

The History and Heritage of Some of the Great Children's Hymns **August 19, 2012 6:00PM**

Introduction.

For the past four years at this service it has been my custom to focus on some of the great old hymns and great old hymn writers. This year I decided to focus on the history and heritage that's ours through some of the great children's hymns.

Tonight we will sing the truth of our Biblical faith through some great old children's hymns. As we come to sing our faith and declare our faith in our Great God in invite you to stand as we are called to worship God:

Call to Worship:

Mark 10:14-16 [Jesus said], "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." 16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Opening Prayer:

Holy Father, thank you for the privilege that is ours as creatures to worship and praise so great a creator. And thank you for raising up your servants endowing them with anointed gifts of rendering your praise in poetry and verse so that your church could more fully sing your praises.

Stir up the hearts of your people, that we may joyfully sing your praises in this life and the life to come; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Children of the Heavenly Father.

The author of this beloved hymn is Caroline Wilhelmina Sandell-Berg (1832-1903) born in Sweden in 1832. She grew up to become Sweden's most popular and prolific author of over 650 Gospel hymns. She wrote so many that she became called "*the Fanny Crosby of Sweden.*"

She was raised in the home of a Swedish Lutheran pastor. As a young girl Lina (Lie-nah), as she was called, was afflicted with a paralysis and confined to her bed with little hope of recovery. But by God's grace by the age of twelve she slowly improved and was able to walk again. From this early childhood experience she began to write poetry to express her gratitude to God and at the age of sixteen published her first book of poems.

"Children of the Heavenly Father" was written in her teenage years and was one of her most famous hymn texts.

This hymn is a testimony to the spiritual upbringing she received in her home and is an encouragement to all of us parents to teach and train our children in the Scripture, especially those Scriptures that prepare us for suffering and trials and difficulties.

Read to your children Psalm 84 from which the first two stanzas are taken:

Psalm 84:1-5 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

3 Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young, at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah

5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you,

Read to your children Romans 8:35-39 from which stanza three is taken:

Romans 8:35, 37-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ...

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read to your children the story of Job from which the last stanza is taken:

Job 1:21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Hebrews 13:5-6 "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Matthew 12:34 Jesus said: "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."

The strength of Lina's faith and her solid grounding in Scripture and in the truths she wrote about was evident when at the age of 26 she witnessed the tragic drowning death of her father who fell overboard when the ship they were traveling on gave a sudden lurch. Two years later her mother died. Through all of life's challenges her faith was expressed in song, just as for us through life's challenges song often strengthens our faith.

You hear this in another one of her well-known popular hymns:

"Day by day and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear."

"Children of the Heavenly Father" is a confession of humble but confident trust in God's providence in the lives of his people. It reflects Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism – "in

life and in death I belong to my faithful Savior.” This hymn reminds us that Jesus loves us through it all.

Jesus Loves the Little Children

Jesus Loves the Little Children is probably second only to Jesus Loves Me as favorite children’s hymns. Those two are probably the first songs most children learn in church and are known by all children and adults alike.

It was written by Clare Herbert Woolston (1856-1927) who was a pastor in Chicago. That’s about all we know about him.

The tune has a bit more interesting history. It was written by George Frederick Root as an 1864 Civil War tune titled “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching.” Later the words of “Jesus Love the Little Children” were set to his tune.

The inspiration for the hymn comes from Scripture:

Matthew 19:14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:1-4 The disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” 2 And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them 3 and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Revelation 7:9 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Jesus died to redeem children from every race, every people group, every color of skin. He died for their parents too. If you are burdened with the guilt of moral sin, the blood Jesus shed on the cross can wash that sin away. By faith and repentance, you can become a new creature in Christ Jesus.

One of the great debates between me and Phama is over the words of this song. She was raised in a church that sang, “Red, brown, yellow, black and white.” I was raised in a church that sang, “Red and yellow, black and white.” With the dawn of the internet and Google of course I was able to prove to her that I was right. But I decided to concede to her that her way is better, it’s more inclusive of all the children of the world. I’m right, she’s better. So we’ll sing it her way.

He’s Got the Whole World In His Hands

“He’s Got the Whole World In His Hands” is a traditional American Spiritual. One tradition says it dates back to middle of the 19th century and was first published in 1927 in a paperback hymnal called *Spirituals Triumphant*.

Another tradition says it was written by a Cherokee Indian named Obie Philpot (born 1922) while he was in training as part of the military in WWII. When he was deployed, he left the lyrics to the song in his locker. Someone found the song and managed to have it put on the radio while he was at war.

It seems to be inspired by Job 12:10:

Job 12:10 *In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.*

It's a very simple song with a lot of repetition, but it's repetition that bears repeating. It's a joyful celebration of the sovereign providence and goodness of God.

(See Isaiah 40:12-23 and also Psalm 95.)

Tonight, we sing it as a preparation for prayer, reminding us that we are dependent on God and can depend on Him for everything because He is ruler over everything and in control of everything. He's the source and the sustainer. He holds everything in His hands. He's got you and me in His hands. Let's sing and pray to the God who is the supreme source of everything and let's surrender our lives to him.

Evening Prayer:

Creation, that great revelation of the power and intelligence of the designer and maker.

Henrietta Noteboom; Gert Vander Veen; Fransens; Eleanor Vander Griend
Great fair week.

