

Like I said, I am *super*excited about this weekend. It will be different. I want to just start reading a passage of Scripture together from Colossians. I want us to read it together, so this is how we're going to start the morning. Colossians 3:16. Let's read this together. **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."**

So I'm really excited about this passage for two reasons. One, if you notice, there is a comma between wisdom and singing, which tells me this is one thought, not two. There is a call to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, to teach and admonish, and also, to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. But what I think, a lot of times, some come into church thinking is, "I'm ready to hear songs, and then I'm ready to hear the Word of God."

But what we've been doing at The Village, and what we've been trying to do for the last 10 years, and pleading with you, and with the Lord, to help us with is that when I stand on stage with a guitar each week, the Word of Christ is dwelling in me richly as I sing songs, and as Matt stands here with his face mic, and he teaches, the Word of Christ dwells richly as words come out of his mouth.

As our volunteers hold babies right now, and as Thomas Hussey is leading worship in Kids' Village and Matt McCauley is teaching there, and as people were waving you in and parking you, the Word of Christ is dwelling in them richly, to teach and admonish and to use their gifts to make much of the Lord. So I'm excited this is all one thought, that what we do when we sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs is letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly and to teach and admonish one another as we do this. So I'm excited about that.

The second thing I'm excited about, and where we're going this weekend, is the word *hymns*. We're going to take the word *hymns*. We are going to blow it up this weekend, and we are going to talk about hymns. I'm going to explain a little bit. I'm going to explain the history and theology of a couple of hymns, and then we're going to sing a couple of hymns. Then, I'm going to come back out and explain the theology and history of a couple of hymns, and we're going to sing a couple more hymns. It may go horribly this weekend, but I'm hoping it goes really, really well.

When I came here 10 years ago, I was 23 years old. Some of you who have passed by the year 23 know if you look back on the year 23, you probably think of a lot of pride. You probably had a ton of pride, and life has just beaten out of you and chiseled away a lot of that pride. If you haven't hit 23 yet, just trust me; it's coming. I was 23, and I was singing songs like "Be Glorified" and "Famous One" of that time, the rock 'n' roll late 90s Christian songs and having a good time. I had that sense of pride in me, where I was like, "This is who I am. This is what I do. The older generation can just get on board." I just had that mentality.

I can remember I was a week and a half into working at The Village Church, 10 years ago, and this elderly man approaches me after the service. My heart started beating faster, and I started getting nervous. "What if he's going to hate me?" His name was Dell Steele. He has since passed. He was chairman of our elders and an encouragement and a bright light and wisdom for the staff for years, especially in our early years.

Dell walked up to me and put his arm around me, and he said, "Son, I didn't like the music very much." He said, "But here's what I liked. I watched the church respond to the Lord. I watched them lift their hands, and I watched them sing. As long as the church continues to do that, I'll start to like your kind of music." In that moment, my heart broke.

When I finished that conversation, I went to my office, and I opened up the hymnal that had sat dusty on my desk. I started thinking through the hymns and reading the richness of the hymns. I didn't grow up in church, so I didn't know these hymns. I didn't know the melodies, so some in here, who have been here for a while, know I've changed some of the melodies to some of the hymns that I've rewritten.

So I apologize for that. I never knew the original melodies, but for the first time I really soaked in how wonderful these hymns are. So today we're going to sing great hymns; I think some of the best hymns ever written. Hymns like "Amazing Grace," "Be Thou My Vision," "All Creatures of Our God and King," "How Great Thou Art," "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." These kinds of hymns. Like I said, we're going to teach on theology and history.

When I started thinking about how to teach on hymns, I thought probably the best way to communicate the richness of hymns is not only theology, because theology is important, but history. So we know theology is important. Each week, if you've been here for any time at all, you've seen when we sing songs there's the lyric of the song, and then there is Scripture at the bottom for most slides. That's because I want us to realize this is way more than poetry that we're singing. This is actually Scripture.

