

Redeemer's Christian Connection

Redeemer Lutheran Church

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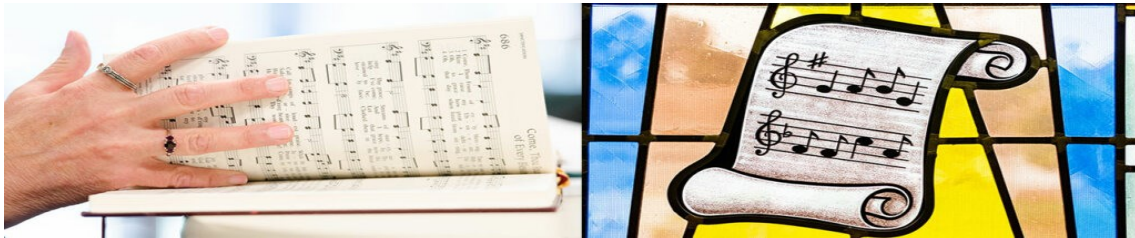
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February Newsletter

Pastor's Page



“The Word in Song.”

A Hymn Study for Lent

“Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart”

LSB 708

Introduction

As the young woman lies dying in her hospital bed, the pastor is urgently summoned. He brings with him his well-used Pastoral Care Companion; anticipating that death is imminent, he opens to the “Commendation of the Dying.” Prayers are prayed, psalms are chanted, Scriptures are read; after the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer, he sings the Nunc Dimittis: “Lord, now You let Your servant go in peace...” Then he sings stanza 3 of hymn 708: “Lord, let at last Thine angels come...” Hearing or singing the words of this hymn is a beautiful and confident way for the Christian to face death, trusting in God’s promise of the resurrection and in the hope of eternal life in heaven. Stanza 3 is famously used as the final chorale in J.S. Bach’s St. John Passion, giving the Good Friday narrative an appropriate ending — not with our Lord dead on the cross, but with the open tomb and death defeated.

Exploring the Scriptures

Anyone who is paying attention knows that this life is far from perfect. There are disappointments and heartaches, illnesses and pain. “Change and decay in all around I see,” we sing in another favorite hymn of trust and hope (LSB 878:4). And of course, there is death.

Most people think of death as an unfortunate but normal part of life. There may be some vague thought of heaven (never hell!) for the nice people; for some, death means simply disintegration back into the earth and no more. But there is more; there is much more, for Jesus has promised to return on the Last Day and raise the dead.

It won't be just the righteous that He raises, but all people, as we confess in the Nicene Creed: “I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come” (LSB, p. 191). The Athanasian Creed goes even further, stating, “And those who have done good will enter into eternal life, and those who have done evil into eternal fire” (LSB, p. 320), meaning that those who die with faith in God's promised Savior will enter into eternal life with God, but those who have rejected Jesus will experience weeping and gnashing of teeth in eternal damnation.

Hymn Background

The text was written by Martin Schalling (1532–1608), a Lutheran pastor and theologian who was a disciple of the reformer Philipp Melancthon, author of the Augsburg Confession. Schalling lived during a time of intense religious strife, which reached even outside Germany and throughout Europe. As the Reformation moved forward, the Roman Catholics often fought back, countering with their own documents and creeds. At that time, Germany was composed of many small principalities and kingdoms. It was up to each individual ruler to decide on the religious confession of his territory, leading to many changes as rulers came and went. Unfortunately, these battles of words often spilled out into battles of swords, and many were killed in wars and power struggles during this time.

Even if we were without religious strife, death is still a universal problem in this life, and all Christians should be able to confess the truths sung in this hymn, finding comfort in these words.

Text

Stanza 1

Lord, Thee I love with all my heart;
I pray Thee, ne'er from me depart,
With tender mercy cheer me.
Earth has no pleasure I would share.
Yea, heav'n itself were void and bare
If Thou, Lord wert now near me.
And should my heart for sorrow break,
My trust in Thee can nothing shake.
Thou are the portion I have sought;
Thy precious blood my soul has bought.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
Forsake me not! I trust Thy Word.

In this first stanza, we are reminded that earth's pleasures are no match for eternal life in heaven, and that the most important thing for us is to be in the presence of God. In the Divine Service each Sunday, God promises to be present with His eternal gifts of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through His Word and Sacraments.

Stanza 2

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave
My body, soul, and all I have
In this poor life of labor.
Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place
May glorify Thy lavish grace
And help and serve my neighbor.
Let no false doctrine me beguile;
Let Satan not my soul defile.
Give strength and patience unto me
To bear my cross and follow Thee.
Lord Jesus Christ,
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,
In death Thy comfort still afford.

In this second stanza, we are reminded of the Creed, as you may have learned it from the Small Catechism. In the meaning of the First Article, Luther writes, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them" (LSB, p. 322). We pray that the devil, the world and our own flesh would not betray us or lead us into temptation or doubt.

Stanza 3

Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abr'ham's bosom bear me home,
That I may die in fearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until Thy reappearing.
And then from death awaken me,
That these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,
My Savior and my fount of grace,
Lord Jesus Christ,
My prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise Thee without end.

