



## Song Notes for August 22

### How Great Thou Art

The origins of this hymn may be found with Swedish pastor Carl Boberg, around 1886. Boberg was a leading evangelist of his day and the editor of an influential Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden periodical *Sanningsvittnet* ("Witness of the Truth"). Boberg served in the Swedish parliament and published several volumes of poetry, including hymns. He also helped compile the first two hymnals for the Swedish Covenant Church.

Boberg's inspiration is said to have come one day when he was caught in a dramatic thunderstorm on the southeastern coast of Sweden. The violence of the storm followed by the return of the sun and the singing of birds left him falling to his knees in awe ("in humble adoration..."). Soon he penned the nine stanzas of the original version in Swedish. Several years later, Boberg unexpectedly heard his poem sung by a congregation to an old Swedish folk melody.

The person who requested this said, "My deceased mom and my best friend loved that hymn."

### I Cannot Tell

Although the text of this hymn may be new to many, the tune is instantly recognizable from the Irish ballad, "O Danny Boy." The author of this hymn, Irishman William Fullerton, was influenced from an early age by the preaching of evangelist Charles Spurgeon, who became his mentor. Although known more for his devotional writings and study of missionary history, Fullerton occasionally wrote hymns for personal worship and devotion, such as "I Cannot Tell."

What sets this hymn apart from others is its sense of wonder and questioning, in an appreciative way, the why and how of God's actions and God's love as expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus ("I cannot tell..."). Yet in the midst of wonder and questioning, there is hope and faith ("...but this I know...").

It speaks of the trust that we are invited to exercise in believing that God's love and actions toward us and the world are gracious.

### I Love to Tell the Story

The text of this hymn is drawn from the second part of a 50-stanza poem on the life of Christ, written in 1866, during the author's recovery from a serious illness. Katherine "Kate" Hankey, though from a high-church Anglican family, caught the evangelical zeal—likely from the Wesleyan revivals in England. She wrote and composed poems and songs, several for children, on the Story of Christ. Other hymns that are based on her 50-stanza poem include, "Tell Me the Old, Old Story" and "The Story Told."

The person who requested this hymn said, "It sums up the power and timelessness of the gospel."

### Lord of the Dance

Upon his death on March 13, 2004 at the age of 88, Sydney Bertram Carter's obituary in the London Daily Telegraph began with the bold assertion that "Lord of the Dance" was "the most celebrated religious song of the 20<sup>th</sup> century."

"Lord of the Dance" (1962) captured the spirit of the 1960s protest movement in the United States. It became a sacred equivalent for songs by Pete Seeger in the late 1950s, including "Where have all the flower's gone" and "To everything turn" (later made even more popular by Peter, Paul, and Mary), as well as Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the wind" (1962). "Lord of the Dance" brought this sound and spirit into the church, especially in services designed to reach young people.

A favorite of youth groups in the 1960s and 1970s, "Lord of the Dance" spread far beyond the Christian community, though, partially because the song never mentions Jesus Christ by name. Its most famous use beyond the church is as a "Celtic" dance for Michael Flatley's world-famous show, *Lord of the Dance*. The origins of the tune are not Celtic, however, but thoroughly American. Carter adapted a melody from the American Shaker dance tune Simple Gifts.

Born in 1915, Carter was educated at Oxford, and he taught high school in the 1940s. Sympathizing with the Quakers, who are pacifists, he served in an ambulance unit with the Society of Friends during World War II. Carter began composing songs in the 1950s and 1960s, many of which remain very popular in the schools of Great Britain to this day.

The person who requested this said, "It tells of Jesus' story and his sacrifice for us."

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

One: To share the story of Christ today and in the future may require that some followers of Jesus grow in using social media in life-giving ways.

**Many: Christ, make us faithful to post and tweet the truth about you in love!**

One: Let our tweets and posts always be gracious, seasoned with salt and curry, so that we may know how to reply on Instagram and Twitter, on TikTok and Snapchat.

**Many: We are both invited and challenged to tell a parable in 280 characters.**

One: Jesus restores a poor man's sight. The once-blind man sees, praises, witnesses. Religious leaders question, intimidate, exclude. Parents declare their son, born blind, an adult. Jesus announces, "I AM" and only those unseen believe.

**Many: Creative artists depict the woman at the well talking to Jesus in the African bush.**

One: Jesus loves all children and blesses Native Americans with compassion.

