



Song Notes for August 15

Christ the Lord is Risen Today!

Originally titled "Hymn for Easter Day" and printed as eleven four-line stanzas without alleluias, this Easter text was written during the first year following Charles Wesley' life-changing conversion experience on May 24th, 1738 at Aldersgate, London.

See July 18 song notes for more background on prolific hymn-writer Charles Wesley.

The person who requested this said, "It is a lively tune which celebrates what I personally figure to be the most important event/holiday on the Christian calendar."

Open My Eyes That I May See

The first woman to publish a collection of her own anthems, Clara H. Scott has created in this hymn a sung prayer for illumination. It not only asks God to help us understand Scripture but also prays for the strength and courage to make God's love known to others.

Clara Scott wrote this hymn shortly before her death, a final prayer for open eyes and ears to see and hear Jesus clearly, and express that she was "ready, my God" for what God had prepared for her.

The person who requested this said, "This speaks to my soul and calms me."

Be Thou My Vision

Sometimes hymn singing invites us to connect with the saints who have gone before. Such is the case with this famous Irish hymn. The original poem, found in two Irish manuscripts in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, may be dated as early as the 8th century.

Irish liturgy and ritual scholar Helen Phelan points out how the language of this hymn is drawn from traditional Irish culture: "One of the essential characteristics of the text is the use of 'heroic' imagery to describe God. This was very typical of medieval Irish poetry, which cast God as the 'chieftain' or 'High King' (*Ard Ri*) who provided protection to his people or clan. The *lorica* is one of the most popular forms of this kind of protection prayer and is very prevalent in texts of this period."

Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

While based on Elijah's ascent to heaven (2Kings 2:11), this African American spiritual also communicates the enslaved people's hope that they might find deliverance across a river (perhaps in the free states beyond the Ohio River). For some singers and listeners, the chariot may represent the path to freedom offered by organized abolitionists through the Underground Railroad. For others it could symbolize a chariot of the Lord offering transportation for the soul to heaven.

The person who requested this said, "I like the sound of the song, plus there is a connection to my first vehicle; I called it my 'sweet chariot.'"

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP—inspired by Revelation 1: 4-8

Grace and peace to you from the One who is,
who always was,
and who is to come—
the Alpha and Omega—the beginning and the end.

**This is our God—
the One who loves us, and who gave himself for us;
who gathers us together,
and bids us seek his face.
Let's worship God together!**

HYMN *Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!*

"Christ the Lord is risen today!" Alleluia!
All creation, join to say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, O heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise. Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!
Jesus died, our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Hail the Lord of earth and heaven! Alleluia!
Praise to you by both be given, Alleluia!
Every knee to you shall bow, Alleluia!
Risen Christ, triumphant now. Alleluia!

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

—from the Book of Common Prayer (Episcopal Church)

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name.

(moment for silent prayers and reflection)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Let us hear, with the apostle Paul, the assurance of God: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2Corinthians 12:9). God receives us and accepts us where we are, offering to guide us toward authentic personhood and meaningful service to others. God continues in covenant love with us; therefore, be strong and take courage, knowing that the Lord is with you.

Thanks be to God!

PASSING THE PEACE

HYMN *Open My Eyes, That I May See (#451)*

Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me.
Place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes; illumine me,
Spirit divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear.
And while the wave notes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears; illumine me,
Spirit divine!

Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere.
Open my heart, and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my heart; illumine me,
Spirit divine!

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Revelation 21:1-6 and
1:9-20

MESSAGE *The Cosmic Christ, part II*

HYMN *Be Thou My Vision (#450)*

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true Word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower;
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
thou, mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

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 *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot (#825)*

Refrain:

Swing low, sweet chariot,
coming for to carry me home.
Swing low, sweet chariot,
coming for to carry me home.

I looked over Jordan, and what did I see
coming for to carry me home?

A band of angels coming after me,
coming for to carry me home. O,
<<Refrain>>

If you get there before I do,
coming for to carry me home,
tell all my friends I'm coming too,
coming for to carry me home. O,
<<Refrain>>

The brightest day that ever I saw,
coming for to carry me home,
when Jesus washed my sins away,
coming for to carry me home. O,
<<Refrain>>

I'm sometimes up and sometimes down,
coming for to carry me home,
but still my soul feels heavenly bound,
coming for to carry me home. O,
<<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

REVELATION

Background

- Context of the writing: the persecution of Christians under Nero around 60 A.D.
- It is a pastoral book, for people who are suffering.
- It is grounded in the Old Testament. There are more quotes and references from the O.T. in Revelation than any other book of the New Testament.
- It is a Christ-centered book, about the victory of the risen Christ and the hope and comfort he brings.

Guidelines for Reading and Study

- Let the book give you its own clues for interpretation. Don't read into it what isn't there.
- The images are not meant to be taken literally; they are there mostly for effect.
- Use all of your senses when reading, and just take it in. If you try to figure everything out intellectually, you'll get a headache.
- It is not a prediction of future events, but present hope and assurance that Jesus Christ boundaries history and holds our lives secure.