Years ago, I discipled a boy named Ethan. We were going through the book *Desiring God* together. We got stuck in chapter 3 talking about spirit and truth. So when Jesus approaches the woman at the well in John 4:23, he says, "There's coming a time when real worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

These are the worshippers the Father seeks." So we made it our aim to find out what "spirit and truth" means. So *truth*, the Word of Christ dwelling in us richly; *spirit*, that word coming out in obedience and lifted hands and singing and shouts and claps, and all these things.

So I made a point one Sunday to sit behind Ethan. He didn't know I was sitting behind him. I sat behind him in the pew, and the orchestra started up with the song "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." I just watched Ethan as he sang. Please don't think of me as creepy. I don't usually watch people while they sing, just, "Hey... Hey..." I don't do that, but because of where we had been and me discipling him, walking through... I was taking some notes.

I noticed, oddly enough, that on the part where it says, "Bring forth the royal diadem," Ethan's hands shot up in the air. "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord..." I was like, "I wonder if he knows what a diadem is?" So after church, because we had been going through this all summer, I felt the freedom to pull him aside, and not embarrass him, but just to make a point to say, "Hey, do you know what a diadem is, because your arms shot up when we sang, 'Bring forth the royal diadem'?"

A smile came to his face because he kind of realized what I was trying to get out of him. He was like, "Explain it to me." So I said, "This is so cool, because a diadem is what Jesus is going to wear when he rides in on a white horse in Revelation 19. He's going to have *King of Kings* tattooed on his thigh, and he's going to come in victorious with a royal diadem, a crown, upon his head. He's going to take those who he loves, his sons and daughters, home.

So knowing the truth of that, when you sing now, 'Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all,' that has a different feel to it now, right?" So we know truth is important, but history is important as well. Let me explain. There was a man named Horatio Gates Spafford who owned a lot of property on the shores of Lake Michigan. In 1871 the Great Chicago Fire happened, and it burned up much of his real estate. After seeing a counselor, his counselor advised him to go on a vacation with his family, to get away, get out for a bit. So that's what he did.

He put his wife and his four daughters on a ship and sent them to England. He knew his friend and preacher, Dwight L. Moody, was preaching later that week in England, so he sent his family over. He needed three days to finish up some business, and his plan was to meet them in London to listen to Dwight L. Moody, and to sit under his ministry, and to hang out with him.

Well, on November 22, 1873, an English ship struck his family's ship, sinking it in 12 minutes, killing his four daughters. His wife made it to Wales, and she cabled him the message, these two words, "Saved alone." Distraught, he boarded a boat headed to that spot and asked the captain of the boat if he would

stop in the area where he thought his daughters died. The captain told him, "This is where we think the ship sank," and so they dropped anchor. Horatio went down to the bottom of the boat and penned these words.

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Knowing the history of that adds so much more, right? As we sing those words, it really helps us understand where the author was coming from. So I'm excited to teach some history, to teach some theology. So that's what we're going to do today. I need to let you know two things before we really get started. There's going to be a lot of standing and sitting, so you've been warned.

You know now there's going to be a lot of standing and sitting. We don't do this every weekend. If this is your first time at The Village, don't freak out. Second, a couple of the melodies have been tweaked a bit, so don't let that bother you too much, if that is a thing that bothers you, because this weekend is going to be about the glory of God...amen...not about melody. This is going to be about the glory of God, and so I'm excited. So let's get started.

First song we're going to talk about is "All Creatures of Our God and King." It was written by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1225 (that was 788 years ago), in Italy. Saint Francis was born in 1182 in Central Italy to a wealthy merchant. He went off to war, he was captured, and shortly after his release, he was saved; he came to faith.

At that time, he renounced his wealth. He moved out into the countryside. He walked the countryside speaking the gospel to whoever he could, just living a very simple life. He loved nature, so if you've ever seen a picture of Saint Francis, you may have seen a picture of him with a bird on his shoulder, or maybe a squirrel by his feet. He loved being in nature.

Once, he hiked through Italy's Spoleto valley, and he came upon a flock of birds. When they didn't fly away, he decided to preach them a little sermon. "My brother and sister birds," he reportedly said, "you should praise your Creator and always love him. He gave you feathers for clothes, wings to fly, and all other things you need. It is God who made your home in thin, pure air. Without sowing or reaping, you receive God's guidance and protection."