Jesus Loves Me This I Know

On May 10, 1837 a panic hit the banks causing the first great economic recession in the United States leading to a depression that lasted five years. A well-known New York lawyer lost all his wealth during the 1837 depression and was forced to move his family. He found an old farm house up the Hudson River on Constitution Island, directly across the river from the West Point military academy. He had two daughters.

The sisters were Anna Bartlett Warner (1827-1915) and Susan B. Warner a very famous 19th century author. The two sisters took a great interest in the Military Academy in which their uncle Thomas Warner was a chaplain and professor. As a result they opened their home to the cadets and held Sunday school classes. Anna loved writing hymns and she wrote a new one each month for her students.

It's thought that Dwight D. Eisenhower was one of the last cadets to attend their classes. We don't know that that's true, but we know that it's possible. Eisenhower graduated in 1915, and Anna died in that same year.

When the sisters died, the Academy honored them by providing for them to be buried at the Academy cemetery -- an unusual exception to the rules -- high honor, indeed!

The sisters wanted to help their family's income, so they turned to writing novels and children's books to make money. Among the 18 books that they wrote together there was one particular one ("Say and Seal") in which one of the characters comforted a dying child by singing this song written by Anna.

This was the first time "Jesus Loves Me" appeared anywhere. Later, Anna published "Jesus Loves Me" as a hymn in her first hymnbook called "Original Hymns".

In 1862, **William B. Bradbury**, a music composer of gospel hymns, stumbled across the song's words and wrote the tune as we sing it today. He also added his own chorus: "Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, The Bible tells me so." Within months, this song raced across North America, and eventually all the continents of the world.

"Jesus Loves Me" became one of the most popular spiritual songs in the world. It has been translated into more languages than any other song. Missionaries love its simple and easy-to-remember chorus as a means of explaining the gospel in a clear, simple way.

Stories that have grown up around this song. One is that someone asked Karl Barth, the great theologian, to summarize the essence of the Christian faith in a few words, and he responded, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Another is that, at the height of persecution in Communist China when Mao Tse Tung tried to crush the church in China, a Christian sent a message out to a friend in 1972. The message escaped the attention of the censors, because it said simply: "The this I know people are well" -- but that phrase, the "this I know people" clearly identified the Christian community in China. It assured the friend that the church in China was alive and well.

"Jesus Loves Me" started out as a poem from a novel and is now one of the best-known hymns in the world. We, too, are "This I Know" people.

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

We give thanks to God the Father that our Savior, Jesus Christ, before he suffered, gave us this memorial of his sacrifice, until he comes again: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

The Teaching of the Lord's Supper

With these words our Lord commands all believers to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup in true faith and in the confident hope of his return in glory. In this Supper God declares to us that our sins have been completely forgiven through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself finished on the cross once for all. He also declares to us that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ, who with his very body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father, where he wants us to worship him. (Adapted from the Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 75, 80)

This bread which we break is the communion of the Body of Christ. The cup which we bless is the communion of His blood.

Prayer

"Ever-present God, as we lift these common elements to the throne of Your grace, we pray You'll bless those coming forth for Your food. May Your real spiritual presence be in the midst of this nourishment. For Christ's sake, Amen."

The Invitation

Come, therefore, all of you who are truly sorry for your sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus as your Savior, have confessed his name, and desire to live in obedience to him. Come eagerly and joyfully, with assurance of faith, for Christ, our risen Lord, the bridegroom of the church, invites you as guests to fellowship with him at his table. (Adapted from Psalter Hymnal, p. 975)

Minister: Take, *eat*, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Minister: Take, *drink*, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Thanksgiving

Let us pray: Almighty God, we give to you our humble and hearty thanks, that you in your great mercy have given us your Son to be our Savior from sin and to be our constant source of faith, hope, and love. We bless you for permitting us to show forth his death and to receive the communion of his body and blood through the holy sacrament. We praise you for uniting us more fully with the body of Christ, and for assuring us that we are heirs of your heavenly kingdom. Grant, we ask you, that our commemoration of his death may help to daily increase our faith, to establish our hope, and to strengthen our love. Enable us henceforth to live always for him who gave himself for us, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

His Banner Over Me Is Love

As is the case with many children's songs, the history and authorship of this one is unknown.

It draws on one text and reminds us of another.

Song of Solomon 2:4 He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing.

[Sing then be seated for a moment.]

Benediction.

Now having feasted at the table of our Lord and having been filled with spiritual food and spiritual song, go into the world in peace, knowing that the grace, mercy and love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit abide with you this day and always. Amen.

Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)

The Lord bless you and keep you;

[25] the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

[26] the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Go, My Children, With My Blessing

We began this evening with the familiar words of "Children of the Heavenly Father" by a Swedish girl raised in the home of a Lutheran pastor.

We conclude with a less familiar and more recent blessing song by a Slovak man, Jaroslav Vajda (VY-dah, April 28, 1919 – May 10, 2008), who was *also* raised in a Lutheran pastor's home. He was born in Ohio and was a prolific American hymn writer. He wrote his first hymn at 49 and by 89 had written over 200.

This hymn is an expansion of the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6:24-26, but is unusual because it's God's voice that's sung by the congregation to each other."

This hymn is set to the tune of a Welsh blessing.