

Third Thursday in Lent - March 4, 2021

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. (Acts 3:13-15)

LSB 430 – My Song Is Love Unknown

(Verse 5 of this week’s hymn served as inspiration for today’s devotion.)

The richness of this hymn is on full display in this fifth stanza. The text is a clear reflection of Acts 3:13-15, with a beautiful interpretation of the “witness” that Peter makes about our Lord Jesus.

Many times our English hymn texts are translations, interpretive adaptations, of other languages—whether Latin, German, French, etc. But this text is originally in English. The author of the text, Samuel Crossman, is one of the earliest hymn writers who composed texts in English. So Crossman means what he pens when he suggests:

“Yet cheerful He to suffering goes.” Cheerful.

In reading Peter’s witness as recorded in Acts, there is nothing “cheerful” to be seen. “Tragic” is more like it. The God who had delivered Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of Israel time and time again sees his son and servant, Jesus, delivered over to death. The Holy and Righteous One is denied, “made away” as Crossman writes. The Author and Prince of Life is forsaken and killed, exchanged for a known murderer.

Yet cheerful He to suffering goes—that He His foes from thence might free. He does this for the very ones who forsook him, who denied him, who killed him. He endures suffering so that all who in sin have denied, rejected, and forsaken Him might be set free from sin and death. He does this for you. He does this even for me. Jesus cheerfully endures suffering because he spares us from that suffering.

The evil of humanity is completely thwarted in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus cheerfully endures that which is clearly tragic. This is the love that is unknown, the love that makes the loveless lovely. Our Lord loves us cheerfully. Our Lord demonstrates that cheerful love in willing submission and suffering.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, your son cheerfully endured the suffering and shame of the cross for our sake. Strengthen us with faith and hope in Christ’s death and resurrection, that at His return in final judgement we might be eternally set free. We ask this in the name of the Author of Life, whose love makes us lovely. Amen.

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