The flock, it is said, then went off rejoicing. That perspective is reflected in a hymn that was written right before Saint Francis' death, in 1225, entitled "Song of Brother Sun," or what we know now to be "All Creatures of Our God and King." It exhorts all creation to worship God...the clouds and the birds and the rushing wind and sun and moon. Exhorting clouds and birds, and all these things, to praise the Lord may sound a little strange, but it's biblical. Psalm 148 says:

"Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and maidens together, old men and children! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD!"

So all creatures, all mankind, should bring their praise to God, for this is why we exist. "All Creatures of Our God and King." What we'll sing, right after this, is, "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow," or what many of us know to be "The Doxology." A *doxology* is simply just a short hymn of praise; it's a giving of glory to God. The title of this particular doxology is "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow." It was written by Thomas Ken in 1674, in England.

Thomas was born in 1637. His parents died when he was a young boy, and his half-sister and her husband raised him. They put him in an all-boys school called Winchester College. He graduated from Winchester and went on with his life. He ended up coming back years later after being ordained in the ministry. This time he came back as a chaplain.

He had some boys he was over as the chaplain, and to encourage their devotional time, he wrote two hymns. This was revolutionary in England at this time because there were no hymns in England at this time. The churches in England were singing psalms, usually chanting psalms, or speaking them, but no hymns. He's what's regarded as England's first hymn writer. So he suggested the boys use these hymns to encourage their devotional life. So he wrote one hymn for the morning and one hymn for the evening.

The morning hymn had three stanzas, beginning with...

*Awake, my soul, and with the sun
Thy daily stage of duty run;
Shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise,*

To pay thy morning sacrifice.

The evening hymn included this verse.

*All praise to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light!
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Beneath Thine own almighty wings.*

Both hymns ended with this common stanza, which has since become the most widely sung verse in all the world.

*Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

Moses, in Deuteronomy 28:2, tells the Israelites, **"And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God."** "Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow." Next, "Praise Him, all creatures here below; praise Him above, ye heavenly host." In Luke, a multitude of heavenly hosts joined an angel in praising God saying, **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"**

Psalm 148:2 says, **"Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!"** "Praise Him above, ye heavenly host." The last line of this hymn. "Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." *Holy Ghost*... The word *ghost* may not be in a lot of your vocabulary. These days, this term *ghost* is usually used to mean a dead person, but in these days we're talking about, *ghost* was actually an Old English word meaning *gast*, or spirit.

So in the seventeenth century, there was little difference between their words *ghost* and *spirit*. So we're going to keep *ghost* in there. Now we know the history of it. Thomas Ken died on March 19, 1711. He was buried at sunrise. The doxology was sung at his funeral. So I'm excited now, 300 years later, to sing the same words together.

Yesterday, as the band was rehearsing, I was able to experience the things I'm praying the Holy Spirit would allow you to experience this weekend. I was in the greenroom. I had my notes, and I had this stand. I was preaching to my fake church, as I looked to the walls of the green room, pretending to look in your faces. I walked out as they were singing "All Creatures..."

I'd just finished preaching the history of "All Creatures..." I walked out, and I just wept. As I thought about the history and the impact it had on Saint Francis, and him walking through nature and seeing and taking Psalm 148, and all those things combining together. So I'm praying this would happen for you, and continue, not just in song, but in all of life. So I'm excited to keep going with this.

The next song is "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," written by Isaac Watts in 1707, in England. Isaac wrote many of his hymns at a church called Above Bar Congregational Church. That's a strange title to me. I don't know if you have to be at a certain level to be a member, or... I don't understand the name of that church, but regardless, he was at Above Bar Congregational Church in Southampton, England.

In 1707, he decided to move to London and join another church there. He received a letter from his brother encouraging him to publish some of the hymns he had written. For some reason, he waited, and finally, met Mr. Lawrence, a publisher. He sold "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" for 10 pounds, which is, roughly, \$15.

It was obviously an instant success. The song was inspired by Galatians 6:14. It was originally titled "Crucifixion to the World, by the Cross of Christ." Many consider it the finest hymn in the English church. Charles Wesley, a great and wonderful hymn writer, reportedly said he wished he would have written that song more than any of his other hymns. "When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died," the song says.

