

I Come to the Garden Alone
A favorite of Barbara Balseiro and Janet Weidman
LEVAS Hymnal #69; sung as Offertory Hymn on July 19, 2020

You may enjoy listening to one of these as you read the history and story of this much-loved hymn.

Mahalia Jackson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2eSfKqMRbA

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcRCa7SDhxA>

And then join us at 10 a.m. on Sunday, July 19 to enjoy Vincent’s rendition of this hymn. If you are at home, you can sing along; for those in church, we will simply hum, nod heads, tap our toes. The broadcast is via FaceBook Live and recorded for future enjoyment. The words of the hymn are at the end of this article.

The words and tune (Garden) were both written by C. Austin Miles, (January 7, 1868 – March 10, 1946) of Lakehurst, New Jersey. Attending the University of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, Mr. Miles abandoned his pharmacy career in 1892 and turned his attention to gospel music and publishing.

In his own words, he describes the birth of this hymn:

One day in March, 1912, . . . I drew my Bible toward me; it opened at my favorite chapter, John 20 [1-18] . . . That meeting of Jesus and Mary Magdalene had lost none of its power to charm.

As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary’s life, when she knelt before her Lord, and cried, “Rabboni!”

My hands were resting in the Bible while I stared at the light blue wall. As the light faded I seemed to be standing at the entrance of a garden, looking down a gently winding path, shaded by olive branches. [The author then describes the arrival of Mary, Peter, and John as they gathered at the tomb, followed by the appearance of Jesus.]

I awakened in full light, gripping the Bible, with muscles tense and nerves vibrating. Under the inspiration of this vision I wrote as quickly as the words could be formed the poem exactly as it has appeared.

Some years later, Mr. Miles' great-granddaughter said that he wrote these words "in a cold, dreary and leaky basement in Pitman, New Jersey that didn't even have a window in it let alone a view of a garden."

The song was first published in 1912 and popularized during the Billy Sunday evangelistic campaigns of the early twentieth century. The hymn is loved by multitudes and not loved by a multitude of others. Those who love it are drawn to the personal relation with Christ; those who oppose it often say it is too erotic and egocentric.

No matter where you find yourself in relation to the hymn, it has made its way into our lives for over 100 years through a variety of ways. In addition to the links above, some of the other voices who have recorded it over the years are: Roy Rogers and Dale Evans; Tennessee Ernie; Perry Como; Rosemary Clooney; Doris Day; Elvis Presley; Willie Nelson; Glen Campbell; Johnny Cash; and Alan Jackson. The hymn has also been used in the musical scores of a number of movies, such as: *The Ballard of the Sad Café; Wild River; Places in the Heart; Nashville; and The Lucky One.*

Read over the words, listen to a video, sing along on Sunday, and see where Mr. Miles' vision may take you.

1 I come to the garden alone,
While the dew is still on the roses;
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear,
The Son of God discloses.

Refrain

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

2 He speaks, and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing;
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing.

Refrain

3 I'd stay in the garden with Him
Though the night around me be falling;
But He bids me go through the voice of woe,
His voice to me is calling. **Refrain**



I am the Bread of Life
A favorite of Aletha Westerberg
1982 Hymnal #335; Sung as the Recessional Hymn on July 19, 2020

You may enjoy listening to this virtual choir sing “I am the Bread of Life while you read its story.” I chose this video as I think it speaks to the vastness of love for this hymn throughout the world...and I am fascinated by virtual choirs! The words, especially the pronouns may be different from the version you know but, Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0yUdXnfC5E>

First of all, many thanks to my friend and a wonderful musician, Alan Muench, organist at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in McMinnville, Oregon, who wrote this article originally for his parish newsletter:

If I had to select the one hymn I've heard the most people say is their favorite, without hesitation it would be “I am the bread of life.” With text referencing the Eucharist and the resurrection, and music that builds to a big crescendo in the refrain, one cannot help but sing with great zeal and enthusiasm.

The composer of both the text and music is Suzanne Toolan (b. 1927). She joined the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame, California in 1950 and taught music in Mercy High School. She has written about how “Bread of Life” came to be:

I wrote “I Am the Bread of Life” for a San Francisco archdiocesan event in 1964. I was teaching high school at the time and wrote the song during my free period. When the bell rang for the next class I decided I didn't like the music, so I tore it up and threw it in the wastepaper basket. My classroom was next to the infirmary, where the girls who didn't want to take tests or were otherwise unprepared for class went for a period or two until they were tracked down by an exasperated teacher. As I left my classroom, a freshman girl came out of the infirmary and said, “What was that? It was beautiful!” I went back into my classroom, took the manuscript out of the basket and taped it together. It has had a life of its own ever since.

Here is a five-minute video about her life that is very inspiring:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smc1yx6xTNC>

Here is the hymn as it appears in the 1982 Hymnal #335.

1. I am the bread of life,
They who come to me shall not hunger;
They who believe in me shall not thirst.
No one can come to me
Unless the Father draw them.

Refrain And I will raise them up,
And I will raise them up,
And I will raise them up on the last day.

2. The bread that I will give
Is My flesh for the life of the world,
And they who eat of this bread,
They shall live for ever,
They shall live for ever. **Refrain**

3. Unless you eat
Of the Flesh of the Son of Man
And drink of his blood,
You shall not have life within you.
You shall not have life within you. **Refrain**

4. I am the resurrection,
I am the Life,
They who believe in me,
Even if they die,
They shall live forever. **Refrain**

5. Yes, Lord, we believe
that you are the Christ,
the Son of God
who hast come into the world. **Refrain**