



Song Notes for August 8

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

No hymn is identified with the Protestant Reformation more than Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress." Luther (1483-1546) left a body of congregational songs that both defined the Lutheran confessional tradition and became truly ecumenical in influence.

Luther encouraged new musical and lyrical expressions of psalms and hymns, and the text and tune he created for this hymn is based on Psalm 46 ("God is our refuge and strength...")

The person who requested this one said, "The hymn strongly speaks to and reinforces my belief that "God has my back"—God has everyone's backs!

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

England is a seafaring nation, and the ways of the sea lie deep in the psyche of the British people. Given the rich and centuries-long history of English exploration, trade, and naval expansion, it's no wonder that the great this naval hymn came from the pen of an Englishman, William Whiting (1825-1878).

The hymn first appeared in the famous *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861. Hymnologist Morgan Simmons notes that the "compilers of that influential collection, however, made rather extensive revisions to the hymn written by William Whiting the year before."

Indeed, there have been many modifications and additions to this hymn, known as the hymn for the Royal Navy as well as the United States Navy. Branches of U.S. military service have added their own stanzas. And, in 1961 a stanza was written for astronauts.

For many people, especially those who have served in the armed forces, this hymn embodies memories of their service, their patriotism and their hopes.

Whiting employed a Trinitarian theme in this hymn, perhaps alluding to Genesis 1:2 where "the Spirit of God hovered over the waters" at creation, bringing order out of chaos.

The person who requested this said, "When I hear this, I picture calm sea. A very calming effect as I reflect on all the service men and women who have given so much to protect our country."

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

The opening line of this hymn was inspired by the three divine attributes listed in 1 Timothy 1:17: "*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen*" (King James Version), and it continues by considering how God's life and being exceeds our own finite existence.

This hymn was written by Walter Chalmers Smith (1824-1908), a Scottish Free Church minister educated at the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. Smith served congregations in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh. In this hymn he wanted to communicate the grandeur and greatness of God, using "light" as a consistent metaphor throughout.

The person who requested it said, "This hymn reminds me of not only the power of God, but my power as well—as a being of God."

God Will Make a Way

A family tragedy was the background for the writing of Don Moen's most influential song. Don relates the story behind this song:

"My wife's sister and her husband and four children were involved in a car accident during a trip they were taking from their home in Oklahoma to Colorado. One of their four children tragically died, while the other three were critically injured."

“They asked me to sing at the funeral, so I boarded a plane the next day, March 19, 1987, and headed for Oklahoma. As I sat on the plane, wondering what I should say to them, I began to read in the book of Isaiah. My eyes went to chapter 43, verse 19: “I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.” Instantly, the Lord gave me a song to sing to them: “God will make a way, where there seems to be no way...”

This song has provided hope and peace to countless people who feel like their life has become stuck, and where the future seems uncertain or even hopeless. The person who requested this song said, “My late husband and I loved that song—because our children did not know our Lord.”

PRELUDE

WELCOME

LITANY OF PRAISE AND AFFIRMATION

This litany interweaves Martin Luther’s great Reformation hymn with the words from Scripture that inspired it, the words of Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

**Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake
in the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**

[Sung]

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and, armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

There is a river
whose streams make glad
the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

**God is in the midst of the city;
it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.**

[Sung]

*Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing;
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God’s own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus it is he,
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.*

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
God speaks and the earth melts.

**The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.**

Come, behold the works of the Lord!

**God makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
God breaks the bow, shatters the spear,
and burns the shields with fire.**

[Sung]

*And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed his truth
to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure,
one little word shall fell him.*

Be still, and know that the Lord is God!

**God is exalted among the nations;
God is exalted in the earth.**

The Lord of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge.

[Sung]

*That word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through him who with us sideth;
let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill,
God's truth abideth still,
his kingdom is forever.*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God, we confess that despite our best efforts and intentions, we have failed to consistently live in ways that bring honor to your name, and bring blessing to our neighbors. Through the grace of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, free us from attitudes and actions that do not lead to life. Strengthen us in love and help us to delight in doing your will.

(moment for silent prayers and reflection)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

—based on Romans 5:8 and Colossians 1:13-14

God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

**For he has rescued us
from the dominion of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom
of the Son he loves,
in whom we have redemption,
the forgiveness of sins.
Therefore,
since we have been reconciled through faith,
we have peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Thanks be to God!

PASSING THE PEACE

HYMN *Eternal Father, Strong to Save (#8)*

Eternal Father, strong to save,
whose arm has bound the restless wave,
who bade the mighty ocean deep
its own appointed limits keep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Savior, whose almighty word
the winds and waves submissive heard,
who walked upon the foaming deep,
and calm amid its rage did sleep:
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Holy Spirit, who did brood
upon the chaos wild and rude,
and bade its angry tumult cease,
and gave, for fierce confusion, peace:
O hear us when we cry to thee
for those in peril on the sea.

O Trinity of love and power,
all travelers guard in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe,
protect them wheresoe'er they go;
thus evermore shall rise to thee
glad praise from air and land and sea.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mark 8:27-33 and
Colossians 1:15-20

MESSAGE *The Cosmic Christ*

HYMN *Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise (#12)*

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unshaking, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might:
thy justice, like mountains high soaring above;
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness and
love.

To all, life thou givest, to both great and small.
In all life thou livest, the true life of all.
We blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
then wither and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Thou reignest in glory; thou dwellest in light.
Thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight.
All praise we would render; O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your 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.*

HYMN *God Will Make a Way*

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me
He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me
He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

By a roadway in the wilderness, He'll lead me
And rivers in the desert will I see
Heaven and Earth will fade
But His Word will still remain
He will do something new today

God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me
He will be my guide
Hold me closely to His side
With love and strength for each new day
He will make a way, He will make a way

BENEDICTION

May the grace of Christ attend you,
The love of God surround you,
And the Holy Spirit keep you,
That you may live in faith,
Abound in hope,
And grow in love,
Now and forevermore.
And all of God's people said, Amen!

POSTLUDE

"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." John 20:21