In this final stanza we have the heart and soul of this hymn. Jesus said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). All roads point to the end. The whole life of a Christian is one preparing for death. And in these words, we confess to what end we have held steadfast: "That these mine eyes with joy may see, / O Son of God, Thy glorious face, / My Savior and my fount of grace."

Making the Connection

When the Pharisees tested Jesus, asking, “Which is the great commandment in the Law?” Jesus answered by saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:36–40). This hymn sums up these commandments very well: We love God because He loved us first and gave His only begotten Son for the forgiveness of our sins; we love our neighbor because God has given us everything we need for this life and the next.

We do this when we share Jesus’ body and blood at the rail with fellow saints. We do this when we receive the forgiveness of sins promised from the cross and forgive those who trespass against us. We love our neighbors when we help them in time of need, pray for and with them, and comfort them with the beautiful hymns of our faith.

In Closing

We confess in the meaning of the First Commandment, “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things,” (LSB, p. 321). As you know, this is easier said than done, because by nature we look to other gods. This is why we need to regularly hear the Word of God, why we need to regularly hear the words of absolution from our pastors, why we need to regularly receive Jesus’ body and blood: to ease our burdened consciences and to strengthen our faith in God and our fervent love for our neighbor. For God has promised salvation to you and baptized you into His life and death. He has assured you that as His sons and daughters, you will inherit eternal life with Him on account of Christ, who covers all your sins in His own righteousness. Therefore, sing this hymn with all boldness and confidence. Sing it now if you haven’t already. And sing it as you journey from this life into death and into life everlasting.

Prayer

Almighty, everlasting God, Your Son has assured forgiveness of sins and deliverance from eternal death. Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit that our faith in Christ may increase daily and that we may hold fast to the hope that on the Last Day we shall be raised in glory to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

[adapted from LCMS study by Randy Wurschmidt]





Life Thoughts In The Church Year

February 4 – Epiphany V – Our Almighty Maker has blessed us with bodies for enjoyment. He has entrusted them to our control (1 Corinthians 9:26-27), but this means more than the mere “my body, my choice” indulgence of appetites. The greater gratification comes from receiving and serving even the least neighbor (1 Corinthians 9:22). Who are we to lie silent about the sanctity of life and thereby withhold the divine invitation to such a delightful discipline?

February 11 – Transfiguration of Our Lord – We proclaim not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5) of body and sexuality. We proclaim not personal choice, but Jesus Christ as Lord of marriage and procreation. We proclaim not popular opinion, but Jesus Christ as Lord of hurts and healing. We proclaim not political debate, but Jesus Christ as Lord of life and death. Listen to Him who makes us beloved children of God (Mark 9:7).

February 18 – Lent I – The Lord God forbid father Abraham from sacrificing his boy Isaac (Genesis 22:12). The lesson extends to us, too. Abortion is immoral because it is unnecessary. Jesus alone serves as beast of burden in the solemn rite of righting wrongs (Mark 1:13). Death always hatches from sin (James 1:15), but we belong in the business of redemption. If God’s forgiveness forgets even abortion (Psalm 25:7), we ought to forget about it also.

February 25 – Lent II – Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia view aging and affliction as burdens. But Abraham became a blessing in his elderliness (Genesis 17:1-2). And we encounter the glory of the Lord in carrying one another’s crosses (Mark 8:34, 38). So let us resist Satan’s temptations to take death into our own hands (Mark 8:33). We will rejoice in our suffering (Romans 5:3) and receive neighbors as gifts even in theirs (Psalm 22:24).



Soup & Sandwich Suppers

Everyone is welcome to join us for soup suppers on Wednesday evenings before the Lent services, February 21st, February 28th, March 6th, March 13th and March 20th. Times are TBC. Please bring a soup or sandwich to share.



Birthdays of the Month

Rebecca Cumins—February 3rd
 Benjamin Cumins—February 5th
 Lyn Hinz—February 8th
 Thomas Howell—February 12th
 Lloyd Liebetrau—February 13th
 Judy Colvin—February 15th
 Drew Miller—February 16th
 Jackson Heinecke—February 21st
 Eliot Boyles—February 21st
 Tina Oeltjenbruns—February 24th

Wedding Anniversaries

Tim & Lyn Hinz—February 1st
 Ken & Sarah Weber—February 3rd
 Klaus & Elsa Winkelmann—February 17th

Baptismal Birthdays

Kathy Wacker—February 1st
 Marion Wilson—February 8th
 Dennis Oeltjenbruns—February 24th
 Eliot Boyles—February 26th
 Amber Jordan—February 27th
 Tyler Jordan—February 27th
 Kenny Andasola—February 27th
 Jackson Heinecke—February 28th
 Sarah Tunget—February ?

THE LORD'S MINISTRY

Redeemer Lutherans attendance figures and financial blessings that were given for the month of January to further maintain the Lord's ministry.

Date	Attendance	Communicants	Offerings Received Gen./Designated Funds	Needed Operating Budget
1-7 - 2024	95	64	\$3,188.00/\$1,680.00	\$4,455.06
1-14 -2024	83	64	\$2,295.00/\$5,055.00	\$4,455.06
1-21 -2024	82	70	\$2,262.00/\$48.00	\$4,455.06
1-28-2024	82	69	\$5,849.00/\$1,125.00	\$4,455.06