Well, Galatians 6:14 says, **"But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."** The cross is not the thing we worship. There's a word called *metonymy*, and so when we say things like, "The White House said today, 'Da-da, da-da,'" well, the White House is not actually speaking, right? When Jesus says, "This cup shall pass" and the "new covenant," it's not an actual cup. So the same here. "I boast in the cross. I boast in Jesus."

The next line says, "My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride." Well, Philippians 3 says, **"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count *everything* as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ..."**

Finally, in the second verse it says, "See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e'er such love and sorrow meet..." Did this ever happen more than this? "...or thorns compose so rich a crown?" Matthew 27 says, **"And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting**

together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they spit on him..."

This is the Creator who made the spit in their mouths, who actually formed the spit, and they are now spitting it on the King of Kings. **"...and took the reed and [they] struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him."** "...His hands, His feet, His head, sorrow and love flow mingled down!"

Our next hymn is one you might know called "Amazing Grace." The author was John Newton. It was written in 1779, in England. John Newton pretty much personified the word *wretch*, which is right there at the beginning of that song. He was forced into the Royal Navy. He deserted the Royal Navy. They caught him, they captured him, and they flogged him. They put him back in, and he escaped again.

This time he put himself in with the Atlantic slave trade. So he's on these boats, and captains of the slave boats he was on have reportedly said he was the most vile man they'd ever met in their lives. These are captains of slave ships saying he's the most vile man they'd ever met. So he must have been awful. They said he would make up words that were so vile that they could hardly hear them. This guy was rough.

In 1748, there was a violent storm, and where he had just been standing, a man was swept overboard. So he tied himself to the boat, for the next, it says, 11 hours. The boat rocked back and forth, the storm not relenting. At that point, Newton said, "If this will not do, then Lord have mercy upon us!" This was a moment that sparked his spiritual conversion because, strangely enough, for the next six years, he remained in the slave trade.

At the end of the six years, he began studying Christian theology. He was ordained in the Church of England in 1764 and wrote hymns with the famous poet and hymn writer William Cowper. The song debuted in print in 1779. The original title, funnily enough, was not "Amazing Grace," but "Faith's Review and Expectation." I'm glad the title changed.

The song was based on Newton's study of 1 Chronicles 17. It says, **"Then King David went in and sat before the LORD and said, 'Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And this was a small thing in your eyes, O God.'"** Ephesians 2 says, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."** This is about grace, not about what we can do for him.

Verse 1 says, "That saved a wretch like me!" Romans 9 says, **"What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for**

destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory..." Amen.

Verse 3 says, "The Lord has promised good to me." Psalm 23 says, **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."** Finally, verse 4 says, "The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forbear [or will refrain or cease] to shine; but God, who called me here below, will be forever mine."

Revelation 22. **"And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."** "Amazing Grace" carries the message that forgiveness and redemption are possible, regardless of sins committed, and that the soul can be delivered from despair because of his grace and mercy, because he died for us...his amazing grace.

How's it going? Is everybody okay? Is it good? All right. Great. Okay. Our next song is "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," written by Robert Robinson in 1758, in England. All these were written in England. Robert had a rough beginning. His father died. His mother just couldn't handle him, so she moved him to London, where everybody else goes. She had these hopes for him to become a barber. He decided not to be a barber, but instead to be a drunkard and join a gang. So that's the writer of "Come, Thou Fount..."

He definitely had a troubled adult life. There was one point where he drank a lot, went to see a fortune-teller, and became so disturbed, he walked out, and he convinced his buddies to attend an evangelistic meeting that night. The person who was preaching was George Whitefield. Whitefield was one of the greatest preachers of all time. He was preaching that night from Matthew 3.

Matthew 3 says, **"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?'"** Bursting into tears, Whitefield reportedly exclaimed. "O my hearers, the wrath to come! The wrath to come!" Well, Robinson immediately sobered up. On December 10, 1755, he came to faith. He entered the ministry and wrote a hymn for his sermon on Pentecost Sunday entitled "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." It has been a favorite in the church ever since.

