Read Ex. 12:5. As the Lamb of God (John 1:29), Jesus embodies all the sacrifices of ancient Israel.

- What words does the hymn text use to emphasize the singularity of Jesus' self-offering?

Stanzas 2 and 3 focus on the relation between the divine Father and Son. Yet, the hymn text language also reaches out to include others.

Making the Connection

Indeed, what Jesus did for us on the cross is beyond comprehension. His resurrection surpasses the ability of our finite minds to grasp it. What is more, it all happened so long ago, so how can we know for sure?

St. Paul wrote, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

St. Paul also wrote, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that

- Find phrases in these two stanzas that draw us in as the blessed recipients of Christ's sacrificial death.
- Gerhardt writes, "O wondrous Love, what have You done!" and "O Love, how strong You are to save!" How does Jesus' crucifixion define love in a profound way?

With the final stanza, the hymn text gives voice to the believer's joy in sharing all the benefits of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and His glorious resurrection.

- Find as many of these benefits as you can in the text of this final stanza.
- What is the ultimate hope expressed by the words "Lord, when Your glory I shall see / And taste Your kingdom's pleasure"?
- Is this hope only in heaven? Where may we see "glory" and taste "pleasure" even now in suffering?

Martin Luther wrote about a "joyous exchange" for the Christian because of what Jesus Christ has done. As in a marriage, the property of the one becomes the property of the other, and the property of both together. In this, there is great joy.

- What evidence of Luther's "joyous exchange" can you find in the text of this final stanza?

we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16).

- What does it mean that Christ's work on the cross is given to us in the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper?
- Where, then, can you know the joy of Christ's glory in cross and resurrection to be your own in the midst of "crosses"?

In Closing

"Your blood my royal robe shall be ... Your righteousness shall be my crown; / With these I need not hide me" (st. 4). The events of Holy Week reveal that there is no need for us to hide, for we are no longer naked in our sin. We are clothed in the finest possible apparel to celebrate the feast of Easter, both now and forever.

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 438.

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience, and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Sunday of the Passion).

Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

Lutheran Service Book 434 | study by Frank J. Pies

Introduction

Most people familiar with American history are able to identify certain political figures by the particular designations accorded to them. The “Father of our country” is unquestionably George Washington, and “Honest Abe” can only be Abraham Lincoln. Church history, likewise, has its share of titled people. Martin Luther is the “Reformer of Western Christendom,” and Isaac Watts is the “Father of English Hymnody.”

This manner of denominating individuals is also found in biblical history, especially as it concerns the Lord Jesus.

Scripture calls Him many names, each uniquely expressive of His person and work for us sinners. Today’s hymn addresses Christ by that title which is most comforting and endearing to His people, particularly at this holy time of our Church Year.

- What is the Lord called at the beginning of each of the hymn’s three stanzas?
- What does this image mean to you? How do you understand it?

Exploring the Scriptures

The proper interpretation of who Jesus is and what He does as the Lamb of God is revealed in the written Word of God. The Old Testament contains the background necessary for this understanding, typifying and foreshadowing, predicting and pointing to the reality that is in Christ.

- What did the Lord direct the children of Israel to do on their last evening in Egyptian captivity? See Ex. 12:1–11. What promise did God make to those who smeared the lamb’s blood on the doorframes of their homes? See Ex. 12:12–13. Imagine the joy and thanksgiving Israel experienced as God fulfilled this promise. See Ps. 136:1–3, 10–12.
 - So that unholy Israel might have fellowship with the holy Lord, He established the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical system of worship. What sacrifices did God require for the daily offering? See Ex. 29:38–39. For the fellowship and sin offerings? See Lev. 3:6–8; 4:32–34.
 - How did the prophet Isaiah describe God’s Suffering Servant seven centuries before the events of Holy Week took place? See Is. 53:6–7.
- Against this rich backdrop, the New Testament emphatically declares that Jesus is God’s Lamb who gave Himself as the sacrifice to win forgiveness for the sinful world.
- What did John the Baptizer call Jesus in John 1:29, 35–36? Why did John refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God? What was His mission? Where in the liturgy do we sing these inspired words? Why?
 - How did God’s Lamb take away the world’s sin? See Heb. 9:11–14; 1 Peter 1:18–19; and 1 John 1:7.
 - What does St. Paul call Christ in 1 Cor. 5:7? Discuss this naming in light of the fact that ancient Israel’s deliverance by the Lord’s Passover was a foreshadowing of the world’s deliverance from sin and death by Jesus’ death and resurrection.
 - How is the victorious Christ described in Rev. 5:6? What “new song” is sung in praise of Him, a portion of which Lutherans in our generation intone in the liturgical canticle, “This Is the Feast”? See Rev. 5:9. What ultimate celebration do we who believe in the Lamb look forward to? See Rev. 7:9–17.

