

Scripture and Devotional

31 July 2022

Introduction to the Scripture:

Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Mary, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, and Simeon all sing to the Lord and have at least a part of their song recorded in the Bible. We also recognize that there are early hymns of the church recorded in a few of the Epistles including Philippians and Colossians. Our Scripture reading this morning is an early hymn about Christ's work found in Colossians 1:15-20

Scripture Reading Colossians 1:15-20 CEB

Hymn about Christ's work

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation, ¹⁶ Because all things were created by him: both in the heavens and on the earth, the things that are visible and the things that are invisible. Whether they are thrones or powers, or rulers or authorities, all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He existed before all things, and all things are held together in him. ¹⁸ He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the one who is firstborn from among the dead so that he might occupy the first place in everything. ¹⁹ Because all the fullness of God was pleased to live in him, ²⁰ and he reconciled all things to himself through him — whether things on earth or in the heavens. He brought peace through the blood of his cross.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Devotional

According to the United Methodist Hymnal Society and *Chuck knows Church*, the three most popular hymns in our hymnal are “Amazing Grace,” “Here Am I, Lord,” and, “How Great Thou Art.”

You all remember the story of “Amazing Grace,” and how John Newton penned it as his testimonial to the saving power of Jesus. His tombstone reads, “John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and Libertine, a servant of slavers in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had so long labored to destroy.”

The story of “Here I Am, Lord,” is not as dramatic. Here I Am, Lord is probably one of the most well-known hymns that has crossed the divide between Catholics and Protestants.

Dan Schutte wrote this song in 1981. It is based on the message found in Isaiah 6:8 and 1 Samuel 3. In Isaiah we see the Lord God Almighty asking whom He shall send and Isaiah responding positively to God's call. In his response, Isaiah says, “Here I am, send me”.

Schutte wrote the song at age 31 when he was studying theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. He was requested to compose, on short notice, a piece for the ordination mass of a deacon, incorporating in the lyrics God's word, of Jesus as the light, and the bread and wine of the eucharist.

Regardless of whether we are Protestants or Catholics, the message of this song is that Jesus is calling us and we need to respond. It is a call for service. A call for spreading the word and love of God to the people around us. No wonder this is a song that young and old have fallen in love with.

Although “How Great Thou Art,” is often associated with the crusades of Billy Graham, it originated in nineteenth century Europe. In 1886 Swedish pastor Carl Boberg was caught in a sudden thunderstorm while visiting a beautiful country estate. As the storm passed, giving way to the sweet songs of the birds and a green countryside glistening in sunlight, Boberg composed the nine original stanzas of this hymn.

In time the hymn was translated from Swedish into German and Russian. It was noticed by a British missionary who was serving in the Ukraine. That missionary, Rev. Stuart K. Hine, often sang the song with his wife as they ministered there. Later they translated three stanzas into English from the Russian and Hine added a fourth verse.

Why do we sing songs about God? The Wesleys, John and Charles, noted how the “tunes of the devil would be sung all the day long” and decided to put Godly lyrics to those catchy tunes. This way, people would be praising God and thinking about sound theology instead of drowning in worldly ideas. This same reasoning is given by radio stations that only play Christian music. If songs celebrating our faith are what plays in the background of our thoughts and lives as our soundtrack, perhaps we will more easily respond to the dilemmas and people in our everyday with grace, mercy, and Christian love.