The first part of the verse says, "Come, Thou Fount of every blessing." Psalm 36 says, **"For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light."** Ephesians 1. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."** "Come, Thou Fountain of every blessing."

The second part of verse one, "Teach me some melodious [or pleasant-sounding] sonnet [or little song], sung by flaming tongues above." Acts 2 says, "**And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind...**" This is the Holy Spirit's power. "**...and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.**" They were the disciples, and they were probably sitting in the upper room. "**And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.**" That would have been awesome to see!

Verse 2 says, "Here I raise my Ebenezer; here by Thy great help I've come." I teach at a lot of worship conferences, and I'll stand before the men and women at those conferences, and I'll say, "How many of you have sung 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing,' more than 50 times?" The majority of the room raises their hands, of course.

So I'll say then, "How many people know what an Ebenezer is?" Like two percent of the room raise their hands. There's no judgment from me because, literally, when I first started coming to church in 1996, when I got saved, I sang this song with the church, and I literally thought, "What is an old, crotchety man doing in a song?" I had no clue.

I really had no clue until I studied 1 Samuel, which says, "**Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, 'Till now the LORD has helped us.'**" So if you've been at The Village any time at all we've sung this song, you've probably seen a teaching. As the music plays, in the middle of the song, there are three slides that show up. It's something we typed in years ago, and it just helps you understand what an Ebenezer is, as you sing it. Let's talk about those now.

These slides say, "After a long period of sadness and trouble, a consequence of Israel's disobedience, Israel repented under the leadership of a new priest and judge, Samuel. They removed their idols, served God alone, and defeated the Philistines. God restored their political security, and the people, for their part, recommitted their hearts and minds to the Lord.

Samuel placed an Ebenezer, or a stone of help, at the place where this restoration began. He publicly dedicated it as a monument to God's help, God's faithfulness, God's eternal covenant. As the people got on with their lives, the stone stood there, visible to all who passed that way...a reminder of judgment and repentance, mercy and restoration. We serve a living God whose mercies are everlasting."

Verse 2 says, "He, to rescue me from danger, interposed His precious blood." That word simply means to put between, to intervene. So what Christ did, when he died on the cross and rose from the grave, is he stood between us and the Father. So when the Father sees us, he sees Jesus now. So his blood has intervened. It has been put between. It is interposed.

Verse 3 says, "Let Thy goodness, like a fetter [or like a chain], bind my wandering heart to Thee. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love." So as you're singing this, in a minute, think about Robert Robinson and the life he lived (the debauchery, the drunkenness, and all that) and him, later on in life, writing, "Prone to wander... Even now God I feel it. Even with salvation, I feel prone to wander, prone to leave the God I love, so chain me to yourself."

As you're singing it, not only think of Robert Robinson, but think of yourself, because we are all sinners...all of us. None of us are good, not one, but the grace of Jesus. That is our only hope, our only joy, and... Amen! Yeah. Praise the Lord. When we're singing, "Let Thy goodness, like a [chain], bind my wandering heart to Thee," we're literally asking God to chain us to him through his goodness. Not only does this line reiterate his goodness, but through it, we ask God to make it so that we can never leave him. "God, chain us to yourself."

Our next hymn is one of my favorites; it's called "Be Thou My Vision." The one commonly attributed to the authorship is a man named Dallan Forgaill, from the eighth century. That was 1,200 years ago. We're about to sing words that were written 1,200 years ago, in Ireland. Someone else came from Ireland, a certain Saint Patrick, that you may know. Saint Patrick was born in AD 373 in Scotland. I never knew that.

In studying this, it was interesting to know Saint Patrick was born in Scotland. Raiders descended on his home, and they stole him away to Ireland, where they kept him as a slave. He was released back to Scotland. When he was 16, he reportedly told his parents, "I cannot get rid of this nagging from the Lord that I'm supposed to go back to the Druids, and the raiders, and the lost in Ireland and preach the gospel."