Exploring the Hymn

Background

A version of the early medieval Latin canticle “Agnus Dei” (Lamb of God), the beautiful text and melody of “Lamb of God, Pure and Holy” were penned and composed by Nicolaus Decius (c. 1485–after 1546), a German Lutheran pastor and hymn writer, author and composer.

Subsequent to serving in the Roman Church as a monk and monastery provost, Decius embraced the Reformation early in its history. In 1522, a year before Luther wrote his

first hymn, Decius wrote what are probably the first hymns of Lutheranism, two of which are in *LSB* (“Lamb of God, Pure and Holy” and “All Glory Be to God on High”).

- To what degree do you think Decius’ hymn-writing was influenced by learning the truth of the Bible proclaimed anew in the Reformation? What is the relationship between knowing the light of God’s Word and serving in and by that illuminating Word?

Although Decius completed a Master of Arts degree at the University of Wittenberg and was a minister in the Lutheran Church, in his later life he inclined strongly toward Calvinism.

- What might this fact suggest about the constant need to nurture our faith with the truth of God's Word lest we go astray?

Text

One of the things about the hymn that first strikes a person is its form: three stanzas, all of them identical except for the last line of the last stanza.

- Why do you think this format was used? Why not offer the hymn in one or two stanzas? Recall the threefold form of the traditional Kyrie: "Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy."
- What value does such repetition have as an aid for retaining, recalling, meditating upon, absorbing, savoring and rejoicing in the scriptural message of the hymn?

Addressed to Jesus, the hymn is largely a statement of His holy Passion and its blessed benefits.

- After calling Christ the Lamb who belongs to and is supplied by God, what does line 1 declare about His

person and work for us sinners? Why are these facts critical to the Gospel? See Heb. 7:26–27.

- How is the sacrifice of Christ described in line 2? Compare Phil. 2:5–8.
 - As the hymn ascends to its summit in line 3, what does it confess about Christ's burden? What is the significance of the phrase "for us"? What is the horrible, helpless despair that would reign over us without Jesus' forgiveness earned by His atoning sacrifice? See Rom. 6:23.
- In the last lines of the hymn, saving faith looks upon the spotless, patient Lamb of God and confidently cries for rescue, seeking and receiving the gifts He imparts through His Gospel and Sacraments.
- The help that we sinners need, which Jesus ably and generously provides, is humbly requested in the last lines of stanzas 1 and 2. What is it?
 - What blessing is petitioned in the last line of stanza 3? Why is the personal pronoun "Thy" used in connection with this gift? See John 14:27.
 - Remembering that the name *Jesus* means "Savior," what's the significance of twice calling out "O Jesus!" at the end of each of the three stanzas? See Rom. 6:23.

Making the Connection

The one of whom we sing in this hymn makes all the difference in our lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.

- What does the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus mean to you? See Matt. 9:2 and Luke 7:36–50.
- Discuss this amazing difference as summarized by Luther: "It is extremely important that we know where our sins have been disposed of. The Law deposits them on our conscience and shoves them into our bosom. But God

takes them from us and places them on the shoulders of the Lamb ... God says: 'I know that your sin is unbearable for you; therefore behold, I will lay it upon My Lamb and relieve you of it. Believe this! If you do, you are delivered of sin.' There are only two abodes for sin: it either resides with you, weighing you down; or it lies on Christ, the Lamb of God. If it is loaded on your back, you are lost; but if it rests on Christ, you are free and saved" (AE 22:169–70).

In Closing

The more we grow in the knowledge that Jesus is God's Lamb for us, the more we recognize the inexhaustible blessedness of His Gospel. Little wonder that "Lamb of God, Pure and Holy" is a favorite hymn in Lutheranism, frequently sung in the midweek Lenten services and during Holy Week.

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 434.

Prayer

Almighty God, grant that in the midst of our failures and weaknesses we may be restored through the passion and intercession of Your only-begotten Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Monday in Holy Week).

Upon the Cross Extended

Lutheran Service Book 453 | study by Shawn L. Kumm

Introduction

The deed was done. Nails were pounded into outstretched hands and painfully twisted feet. A previously crushed crown of thorns was less than regally in place. His holy blood, already dried to His scourged back, now oozed from hands, feet and head. There is the King of kings, upon the cross extended.

The description makes us avert our eyes, yes, even from the picture in our imaginations. The Gospel writers painted a dark, vivid portrait of the dying Lord Jesus. The darkened sky covers all. The few remaining who loved Him watch and wait.

There is nothing in history to compare to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. Many others had been crucified, and

indeed would be crucified. Two others are there with Jesus. But this crucifixion is different. God hangs there, with all the weight of the world's sin upon Him. Jesus is forsaken to do it all alone, for in righteous response to such sin, the holy Father forsakes His Son — for a while. But in the meantime, we, through the sacred pages of Scripture, watch and wait too.

- What part of the crucifixion is most vivid to you?
- If you have seen someone die in the faith, what common element of death was shared with Jesus by that person in his or her last moments?

