

Favorite Hymns for August 9, 2020

Procession Hymn #529 “In Christ there is no East or West” Tune: *McKee* *A favorite of Ray Utterback.*

Please note: this hymn is sung to at least two different tunes; one verse was dropped from the 1940 Hymnal in making the 1982 hymnal, which makes finding a YouTube recording that matches what we will sing on Sunday almost impossible. I am sure there is one out there; I simply couldn't find it. Nevertheless, enjoy this lovely hymn and its story. It carries much hope for our world today. See what you can find on YouTube if you like.

William Arthur Dunkerley (1852-1941) used John Oxenham as a pseudonym, which is the name authority used by the Library of Congress. Dunkerley, an Englishman, was a journalist, novelist, hymn-writer and poet. He used the pseudonym Julian Ross for journalism.

The poem was originally part of a libretto, “Darkness and Light,” prepared in 1908 for an exhibition for the London Missionary Society on the theme “The Orient in London.” He then included this poem in his collection, Bees in Amber (1913). This popular volume was rejected by publishers; when Oxenham self-published it, the book sold 285,000 copies. From here the hymn found its way into many English-language hymnals, beginning with England’s Songs of Praise (1931).

English literary scholar and hymnologist J.R. Watson states that the hymn takes its opening idea from Rudyard Kipling’s famous lines, “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” from “The Ballad of East and West,” published in Barrack-Room Ballads, and Other Verses (1892). However, Oxenham’s hymn is the antithesis of Kipling’s verse.

Carlton Young, (United Methodist hymnal editor) observes, “the theme of Oxenham’s hymn, one of the most durable hymnic statements of Christian unity in the twentieth century, is from Galatians 3:28: ‘There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ.’”

As a hymn on Christian unity, changes in attitude toward inclusive language affected the hymn as it appeared in hymnals. Editors felt that a hymn espousing Christian unity should reflect gender equality in its language, especially when drawing upon Galatians 3:28. This presented a problem in the original stanza three. Stanza three (now stanza two) has been rewritten and is what appears in our 1982 hymnal. The original stanza three is:

*Join hand, then, brothers of the faith,
Whate'er you race may be;
Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.*

Though originating in the missionary movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries, this hymn gratefully lacks the triumphalism and hegemonic assumptions of so many mission hymns of this

era. Perhaps the author's extensive travel helped him develop a sense of Christian unity beyond the racial and cultural differences that he observed. Indeed, the focus of this hymn has shifted from world missions in the early 20th century to a great hymn of Christian unity for the 21st-century church.

TUNE: *McKee* For many years, the standard tune for this text has been *St. Peter*, composed in 1836 by early American composer Alexander Reinagle. More recently, many hymnals have used a tune adapted from a spiritual by the famous African-American composer and songwriter, Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949). Dr. Young notes that the tune *McKee* was arranged from the chorus of "Done changed my name for the coming day" found in "Jubilee Songs" in *The Story of the Jubilee Singers* (1897). The tune was named for the rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in New York City, Elmer M. McKee, where Burleigh was the baritone soloist for over 50 years.

1 In Christ there is no East or West,
in him no South or North,
but one great fellowship of love
throughout the whole wide earth.

2 Join hands, disciples of the faith,
whate'er your race may be!
Who serves my Father as his child
is surely kin to me.

3 In Christ now meet both East and West,
in him meet South and North,
all Christly souls are one in him,
throughout the whole wide earth.



Sequence Hymn LEVAS #106 "Precious Lord"

A favorite of Brenda Penner and Betty McWhorter

Enjoy this lovely version of this hymn as sung by the great Mahalia Jackson

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

And though we don't have a recording of it, Brenda Penner said this about the hymn "I sang this song as a trio with two women I grew up with in Independence, MO."

Many hymns are conceived in the throes of tragedy. "Precious Lord" was written in Chicago in 1932 following the death of Thomas Dorsey's wife Nettie and infant son during childbirth.

Dorsey (1899-1993) was born in Georgia. His father was a Baptist preacher, and his mother a church organist and piano teacher. Known as the "Father of Black Gospel Music," Dorsey combined African American church hymns with blues and jazz. This "worldly" combination was not without controversy at first, but set the tone for gospel music for decades to come.

