

ST. DAVID'S (SHERMAN'S) UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
July 26, 2020

WELCOME

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Meet us here, holy God, to search our hearts and strengthen our spirits. May we find in these moments of worship the assurance we need to live triumphantly in the face of loss, discouragement, and suffering. Lead us, by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, to trust You and Your will for us. We believe that whatever happens You can bring some good from it. Show us, O God, the good You intend. AMEN.

OPENING HYMN: "O Love That Will Not Let Me Go"

O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Light that follow'st all my way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's glow its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to hide from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red,
Life that shall endless be.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE, MISS DEE

CALL TO CONFESSION

The Spirit helps us in our weakness, says Paul: for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. Hear our prayer of confession.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Searching God, in the book of Romans we are told that “all things work together for good for those who love God because we are called according to your purpose.” But we don’t act as though we believe that. We act as though we are the only one who has our interests at heart. Perhaps that’s because we don’t listen for Your voice telling us who we are and whose we are. We want to control our lives and the outcome of our lives. We don’t necessarily want what You have in mind for us. We covet wealth and material things, You ask us to love each other. We covet power; You tell us God loves the humble. Help us, God, to remember who gave us life.

TIME OF SILENT PERSONAL CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Sisters and brothers, remember the words of Paul: Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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. Alleluia! We are forgiven.

HOLY SCRIPTURES

Psalm 105

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.
- ² Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.
- ³ Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.
- ⁴ Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.
- ⁵ Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,
- ⁶ O descendants of Abraham his servant, O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones.
- ⁷ He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.
- ⁸ He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded for a thousand generations,

Isaiah 43:1-3

Israel's Only Savior

- ¹ But now, this is what the Lord says—
he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
- ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
- ³ For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Romans 8:26-39

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

More Than Conquerors

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SERMON: “Ever Present God”

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom, come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

We believe nothing can separate us from God's love.
In Christ, we are assured of God's care.

CLOSING HYMN: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more,
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow.
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my strength and shield,
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside.
Bear me through the swelling current,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee,
I will ever give to Thee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1. **BELL CHOIR REHEARSAL**, Monday, 7:00 PM in the Grove building.
2. **GRIEFSHARE:** No GriefShare meeting on Tuesday, July 28. Future meeting dates: August 4, 11, 18 and 25; September 1 and 8. Meetings are in the Grove building at 6:45 PM. Meetings are stand-alone. It is not necessary to be able to attend every meeting. Spread the word about GriefShare.
3. **CARING FOR OUR OWN OFFERING** (Month of August): There are times when personal finances are stretched to the limit, and during these times of unemployment and business closures, paying the bills can become critical for a family. We want to extend our church family's compassion and care by lending a helping hand in time of need to our members. Please give your donations to our Treasurer Harley Hartman or Linda Huggens before or after services. Either way, please indicate that the monies are for the Caring For Our Own offering.

4. **NEW HOPE MINISTRIES: Hanover Help-A-Friend Event!** Friday, July 31, 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM at 135 Baltimore Street, Hanover, PA. New Hope Ministries is teaming up with our friends at Happy 95.3/1280 and will be LIVE on air talking about all the programs we offer at our Hanover Center located at 135 Baltimore Street. Our Hanover Center will be open with program information, housing assistance application, and free school supplies for families. Plus: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, In-person, socially distanced Career Fair and 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM, a Budget Class (Participants must pre-register and upon completion of class will receive a gift card to a local retailer.) Please register by calling (717) 698-3365 (x3). The event is free and open to the public! *Please note: Based on CDC recommendations, face masks are required on site.*
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The Story Behind O Love, That Wilt Not Let Me Go

George Matheson (1842-1906) provides us with an account of the origins of one of the most beloved hymns of the late 19th century: "My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan on the evening of the 6th of June, 1882. . . . Something happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering. It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself.

"I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high. I have never been able to gain once more the same fervor in verse."

This hymn was published in 1882 while he was in Innellan, Argyllshire. Though some have speculated, we are not sure of the cause of the intense suffering that led to the composition of this hymn. It was first published in the Church of Scotland monthly magazine *Life and Work* in January 1882 (some say 1883) and soon afterward in the *Scottish Hymnal* (1885).

Though nearly blind by age 18, Matheson became a brilliant student at Glasgow University. He never married, and his sister learned Greek, Latin and Hebrew to help him through his theological studies. She also helped with his pastoral responsibilities.

He served effectively as a minister in parishes in Glasgow, and in 1886 became the pastor of the 2,000-member St. Bernard's Parish Church in Edinburgh. Matheson authored several books on theology and one volume of poetry, *Sacred Songs* (1890). He was awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of Edinburgh in 1879 and the LL.D. from the University of Aberdeen in 1902.

Albert L. Peace (1844-1912), a well-known Scottish organist of his day, wrote the tune ST. MARGARET at the request of the Scottish Hymnal Committee. According to Peace, the tune came to him as quickly as the text had come to Matheson: "After reading it over carefully, I wrote the music straight off, and may say that the ink of the first note was hardly dry when I had finished the tune."

Each of the four stanzas begins with a key word—Love, Light, Joy and Cross—that are not only attributes of his relationship with Christ, but also names given to Christ. Love is a haven for a “weary soul” and is as deep as the “ocean.” The second stanza focuses on Light that illumines the way of the singer. Our “flickering torch” is augmented by the “sunshine’s blaze” of Christ, the Light of the world.

Stanza three is one of Joy—a joy that seeks for us “through pain.” The “rainbow” is a promise of hope following the rain indicating that “morn shall tearless be.”

The Cross is the theme of the concluding stanza. Through Christ’s suffering on the cross “blossoms red” are formed that lead to the birth of new life.

Citing the Handbook of the Church Hymnary (1951) by Scottish hymnologists James Moffat and Millar Patrick, Carlton Young notes that when Matheson “wrote ‘blossoms red’... he was thinking of the blossom that comes out of sacrifice—the sacrificial life which blossoms by shedding itself. ‘White’ is the blossom of prosperity, ‘red’ of self-sacrificing love.”

Dr. Hawn is professor of sacred music at Perkins School of Theology.

The Story Behind Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

The author of this popular hymn is William Williams (1717-1791), born in Wales, to John and Dorothy Williams. According to Welsh hymn scholar Alan Luff, Williams grew up as an Independent and later a Calvinist but had no intentions to be a minister.

In 1744, after being accused of various misdemeanors against the Church of England, Williams devoted himself to Methodism. The hymn text was written soon after this in 1745. While it is still a mystery as to why Williams began composing hymn-texts in his native tongue, *United Methodist Hymnal* editor Dr. Carlton Young states that he became known as the most famous hymn writer of Welsh Methodism. Elements of the hardship Williams experienced as a traveling minister can be found throughout “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah.”

Williams beautifully uses imagery from the Old Testament book of Exodus to conjure a theme of God’s guidance through struggle. One of the reasons this hymn has influenced such a broad array of congregants is the universal subject of hardship.