Exploring the Scriptures

The prophet Isaiah is given specific insight into many parts of the life of the Lord Jesus. As sung in another hymn, “Isaiah ’twas foretold it” (LSB 359:2). The Savior’s virgin birth is seen some 600 years in advance (Is. 7:14). The healing ministry of Jesus is described in comforting detail (Is. 35; 42:1–7). But late in the prophecy of Isaiah, we wince. The tone changes when the reader gets toward the end of Isaiah 52 (vv. 13–15). Something else is now going on. The servant’s appearance is marred (v. 14). He shall sprinkle many nations (v. 15). What can this all mean?

And it doesn’t get much better in chapter 53, the main scriptural basis for this hymn. Imagine hearing this for the first time in the early 700s or late 600s B.C. Surely the Lord isn’t talking about anyone in Israel. What can this mean for us, the inheritors of God’s good and gracious promises?

You have the benefit of 20 centuries of hindsight. It’s been over 2,400 years since Isaiah wrote, under the inspiration

of the Holy Spirit, the words that form the center of this hymn.

- Read Is. 52:13–53:12. Note along the way, verse by verse, how the life, suffering and death of Jesus are predicted in greatest detail.
- With Easter in sight, look for a hint of the resurrection in the verses above from Isaiah.
- Read Heb. 9:26, another Scripture passage reflected in this hymn. How is the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus connected to you?
- Peter is an eyewitness in the courtyard as Jesus is tried, spat upon, scourged and mocked. Now read 1 Peter 2:21–25. In these verses, where does Peter show that he is familiar with Is. 52:13–53:12?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Paul Gerhardt (1607–76) lived in tumultuous times. The Thirty Years’ War (1618–48) began in his 10th year. His father, the mayor of a small village, died before he reached maturity. He suffered the jealousy of colleagues. He suffered from want of income. Doctrinal controversy left him without office. His wife and all but one of his children preceded him in death.

Nevertheless, Gerhardt preached the Gospel in season and out. Common parishioners supported him when princes abused him.

And he wrote. Gerhardt wrote over 130 German hymns and poems and at least 14 Latin poems. His poems comforted victims of the Thirty Years’ War and victims of fire and plague.

- Paul Gerhardt died on May 27, 1676, during his 70th year. It is said that his last words were from one of his hymns. The stanza he used is translated “Death cannot destroy forever” (*The Lutheran Hymnal* [CPH, 1941]). How does the Christian faith justify Gerhardt’s bold statement?

- After he died, a large portrait of Gerhardt was painted that still hangs in the last church in which he served. Underneath the portrait are the Latin words *Theologus in cribo Satanae versatus*: “A theologian sifted in Satan’s sieve.” How do these words sum up Gerhardt’s life?
- In his testament to his son, Gerhardt closed with these words: “In summary: Pray diligently, study something honorable, live peacefully, serve honestly, and remain unmoved in your faith and confessing. If you do this, you too will one day die and depart from this world willingly, joyfully, and blessedly. Amen” (bach-cantatas.com/Topics/Librettist.htm). How would these words be good for your life in Christ?

Text

Though originally a much longer hymn (German hymn writers and poets at the time were well known for long writings), the seven remaining stanzas of this hymn get

Making the Connection

The suffering Christian finds hope in the sufferings of Jesus — you are sustained in your suffering by the Savior who suffered for you.

A famous woodcut by 16th-century artist Albrecht Dürer shows Jesus extended upon the cross. Angels with chalices catch blood pouring from His hands and feet.

In Closing

As time permits, read in its entirety Is. 52:13—53:12. Recall all you know about the crucifixion of your Lord Jesus and note how all the pieces from Isaiah fit in the completed puzzle of salvation.

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 453.
- Pray in unison or responsively Psalm 71, the appointed psalm for Tuesday in Holy Week.

straight to the point: The Lord Jesus suspended on the cross has true meaning for your life.

- In stanzas 1 and 2, who does Gerhardt invite to see the cross of Jesus?

In his sermon on Pentecost, Peter preaches laser-sharp Law. Take a look at Acts 2:36.

- Stanzas 3 and 4 get to the heart of the matter. Who does Gerhardt see as having been the problem all along? How do Gerhardt’s words echo Paul’s in 1 Tim. 1:15?

Gerhardt’s mastery of the poetic phrase shows up even in the translation from German into English by John Kelly (1833–90).

- Look at the openings words to stanzas 5, 6 and 7. How is the emphasis placed on Jesus? Match the lines in each stanza with the following Bible passages: Stanza 5 with Is. 53:5 and 1 Peter 2:24; stanza 6 with Eccl. 4:12 and Is. 61:1; and stanza 7 with 1 Cor. 1:18 and Is. 50:4.

- Connect stanza 2 with 1 Cor. 11:26; Rev. 1:5; and 1 John 1:7.

- Connect Heb. 12:22–24 with the Sacrament of the Altar.