Obviously his parents were saying no, but he went back. He stepped back into the darkness of Ireland, where there had not been gospel preaching, and he ended up planting 200 churches and baptizing over a hundred thousand people. I'm telling you about Saint Patrick's history because what he did, his work, has endured several centuries later, so people like Dallan can write words that we can sing today, that preachers are preaching sermons today in Ireland, through the work of the Lord, through Saint Patrick.

This hymn was translated to English in 1905 by Mary Elizabeth Byrne, a scholar in Dublin, while Eleanor Hull took those translated words and put rhyme and meter to them. It was then set to a traditional Irish folk song called "Slane." It was named after a hill in Ireland where Saint Patrick is said to have defiled the Irish king's edict 1,500 years ago that restricted the lighting of candles, or Paschal fire, on Easter Eve.

Verse 1 says, "Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart." Psalm 119 says, **"Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life**

in your ways." "Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart; naught be all else to me, save that Thou art."

That's a little confusing for our language. This is what it means. "May everything else, except what you are, be nothing to me."

In verse 2, "Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word." First Corinthians 1 says, "**And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption...**" Finally, one of my favorite verses of all time, verse 4. "Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise, Thou mine Inheritance, now and always." It goes on to say, "Thou and Thou only [or you and you only], first in my heart, High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art."

Proverbs 11 says, "**Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.**"

Ephesians 1 says, "**...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...**" So riches, we pay no attention to; we heed them not. The empty praise of man, we don't pay attention to that. Our inheritance, our joy, is found in God.

Our next hymn is "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," author Thomas Chisholm, in 1923, in Kansas. Thomas had a difficult adult life. He struggled with an illness most of his life. He tried to work to raise some money but always found himself back in bed with his illness. After coming to faith at age 27, Thomas found great comfort in the Scriptures and especially in Lamentations 3:22-24, the fact that God was faithful to him, that he was his strength in times of illness and in times of need, to provide for him.

With this, I want to encourage some of you, if you may be struggling with an illness, with pain, or with suffering, to take great hope in this passage and in the Scriptures as a whole, as Thomas did. This was one of his favorite Scriptures. I imagine he read it hundreds of times, and getting to the middle of this, what we're about to read, one day, the Lord gave him this great old hymn. "**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore, I will hope in him.'**"

He wrote this song as a celebration of God's faithfulness in his life but admits there was no dramatic story behind the writing of the hymn. Although, I think what has happened with the Lord using his illness and reading the Scriptures to be pretty dramatic...what he wrote down. Verse 2 tells us of God's faithfulness revealed in creation.

The seasons, the sun and moon and stars, all continue on their courses perfectly, orderly, quietly, guided by God's faithful hand without any help from us. Verse 3 reminds us of God's faithfulness revealed in our

lives. He pardons all our sins, fills us with peace, assures us of his presence, gives us strength, hope, and blessing, too numerous to count.

Now for our last hymn of the day, "How Great Thou Art," by Carl Boberg in 1885, in Sweden. He was a 26-year-old Swedish minister when he wrote the poem in 1885, called "O Store Gud," or "O Mighty God," as it was originally titled. The inspiration for the poem came when he was walking home from church in Sweden and witnessed a huge storm in the bay.

According to J. Irving Erickson, "Carl Boberg and some friends were returning home...where they had participated in an afternoon service. Nature was at its peak that radiant afternoon. Presently, a thundercloud appeared on the horizon, and soon, sharp lightning flashed across the sky. Strong winds swept over the meadows and billowing fields of grain.

The thunder pealed in loud claps. Then rain came in cool fresh showers. In a little while the storm was over, and a rainbow appeared. When Boberg arrived home, he opened the window and saw the bay...like a mirror before him... From the woods on the other side of the bay, he heard the song of a thrush...the church bells were tolling in the quiet evening. It was this series of sights, sounds, and experiences that inspired the writing of the song ["How Great Thou Art"].

Deuteronomy 32 says, **"For I will proclaim the name of the LORD; ascribe greatness to our God!"**

Isaiah 45 says, **"I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host."** Hebrews 1 says, **"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high..."** Let's read together Psalm 145.

"I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness."

In verse 3 of this song, it says, "When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration, and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!'" One last Scripture. Let's read this together. First Thessalonians says:

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord."

© 2013 The Village Church