Dorsey put together the "Wild Cats Jazz Band" to play for Ma Rainey in 1925. His wife, Nettie, was Rainey's wardrobe mistress. After suffering a severe illness in 1926, Dorsey was converted in 1928 and became active in Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago. Beginning in 1932, he served as the church's choir director for forty years. Of his 1000 musical works, at least 200 were gospel songs. He promoted the gospel song through the formation of the National Association of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, serving as the organization's president. Black musicians during the pre-Civil Rights era often formed their own publishing companies in order to make their music available. He began the Thomas A. Dorsey Gospel Song Music Publishing Company, a publisher of inexpensive gospel blues music.

Even though he had hundreds of jazz and blues songs to his credit, he turned to gospel music, one of the first to use that term, following the tragic death of Nettie and their infant son in 1932. Dorsey provides an account of the circumstances surrounding the composition of this famous song:

"Back in 1932 I was 32 years old and a fairly new husband. My wife, Nettie and I were living in a little apartment on Chicago's Southside. One hot August afternoon I had to go to St. Louis, where I was to be the featured soloist at a large revival meeting. I didn't want to go. Nettie was in the last month of pregnancy with our first child. But a lot of people were expecting me in St. Louis. . . .

". . . In the steaming St. Louis heat, the crowd called on me to sing again and again. When I finally sat down, a messenger boy ran up with a Western Union telegram. I ripped open the envelope. Pasted on the yellow sheet were the words: YOUR WIFE JUST DIED. . . .

"When I got back, I learned that Nettie had given birth to a boy. I swung between grief and joy. Yet that night, the baby died. I buried Nettie and our little boy together, in the same casket. Then I fell apart. For days I closeted myself. I felt that God had done me an injustice. I didn't want to serve Him anymore or write gospel songs. I just wanted to go back to that jazz world I once knew so well. . .

"But still I was lost in grief. Everyone was kind to me, especially a friend, Professor Frye, who seemed to know what I needed. On the following Saturday evening he took me up to Malone's Poro College, a neighborhood music school. It was quiet; the late evening sun crept through the curtained windows. I sat down at the piano, and my hands began to browse over the keys."

Dorsey remembered an old pentatonic (five-note) melody from his Sunday School days, *Maitland* by George Allen (1812-1877), paired with the text "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone." Arranging this tune and adding his own words, "Precious Lord" became the most famous of his many gospel songs. He gave the song to Frye who introduced it to the choir at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church the next Sunday, an event that, Dorsey later remarked, "tore up the church." Martin Luther King, Sr. was the pastor of Ebenezer at this time, beginning his ministry there in 1931.

The three stanzas capture the grief not only of Dorsey, but also of any who have suffered significant loss. The incipit or opening line of stanza one, "Precious Lord, take my hand. . . .," indicates a suffering soul that is reaching out. The singer acknowledges that they are at the end of their rope: "I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm worn." Perhaps Dorsey was referring to Matthew 8:23-27, the narrative where Christ stills the storm, when he penned, "Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light."

Stanza two draws upon the imagery of a journey, one in which the "way grows drear." The traveler cries out, and once again reaches for the hand of Christ. The third stanza begins, "When the darkness appears," reminiscent of Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death . . ." By the time we reach the third stanza, the terrain has changed from a stormy sea (stanza one), a long road (stanza two), to a river of hope (stanza three). Upon singing, "at the river I stand," the singer reaches at last the final destination, the symbolic Jordan River. Each stanza concludes effectively with the refrain, "Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home," perhaps an image of the Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John.

"Precious Lord" has been recorded by many famous singers including Elvis Presley, Mahalia Jackson, Roy Rogers, and Tennessee Ernie Ford. Martin Luther King Jr. drew inspiration from this, his favorite song. It was sung at the rally in Memphis the night before the civil-rights leader's assassination and at his funeral. President Lyndon B. Johnson requested that "Precious Lord" be sung at his funeral. The song has been translated into more than 40 languages.

Dorsey was the first African American elected to the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame and the Gospel Music Association's Living Hall of Fame. Fisk University houses his archives as well as those of noted musicians W.C. Handy and George Gershwin.