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Palm Sunday).

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Lutheran Service Book 425/426 | study by David R. Schmitt

Introduction

Christians have often placed crosses in their churches. They may be large and beautifully sculpted or small and simply adorned, but each cross has a way of telling the story of salvation. Each cross is a visible reminder of how God the Father revealed His saving love for the world in Jesus Christ.

For example, above the altar of the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence stands a famous fresco. The fresco depicts the crucifixion of Jesus. Below the cross stand Mary and John. On the cross hangs Jesus. But, most importantly, behind the cross is God the Father. He looks down at us from above the cross. His arms are stretched out in love. First, they are stretched out in love for His Son, Jesus. The Father's hands rest under the outstretched arms of Jesus, as if God the Father were supporting God the Son in His

sacrifice for the world. Second, His arms are stretched out in love toward the worshipers, as God the Father is giving the sacrifice of His Son for the salvation of the world. All of this occurs under a large Roman arch of triumph. Here, we see that this gracious, self-giving love of God the Father and the Son is the triumph over sin, death and hell that God freely gives in love to the world.

Each cross tells a story, and each time we see a cross we are invited to contemplate that story and share with one another the love of God.

- Describe some of the crosses that you see in your church or home. What do they look like?
- How do these crosses tell the story of salvation to us and to others?

Exploring the Scriptures

For the apostle Paul, the cross was not an object of art. It was an instrument of execution. Those who died on the cross were known to be criminals, convicted of the most serious crimes, and therefore subjected to a punishment that left them naked, mocked, dehumanized and shamed on the side of the road for all to see. Crosses were objects of horror not beauty, and those who hung on them were despised not celebrated. Paul, however, confesses a radically different understanding of the cross of Jesus. Read Gal. 6:14–15.

- Why would it be strange for Jews or Greeks to boast in the cross? (See 1 Cor. 1:18–25.)
- What did God do on the cross that makes it something Paul celebrates? (See 2 Cor. 5:14–21.)

Paul has seen the gracious work of Jesus on the cross: how Jesus bore the eternal punishment of our sin so that He might bestow on us eternal life in His name. Seeing this work of God changes the way Paul looks at himself and at the world. Read Phil. 3:3–11.

- How does Paul value his life differently because of the gift of righteousness that is his through the death and resurrection of Jesus?
- How does Paul value his work in the world differently? (See Gal. 6:14–15.)
- How do we value our lives and our work in the world differently because of the death and resurrection of Jesus?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

When Isaac Watts (1674–1748), a minister famous for his teaching and his hymnody, first published his hymns, he divided them into three classifications: hymns that paraphrased texts of Scripture, hymns that treated divine subjects, and hymns that prepared for the Lord's Supper. By providing a scriptural citation and title for this hymn, Watts indicated that it paraphrased Gal. 6:14.

- What explicit connections to Gal. 6:14 do you see in the hymn?

- What connections to Gal. 6:14 does Watts expand in his hymn?
- How do these expansions encourage you to meditate more fully upon Paul's words?

While this hymn paraphrases Gal. 6:14, Watts did not include it in the section of hymns that paraphrased Scripture. Instead, Watts included this hymn among those that prepared people for the Lord's Supper.

- How does reading and contemplating this hymn in relation to the Lord's Supper deepen the meaning of

references to the body and blood of Christ, the flowing of sorrow and love, the power of Christ's amazing love, and the transformation of one's life?

- How does this hymn prepare you to receive the body and blood of your Savior in the Lord's Supper?

Text

The first line of the hymn points to one single action: The poet will "survey the wondrous cross."

The word "survey" has two meanings. First, it involves an exacting inspection of particulars (as a person might ask you to fill out all of the questions on a survey); second, it implies a comprehensive evaluation of the whole (as a person might survey a plot of land). For the poet, these two actions relate to one another. By closely examining one thing, Watts finds that he re-examines everything. By closely looking at the cross, he re-examines his life, the world and the love of God for all humanity.

In stanzas 1 and 2, the poet sees the glory of God ("Prince of Glory") joined to a shameful death on the cross. This self-sacrificial love of God causes the poet to reconsider his life in the world.

- Before seeing God's love on the cross, what power did the world have upon the poet?
- How does the poet respond to the riches and vanity of the world now that he has experienced God's love for him?

Making the Connection

When the apostle Paul looked at the cross, he saw a paradoxical vision. The cross that the world despised, he rejoiced in because it was the way of salvation; the way of life the world rejoiced in, he despised in order to follow God's humble and lowly way.

This hymn puts into song Paul's paradoxical vision. The Prince of Glory, who rules over all creation, has chosen to die for us, His sinful creatures; we, like the poet, rejoice

In Closing

Crosses adorn our churches, and when we see a cross, it is good to stop and look, to gaze in wonder, not at the beauty of the cross but at the depth of God's love in the story that it tells. Even when a cross is not before our eyes, however, we can keep it before our heart in song, contemplating anew the wonder of God's saving love for the world.

