



Something is Missing

Devotion

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house" (Genesis 28:20–22a).

Something is missing. Have you ever felt that way? You walk into a room and something is different. Something is **wrong**. Something is missing. Maybe you notice it right away or maybe it takes a while for you to finally figure it out. How does it feel when you are not sure what is missing? How does it feel when you figure it out? What if you can't change the fact that something is missing?

I am fortunate to have the hymnal that belonged to my great-grandmother. She grew up in Germany and moved to the United States because she met, and eventually married, an American who was in Germany visiting extended family. Back in those days, there were no hymnals in many churches so each family brought their own hymnal to the Divine Service. When teens were confirmed, they often received both a Bible and a hymnal with their names engraved on the front covers as a gift. These were very practical and well-used gifts.

In my great-grandmother's hymnal are all types of family "treasures": receipts from the 1960s, and clippings from church bulletins. She died when I was very young so all the small items tucked away in her hymnal help shape in my mind who she was. She circled different words or whole verses in her 1941 *The Lutheran Hymnal*. I smiled as I paged through the hymns, amazed at how many I still sing and love very much.

Then I spotted it: something was missing. Apparently, she had loved a verse of a hymn **so much** that she had cut it out. In fact, the hymn number and verse number were written on the back of a handwritten gas station receipt that I found elsewhere in the hymnal.

What happened to this verse that had been removed from the hymnal? I wish I knew. Did she send it to someone? Did she tuck it into a note for someone? Did she place it by her bed when she was in the nursing home? Was it buried with her? So many possibilities, but I don't have any answers. I just knew that every time I would open the hymnal, I would notice that something was missing.

I finally had to look up the words to "O God of Jacob, by Whose Hand," TLH 434, verse 5. It was written by John Logan (1748-1788), although he did not write stanzas 1-4.

Now with the humble voice of prayer
Thy mercy we implore;
Then with a grateful voice of praise
Thy goodness we'll adore.

Aren't those beautiful words? No matter what is happening in our life, God is right there with us! We can call upon God with a "humble voice of prayer" at any time. We can seek God's mercy at any time. We may have regrets. We may have struggles. Although our sins weigh us down and magnify our troubles, God's goodness towards us is always there! Through our Savior, Jesus, we know that we are forgiven. We are loved and are shown mercy. We are equipped to give glory to God and to serve others in His name.

In case you're wondering, the entire hymn is filled with images of God's love and provision to His

children. Here are its other stanzas:

1. O God of Jacob, by whose hand Thy people still are fed;
Who thro' this weary pilgrimage Hast all our fathers led.
2. Our vows, our prayers, we now present Before Thy throne of grace;
God of our fathers, be the God Of their succeeding race.
3. Thro' each perplexing path of life Our wand'ring footsteps guide;
Give us each day our daily bread And raiment fit provide.
4. Oh, spread Thy covering wings around Till all our wanderings cease
And at our Father's loved abode Our souls arrive in peace.

“O God of Jacob, by Whose Hand” TLH 434
Text: Genesis 28:20-22
Author: Philip Doddridge, 1737, stanzas 1-4
Recast by John Logan, 1781, and stanza 5

Is something missing in your life? God knows our needs, forgives our sins, and promises to give us eternal life because we believe in Jesus as our Savior. It is OK to struggle. It is OK to seek. It is OK to cry out to God for mercy. He will show His grace and provide so we may lift our grateful voices in praise to Him. We pray that God will grant it. Amen.

Prayer: Gracious God and Father, thank You for all the good things with which You daily provide us. Thank You for never being missing in our lives but instead, always present as You actively guide and sustain us through all times and circumstances. Thank You for the grace and mercy You lavish on us for Jesus' sake. By the power of the Holy Spirit, keep our focus on you all our days until we reach our heavenly home. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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