"Take My Hand, Precious Lord" was inducted into the Christian Music Hall of Fame in 2007. It was also included in the list of Songs of the Century, by the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2012, Mahalia Jackson's recording of "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" was honored with the Grammy Hall of Fame Award.

Precious Lord, take my hand
Lead me on, let me stand
I'm tired, I'm weak, I'm worn:
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on to the light
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me on.

When my way grows drear, precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone;
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand, lest I fall,
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.

When the darkness appears and the night draws near,
And the day is past and gone;
At the river I stand,
Guide my feet, hold my hand
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on.



Offertory Hymn LEVAS #188

“When Peace Like a River” (Also known as “It is well with my soul”)

A favorite of Judy Atkinson and Janet Weidman.

Sung in their native language, the people of CSI East Parade Church Choir, Bangalore, India, present Nadhee Thulyam Shaanti (IT IS WELL) -

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

A wonderful virtual choir of young men and women

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qmo4qG26_iU

Horatio Gates Spafford (1828 – 1888) was a prominent American lawyer and Presbyterian church elder. He is best known for penning the Christian hymn *It Is Well With My Soul* following a family tragedy in which his four daughters died aboard the S.S. *Ville du Havre* on a transatlantic voyage.

Spafford invested in real estate north of Chicago in the spring of 1871. In October 1871, the Great Fire of Chicago reduced the city to ashes, destroying most of Spafford's investment and greatly affecting his family life. Two years after the devastation of the Great Chicago Fire, the family planned a trip to Europe. Late business demands (zoning issues arising from the Fire) kept Spafford from joining his wife and four daughters on a family vacation in England where his friend, the famous evangelist, D. L. Moody would be preaching.

On November 22, 1873, while crossing the Atlantic on the steamship *Ville du Havre*, the ship was struck by an iron sailing vessel killing 226 people, including all of Spafford's daughters. His wife, Anna, survived the tragedy. Upon arriving in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford that read "Saved alone." As Spafford sailed to England to join his wife, he wrote "It Is Well with My Soul."

The original manuscript has only four verses, but Spafford's daughter, Bertha Spafford Vester, who was born after the tragedy, said an additional verse was later added and the last line of the original song was modified. The verse below is the original fourth verse; it is omitted from the 1982 hymnal.

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
If Jordan above me shall roll,
No pain shall be mine, for in death as in life
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul. (Refrain)*

Following the sinking of the *Ville du Havre*, Anna gave birth to three children, Horatio Goertner, (1877), Bertha Hedges (1878) and Grace (1881). On February 11, 1880, Horatio died of scarlet fever at age three. This final tragedy, after a decade of financial loss and personal grief

accompanied by a lack of support from their church community, began Horatio's philosophical move away from material success towards a lifelong spiritual pilgrimage. Anna and Horatio Spafford soon left the Presbyterian congregation Horatio had helped build and hosted prayer meetings in their home. Their Messianic sect was dubbed "the Overcomers" by the American press.

In August 1881, the Spaffords went to Jerusalem as a party of 13 adults and three children to set up an American Colony. Colony members, joined by Swedish Christians, engaged in philanthropic work among the people of Jerusalem regardless of their religious affiliation and without proselytizing motives, gaining the trust of local Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities.

In Jerusalem, Horatio and Anna Spafford adopted a teenager, Jacob Eliahu (1864–1932), who was born in Ramallah into a Turkish Jewish family. As a schoolboy, Jacob Spafford discovered the Siloam inscription, an inscribed text found in the Siloam tunnel which brings water from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam, located in the City of David in East Jerusalem neighborhood of Shiloah or Silwan. The inscription records the construction of the tunnel, which has been dated to the 8th century BCE on the basis of the writing style. It is the only known ancient inscription from the wider region which commemorates a public construction work.

The music, written by Philip Bliss, was named after the ship on which Spafford's daughters died, *Ville du Havre*.

1 When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sebillows roll;
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Refrain:

It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

2 Though satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has shed His own blood for my soul. ***Refrain***

3 My sin oh, the bliss of this glorious thought
My sin not in part, but the whole
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! ***Refrain***

4 And, Lord, hast the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,

“Even so” it is well with my soul. *Refrain*