- Sing or read together *LSB* 425/426.

- How do you count gain to be loss, pour contempt on pride, and sacrifice the vanity of this world because of the saving work of God?

In stanzas 3 and 4, the poet pauses to survey the cross and then to survey his life in the world. Consider the poet's survey of the cross in stanza 3.

- When the poet looks at the cross, what does he physically see?
- How is this vision a slow and careful inspection of the particulars of the crucifixion?
- With the words "sorrow and love," the poet offers us a glimpse of his spiritual vision. How do these words relate to what Jesus is doing for us as He dies on the cross?

Consider the poet's survey of the world in stanza 4.

- As the poet views the world, he has an expansive vision ("the whole realm of nature"). Why would the entire creation not be a fitting tribute for the poet to bring to Christ?
- What does the Prince of Glory, who already rules over all creation, truly desire?
- What did He do for you that you might be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom?

in His sorrowful love and follow in humble service, even though all of this is despised by the world.

- What story does our world tell about God and love?
- How does our story differ when we include Jesus and the cross?
- How do you share the story of the cross by the way you live in the world?

Prayer

Merciful God, Your Son, Jesus Christ, was lifted high upon the cross that He might bear the sins of the world and draw all people to Himself. Grant that we who glory in His death for our redemption may faithfully heed His call to bear the cross and follow Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Holy Cross Day).

O Lord, We Praise Thee

Lutheran Service Book 617 | study by Shawn L. Kumm

Introduction

The week started out exciting enough. Wall-to-wall people filled Jerusalem. A donkey and her foal were found, and the Lord rode through the streets. Shouts erupted. “Hosanna! Hosanna!” Coats were thrown down; palm branches were lifted up. It was looking like a good week for Jesus and His disciples.

But as the week moved on, events became more serious and dark. “Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed...” (*LSB*, p. 162). Those oft-repeated words bring us into the darkness of the night when the Lord Jesus

gathered His disciples. Sin in need of forgiveness lurks at the table. Betrayal is in the air. As the Passover unfolds, the words of Jesus bring to fulfillment the meal itself. Yes, something old is being completed, something new is being done.

- What is your earliest memory of a Maundy Thursday service?
- When was the first time you received the Lord’s Supper? What were you thinking before, during and after the body and blood of the Lord Jesus was given to you?

Exploring the Scriptures

One of the readings appointed for today, and upon which this hymn is based, is 1 Cor. 11:23–32. Read these verses.

- Notice in verses 23–25 and 27 how many times St. Paul connects “bread” with “body” and “cup” (that is, the contents of the cup, wine) with “blood.”
- Now, in verse 26, how does St. Paul connect the bread and the cup (wine) to the body and blood of Jesus without using the words “body” and “blood”?
- Also, in verse 26, with which words does St. Paul teach you that the Lord Jesus is risen from the dead, that He is not continually sacrificed or not still dead on the cross or in a grave? See also Heb. 9:24–28; 10:10–14.

Another important reading for Holy Thursday, and upon which this hymn is based, is Matt. 26:26–28. Read these verses.

- Which words in stanza 1 reflect the fact that Jesus gives His Supper “for the forgiveness of sins” (v. 28)?

- Which words in stanza 1 sing of the Christ’s divine nature? Which words in the same stanza sing of His human nature? How are these words a comfort to you?

A third important reading for Holy Thursday is Ex. 12:1–14. Read these verses.

- In what way did God deal out justice? Who received this justice? In what way did God deal out mercy? Who received this mercy?
- We believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb. See John 1:29, 36 and 1 Cor. 5:7b.
- Now make the connection between justice and mercy with the lamb and the blood described in Exodus, the Lamb and the blood recorded by Matthew, and the Lamb and the blood taught in 1 Corinthians. What comfort does this bring you?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

The church was familiar with the first stanza of this hymn long before Martin Luther (1483–1546) wrote stanzas 2 and 3. The hymn dates from the 1300s and was often sung during a popular festival where the Host from the Lord’s Supper was paraded in procession throughout town. As Luther began to restore singing to the congregation, he looked for hymns to sing when the Lord’s Supper was celebrated. With the revision of two lines of the first stanza and the writing of two additional stanzas, Luther took this hymn off the streets and put it back into the mouths, hearts

and minds of the people who were once again eager to eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus according to the Lord’s own words, instead of venerating and parading the Sacrament beyond the Lord’s own intended use.

One of the troubling issues of the Reformation was the offering of the Lord’s Supper in only one kind, that is, receiving only the bread and not the wine, receiving only the body and not the blood of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, Luther appreciated the medieval age of the first stanza, because the stanza showed that the people of God had indeed received

the Lord's Supper in both kinds before the aberrant practice of offering only one kind was introduced.