**Many: God still invites prodigal sons and daughters to be reconciled today! Praise be to God. Amen.**

**HYMN How Great Thou Art (#625)**

O Lord my God,  
when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the worlds  
thy hands have made,

I see the stars,  
I hear the rolling thunder,  
thy power throughout  
the universe displayed:

**Refrain - 2x:**

Then sings my soul,  
my Savior God, to thee:  
How great thou art!  
How great thou art!

When through the woods  
and forest glades I wander  
and hear the birds sing sweetly  
in the trees,

When I look down  
from lofty mountain grandeur  
and hear the brook  
and feel the gentle breeze: **[Refrain - 2x]**

And when I think that God,  
his Son not sparing,  
sent him to die,  
I scarce can take it in,

That on the cross,  
my burden gladly bearing,  
he bled and died  
to take away my sin: **[Refrain - 2x]**

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!" **[Refrain - 2x]**

## PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Gracious God, in whom there is no partiality, we confess that our love is limited to those with whom we choose to associate. Our faith is restricted to what we can prove. Our service is reduced by our greater interest in ease and comfort. We have allowed religion to become a compartment in our lives rather than the leaven that influences and transforms the whole. Loving God, heal our unfaithfulness and make today a time of new beginnings, in Jesus' name.**

(moment for silent prayers and reflection)

## WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Friends in Christ, hear the good news: In Christ you are offered a new design for living; receive it. Give what you have, without counting the cost. Keep the faith by giving it away. Accept Christ's sacrifice on your behalf, that you may find fulness of life, and peace. Amen.

**Thanks be to God!**

## PASSING THE PEACE

### HYMN *I Cannot Tell*

I cannot tell why he whom angels worship should come in flesh as prophets long foretold, or why the Shepherd longs to save the wanderers and bring them back rejoicing to the fold. But this I know, that he was born of Mary when Bethlehem's manger was his only home, and that he lived at Nazareth and labored, and so the promised Savior of the world is come. I cannot tell how silently he suffered as with his peace he graced this place of tears, or how his heart upon the cross was broken, the crown of pain to three and thirty years. But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted, and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear, and lifts the burden from the heavy laden, for still the suffering Savior of the world is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations, how he will claim his earthly heritage, how satisfy the needs and aspirations of east and west, of sinner and of sage. But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory, and he shall reap the harvest he has sown, and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendor, when he, the risen Savior of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship when at his bidding, every storm is stilled, or who can say how great the jubilation when all our hearts with love for him are filled. But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture, and countless voices then will join to sing, and earth to heaven, and heaven to earth will answer:

"At last the living Savior of the world is King!"

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and  
Mark 1:14-20

## MESSAGE **What's Your Story?**

### HYMN *I Love to Tell the Story (#462)*

I love to tell the story  
of unseen things above,  
of Jesus and his glory,  
of Jesus and his love.  
I love to tell the story,  
because I know 'tis true;  
it satisfies my longings  
as nothing else could do.

#### **Refrain:**

I love to tell the story;  
'twill be my theme in glory  
to tell the old, old story  
of Jesus and his love.

I love to tell the story;  
'tis pleasant to repeat  
what seems, each time I tell it,  
more wonderfully sweet!  
I love to tell the story,  
for some have never heard  
the message of salvation  
from God's own holy Word. **[Refrain]**

I love to tell the story,  
for those who know it best  
seem hungering and thirsting  
to hear it, like the rest.  
And when, in scenes of glory,  
I sing the new, new song,  
'twill be the old, old story  
that I have loved so long. **[Refrain]**

#### 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.***

#### SONG *Lord of the Dance (#157)*

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun,  
and I came down from heaven  
and I danced on the earth.  
At Bethlehem I had my birth.

#### **Refrain:**

Dance, then, wherever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee,  
but they would not dance  
and they would not follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen, for James and John.  
They came with me and the dance went on.  
**[Refrain]**

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame.  
The holy people said it was a shame.  
They whipped and they stripped  
and they hung me high,  
and left me there on a cross to die. **[Refrain]**

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black.  
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,  
but I am the dance and I still go on. **[Refrain]**

They cut me down and I leapt up high.  
I am the life that will never, never die.  
I'll live in you if you'll live in me,  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he. **[Refrain]**

#### 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