- What evidence do you find in the first stanza that in the 14th century, Christians received the Lord's Supper in both kinds? Why is this important? (For a detailed discussion, see the Augsburg Confession, Article XXII, and the Apology, Article XXII.)

Text

This hymn comes from a group of German hymns called "Leisen," a word which is the shortening of the prayer in Greek, "Kyrie eleison" [KI-ree-ay eh-LEH-ee-sohn], meaning "Lord, have mercy."

- As it is interspersed after every four lines, what strong message does the refrain "Lord, have mercy" communicate to you, the singer?
- What do we learn about the mercy of the Lord from the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37)?

Making the Connection

Read the historic Gospel for Holy Thursday, John 13:1–15.

- Which verse of John 13 do you find specifically reflected in stanza 2?

The text of stanza 3 pictures us leaving the table of the Lord and going back out into the world. This same thought is prayed in the familiar words of the Post-Communion Collect:

In Closing

The forgiveness of sins through the gift of the Lord's body and blood and the continual prayer "Lord, have mercy" are inseparable. God's necessary and proper justice was fully and finally rendered upon His crucified Son, Jesus. God's gracious and loving mercy covers and permeates your life. "Lord, have mercy," we cry. He has — and He does.

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 617.
- Pray the Litany (*LSB*, pp. 288–9) and reflect on how this extended prayer expands on the words from stanza 3, "And live together here in love and union" and "Give Thy Church, Lord, to see / Days of peace and unity."

- Consider 1 Peter 2:24, which is one of the foundational verses for stanzas 1 and 2. How do Peter's words expand your understanding of God's mercy and healing to you?
- What comfort do you find in Christ's wounds being the healing of your wounds? How is God's justice shown in Christ's wounds? How is God's mercy shown in the healing of your wounds?
- In what ways does this understanding of mercy expand your understanding of what Christ gives in His Supper?

Stanza 2 is transitional. It echoes the doctrine of the real presences in stanza 1 while preparing us for the reality in stanza 3 that Christ's body and blood — the forgiveness of sins — indeed has an effect on us.

- Scan stanzas 2 and 3 for these words: "us," "me," "we" and "our." Where in these two stanzas are we the recipients of God's mercy? Where in these two stanzas do we sing that this mercy may continue through us to others?

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another... (*LSB*, p. 166)

- If the vertical posture of the Christian is toward God and the horizontal posture of the Christian is toward the neighbor, according to this hymn and to the prayer above, what opportunities of mercy are available to you as you leave the table of the Lord and go out into the world?

- Now turn to Psalm 116, the appointed psalm for Holy Thursday. In unison or responsively, offer these words as a prayer of thanksgiving for God's great gift of edible mercy through Jesus in your life.

Prayer

O Lord, in this wondrous Sacrament You have left us a remembrance of Your Passion. Grant that we may so receive the sacred mystery of Your body and blood that the fruits of Your redemption may continually be manifest in us; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Holy Thursday).

Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle

Lutheran Service Book 454 | study by Paul Gregory Alms

Introduction

By all outward appearances, the cross of Jesus is not triumphant, beautiful or glorious. The cross looks like defeat, weakness and great suffering and death. No one who judged by common sense would say the spectacle of Jesus dying on the cross was anything but horrible. Yet, the Scriptures and the Christian faith point to the cross as the greatest, most wonderful moment not only of Christ's life but also of ours. It is the supreme moment of Christ's power and the pinnacle and foundation of our life and hope. It is a moment of great victory and salvation.

That contrast and paradox is at the center of this hymn. The awful cross is in reality a "trophy," a triumph, a tree of life.

- What words occur to you as you meditate on the cross?
- How many are positive (focused on salvation and forgiveness) and how many are focused on the sufferings of Christ?
- How are these groups of impressions and words related to each other?

Exploring the Scriptures

The core scriptural idea of this hymn is expressed in the final phrase of the first stanza: "Tell how Christ, the world's redeemer, / As a victim won the day." The message of salvation is not just that Christ saved us from sin; it is that He saved us "as a victim." Christ saved us from sin and death by suffering, by being beaten, by dying, by lying lifeless in the tomb. Christ won a great victory by becoming, for our sakes, a lifeless, dead human being, by suffering and being weak. That contrast and mystery is at the heart of the Gospel.

Read Is. 53:5. This passage mentions both what will happen to Christ and to Christians.

- What will happen to Christ according to this passage?
- What will happen to Christians?

- How are the two related?

Read John 17:1. In John's Gospel, Jesus' "time" or "hour" usually means His crucifixion and burial and resurrection.

- Here Jesus asks His Father to glorify Him, since His hour has come. When does the Father glorify Jesus?
- Is His death on the cross a moment of shame or glory for Jesus?

Read Gal. 6:14.

- What does Paul say is the only thing he will boast about in this life?
- Why is this true for Paul and for all of us?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

The author of this hymn is known as Venantius Honorius Fortunatus (c. 530–609). He was a prodigious writer of verse, much of which has been lost over the centuries. Two hymns survived, this one and "The Royal Banners Forward Go," both of which have to do with the crucifixion. This hymn became very well-known and has been widely used within the Church.

Both hymns were inspired by the appearance of a supposed relic of the cross in the monastery where Fortunatus lived. This shard of wood was regarded as a real piece of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. Fortunatus was commissioned to write a hymn in honor of this relic. "Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle" is that hymn. While we rightly reject the idea that such relics were genuine and, more importantly, that such relics ought to be honored, the version

of Fortunatus' hymn which we sing in *LSB* 454 points to the saving work of Christ that He accomplished on the cross.

- Why do you think relics were so popular through the ages?
- What real, tangible evidences of Christ and His love for us does the Bible really point us to?

Text

This hymn is first and foremost an invitation to sing and praise God. Read Ps. 98:1–2.

- What is the reason in this psalm for praising God?
- How is this similar or related to our hymn?

Stanza 1 concludes that Christ "as a victim won the day." This little phrase brings us right into the heart of

redemption and atonement. It is Christ's cross that is our victory and salvation, and yet the cross is apparent weakness and suffering and defeat.

- Which enemies of ours did Christ defeat on the cross?
- How did His dying "as a victim" defeat them?

While the hymn is appointed for Good Friday and Holy Week and focuses on the crucifixion, it encompasses the whole scope of Christ's redemptive work.

- According to stanza 2, what else did Christ do to redeem us?

Making the Connection

This hymn presents to us Christ's suffering and cross as a victory and a triumph. Scripture also reminds us that we are baptized into Christ. Our lives are connected to His. The fact that Christ's suffering is a victory over sin and death allows us to see our own suffering in faith. Christ suffers with us and weeps with us and, since we are connected to Him, leads us through our suffering to eternity and life.

- How does this hymn help us to see our suffering as part of our Christian life?

This hymn also gives a glimpse of Christ's "passive obedience." He obeyed and fulfilled the Law though He had no need to do so, since He is the Giver of the Law.

In Closing

The cross of Jesus is a triumphant sign, though it is a disgraceful one to the world. A dying man's blood, suffering and death seem like foolishness or worse to those without faith. To us it is glorious, a sign of conquest, a noble and beautiful tree. The more we consider the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the more we keep in mind His great love for us in giving Himself into death, the more the Spirit will lead us to sing of the glorious battle and to tell how Christ, the world's redeemer, won the day.

- Read Gal. 4:4–5. How does this passage help us understand Christ's life of obedience?
- For whose sake was He being obedient?

Stanza 4 draws a comparison between the tree of life in the Garden of Eden and the cross.

- Read Rev. 22:2. How is this tree of life similar to the cross? See Is. 53:5.
- Read Gen. 3:22. There God mentions that eating of the tree of life brings eternal life. How do we "eat" the cross, our tree of life, for eternal life?

- For whose sake did Christ obey the Law?
- Who gets the "credit" for His obedience?

Stanza 3 emphasizes the willingness of Christ to die on the cross for our sakes and for our forgiveness.

- What does such willingness indicate about Christ's attitude toward us?

Such an attitude calls forth from us just the type of praise and singing this hymn invites us to offer to God.

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 454.

Prayer

Almighty God, graciously behold this Your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and delivered into the hands of sinful men to suffer death upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Good Friday).

O Darkest Woe

Lutheran Service Book 448 | study by Marion Lars Hendrickson

Introduction

An anonymous fourth-century homily for Holy Saturday begins, “Something strange is happening — there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh ...”

The Welsh poet R.S. Thomas (1913–2000) wrote a poem titled “Threshold” that captures that silent absence of Holy Saturday, a day of waiting on the threshold between death and resurrection:

... what balance is needed at
the edges of such an abyss.
I am alone on the surface
of a turning planet. What

to do but, like Michelangelo’s
Adam, put my hand
out into unknown space,
hoping for the reciprocating touch?

(poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/52748).

Like that ancient homily and Thomas’ poem, “O Darkest Woe” plumbs the theological and emotional depths of dwelling in the silence between Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection on the first day.

- Think of an occasion of woe in your life — the death of a loved one or a very great loss. Describe your feelings at the time. Did God seem absent? Silent? What hope did you have?

Exploring the Scriptures

Each of the four Gospels records the burial of Jesus, emphasizing details according to the purpose for which the evangelist wrote his Gospel. Read Matt. 27:57–66.

- The evangelist records no words spoken by the disciples or the women. Who does speak here?
- The irony is that the chief priests and Pharisees appear to remember what the disciples and women do not. What do they remember? What do they lack in regard to these words?

Read Mark 15:42–47 and Luke 23:50–56.

- Both evangelists mention Joseph of Arimathea, who was looking for the kingdom of God. What do these words mean? His actions imply some bravery. Why? Do

his actions also imply faith or a remembering of Jesus’ promise about the third day?

- Both evangelists mention the Sabbath. How is Jesus’ rest in the tomb a Sabbath rest? Read Rev. 14:13. Jesus rests from His labors and His deeds follow Him. What are those deeds? How does Jesus’ death and burial create a blessing for those who die in the Lord and for us who remember them?

Read John 19:38–42.

- John includes Nicodemus with the mention of Joseph of Arimathea. Given Nicodemus’ conversation and confusion with Jesus in John 3, what might his inclusion here be saying about his faith? About Baptism? About the Son of Man being lifted up?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Johann Rist (1607–67) was a Lutheran pastor who served his entire ministry in the north German village of Wedel on the Elbe. His years of ministry were marked by the conflict of the Thirty Years’ War (1618–48).

While Rist’s hymn-writing was certainly influenced by the Thirty Years’ War, his writing was also shaped by his work as a dramatist and poet. He wrote and produced a number of dramatic works. In 1644, Emperor Ferdinand III made him laureate, and Rist was elevated to the nobility

as Count Palatine, Johann von Rist in 1653. In 1660, von Rist founded a literary society that he called the Order of Elbe Swans.

In times of war or deep grief, poetry can give expression to the myriad emotions in play, from despair to hope.

- In the silences of a Holy Saturday, in the grief that accompanies death, what is important to remember?

Text

The first five stanzas of this hymn begin with a cry of lament. Stanza 1 begins, “O darkest woe! / Ye tears, forth flow!”

- Read Matt. 27:57–61. With the burial of the body of Jesus, the evangelist records the presence of the women at the tomb in straightforward words. How might this opening stanza animate that scene?
- Read 1 Thess. 4:13–14. What is the basis for hope in the apostle’s words? For the disciples and the women in the time between Jesus’ death and His resurrection, were they without hope? Why or why not? What had they been told but seem to have forgotten?

The lament that begins stanza 2, “O sorrow dread!” introduces a very startling thought: “Our God is dead.”

- How can Rist say that God is dead? Isn’t it Jesus who has died?
- Read 1 John 4:9–10 and John 16:12–13. What do these verses tell us about God’s love?
- While it remains a dread mystery of the Holy Trinity that God in Christ could die upon the cross and lie in a grave, how do Jesus’ words in John 14:8–11 strengthen our faith and hope and peace even while we are unable to explain this profound mystery?

After the initial two cries of lament are cast toward heaven, toward God, the next three stanzas are addressed to the singer.

Making the Connection

With his poetry of lament (together with the plaintive melody to which this hymn is set), Rist wraps the singer in great woe while preaching the Good News of Jesus.

- How is this mix of woe and Good News a description of Holy Saturday, a time in between?

In Closing

Thomas closes “Threshold” with the words, “I am alone on the surface / of a turning planet. What / to do but, like Michelangelo’s / Adam, put my hand / out into unknown space, / hoping for the reciprocating touch?” Our faith reaches out for that “reciprocating touch.” Yet, faith also knows that even before the silence, the reciprocating touch has come to us in the promises of Jesus Christ.

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 448.

- Stanza 3 begins, “O child of woe: / Who struck the blow ...?” Read Matt. 26:24. Why is there woe? While Jesus’ words are spoken of Judas, how does Stephen expand the woeful guilt in Acts 7:51–53?
- Read Is. 53:4. Who else is implicated? Does this get us off the hook? Why or why not?
- Stanza 4 begins, “Thy Bridegroom dead!” Read 1 Peter 1:18–19. What has happened to us? At what cost?
- Stanza 5 cries out, “Such innocence!” Read Is. 53:9 and 2 Cor. 5:21. How extensive is Jesus’ innocence! Yet, because of His death, how extensive is our innocence in Him?

The final two stanzas turn from words of lament to words of confident hope. Because of the great woe in Jesus’ death for sinners, there is great joy for us sinners.

- Stanza 6 rejoices, “What Thou hast won / Is far beyond all telling.” Read 1 Peter 3:18–19. On Holy Saturday, we customarily recall Jesus’ descent into hell. What has He won for us by this act?
- Read Eph. 2:4–6. What is the hope and expectation expressed in the apostle’s words?
- Read 1 John 3:2. What is the hope and expectation expressed in these words?
- Read Psalm 130. While the psalmist cries out from the depths, there is hope in his cry. In hope, the psalmist waits for the Lord. For what does he wait?
- Living on this side of our own day of resurrection, how does our hope in Christ strengthen us to wait?

- Could this hymn be sung at a Christian funeral? Do you think it would be harder or easier to sing it at a funeral rather than Holy Saturday? Why or why not?
- In the midst of sorrow and woe, why is it easy to forget the Good News of Jesus Christ? How could this hymn help bring the hope we have in Christ into the sorrows we feel at a death or great loss?

Prayer

O God, creator of heaven and earth, grant that as the crucified body of Your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with Him the coming of the third day, and rise with Him to newness of life, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Holy Saturday).