

## Week 8: Life of Christ

### O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High

Text: Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471), 1854

- Son of a German blacksmith, attended Latin school as a child
- At the age of 20, entered the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes, and was fully ordained at 33
- He wrote countless meditations, sermons, poems, and prayers, four biographies of monastery members, as well as copied the Bible no fewer than four times, but is most famous for his book *The Imitation of Christ* (which would later influence the conversion of John Newton)
- The original text “O amor quam ecstaticus” was excerpted from twenty-three stanzas in Latin
- Benjamin Webb, a British pastor, provided the English translation which was first published by his friend John Mason Neale in *The Hymnal Noted* in 1854

Tune: Traditional English, 1906

- Originally written in the 15th century to commemorate the 1415 victory of England’s Henry V in the Battle of Agincourt, as part of the Hundred Years’ War
- The tune name DEO GRACIAS comes from the Latin refrain in the original lyrics:

Our kyng went forth to normandy  
Wyth grace and myth of chyvalry  
Per god for hym wrouth mervelowsly  
Qwerfore ynglond may cal and cry  
Deo gracias! Deo gracias anglia redde pro victoria!

- First adapted into a hymn tune in 1906 by omitting the refrain
1. The hymn is a whirlwind tour of Jesus’ life, from birth to death and resurrection, held together by little more than the repeated phrase “for us”. Some of these connections are more intuitive than others, however. In what way was Christ baptized “for us”? How was His temptation “for us”?
    - a. Regarding Jesus’ baptism:
      - i. Jesus was baptized as an example for us to do the same and, although he had no need for baptism (Matthew 3:13-15), was identifying Himself with sinners; baptism is not a *means* to repentance, but rather a *symbol* of it
      - ii. Jesus’ divinity was publicly displayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21-22)
      - iii. Jesus’ baptism showed the world the messianic era had begun (like the dove for Noah, the dove descending on Jesus symbolizes the end of God’s wrath and a new peace)
      - iv. Jesus’ baptism was part of his sacrifice; for Israelites, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was washed in water before performing the sacrifice (Leviticus 16:4)
      - v. The dove was the only bird allowed for ritual sacrifice, and usually reserved for the poorest members of society; by extension, Jesus’ sacrifice is for the poorest of us
    - b. Regarding Jesus’ temptation:
      - i. Jesus’ sinlessness was necessary for our salvation; by resisting temptation he was qualified as the perfect sacrifice, blameless Lamb of God (Hebrews 2:17-18)
      - ii. Jesus’ third temptation was that of an “easy way out”, offered rule of kingdoms on earth without the need for sacrifice or suffering (Matthew 4:8-9); his rejection was a selfless gift affirming His sacrifice for our sake

### All Glory, Laud, and Honor

Text: Theodulf of Orléans (c. 750–821), 1854

- Appointed Archbishop of Orleans by Charlemagne in 781
- In 817, Charlemagne’s successor Louis the Pious accused him of treason and had him imprisoned
- This text, thirty-nine couplets in Latin, was written around 820 during his imprisonment
- Legend has it that as the King visited Angers where Theodulf was imprisoned, he heard this hymn being sung and was so moved, when he found that Theodulf was the singer he ordered his release
- Regardless of the reason, Theodulf was released in 821, but died that year, rumored to be a poisoning

- This text was translated twice into English by John Mason Neale; “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” (originally “Glory, and Laud, and Honor”) became the more popular, also published in *The Hymnal Noted* in 1854
- A prominent member of the Oxford Movement, Neale is unparalleled in translations of Latin and Greek hymns, whose works include: “Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain”, “Good Christian Men Rejoice”, “Good King Wenceslas”, “O come, O come, Emmanuel”, “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”, and others

Tune: Melchior Teschner (1584–1635), 1615

- Little is known of Teschner’s life, other than his studies of philosophy, theology, and music at the University of Frankfurt, and his work as cantor and pastor of churches in Fraustadt and Oberpritschen
  - Provided tunes for many German hymns; for this reason the tune ST. THEODULPH is also known as VALET WILL ICH DIR GEBEN, title of the original German text it accompanied
  - Johann Sebastian Bach provided a harmonization of the tune for use in his “St. John Passion”
  - The harmonization here was written for *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1861 by William Henry Monk (composer of EVENTIDE, tune for “Abide With Me”)
1. This text is specifically for Palm Sunday, dealing with Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It connects our own praise with the praise of the Hebrews, and in the last verse asks God to accept our prayers just as he accepted the praise in Jerusalem. Why do we need to ask God to accept our praise? How is our praise today like the praises of the palm wavers in Jerusalem?
    - a. We are imperfect humans and our praise is fickle. The same crowd shouting “Hosanna!” would be shouting “Crucify him!” just a few days later.
    - b. Our praise is laced with our own selfish desires; “hosanna” is a shout of joy but literally means “save us”, underscoring the Hebrews’ desire for a military and political savior from the Romans
    - c. Strictly speaking, God doesn’t need our praise - it’s a gift. Jesus said even if the crowds were silent, the stones would cry out in praise. (Luke 19:40)

## Go to Dark Gethsemane

Text: James Montgomery (1771–1854), 1820

- The son of a Moravian pastor and missionary, he began writing poems at age 10
- At age 16, he ran away from school and tried unsuccessfully to sell his poetry to sustain himself
- Eventually became assistant to a newspaper printer and editor, and when his employer fled England to escape political persecution he took ownership of the paper and continued it for 31 years
- Montgomery often wrote on political themes, was jailed twice because of it, and worked to end the slave trade and exploitation of child chimney sweeps, among other causes
- Although lacking enough artistic merits to be truly considered one of the “great hymnwriters”, a surprising percentage of his hymns remain in use today, including two well-known Christmas hymns: “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed” and “Angels from the Realms of Glory”
- Originally published in 1820, Montgomery published a second version with major alterations in 1825

Tune: Richard Redhead (1820–1901), 1853

- Oxford-educated, Redhead served as organist at All Saints Church in London from age 19 to 44
  - The remaining 30 years of his career were spent nearby at St. Mary Magdalene Church in Paddington
  - Like John Mason Neale, Redhead was a member of the Oxford Movement
  - Named after its composer, REDHEAD 76 was the 76th tune published in Redhead’s collection *Church Hymn Tunes, Ancient and Modern*, where it was intended for use with the text “Rock of Ages”
1. Montgomery presents a series of Passion scenes, each of which has a small lesson to learn. The first verse begins with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and instructs us to “learn of Jesus Christ to pray”. What’s the connection here to “the tempter’s power”, and what does it teach us about prayer?
    - a. Gethsemane literally means “place of pressing”; located on the Mount of Olives, this would be an olive press. Figuratively, this was a place of pressing (pressure) for Jesus, leading to His arrest
    - b. When they arrived, Jesus instructed the disciples to “pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40). He also asked God to “take this cup from me” (Mark 14:36), longing for an easy way out and reminiscent of His final temptation in the wilderness
    - c. Lesson is that prayer, watchful prayer (“watch with me”, Matthew 26:38), is temptation’s antidote
  2. The hymn has a pervasive darkness to it (“bitter hour”, “mournful mountain”, “solitude and gloom”), even in

the final verse leading up to Christ's resurrection, and includes two somewhat cryptic images: "the wormwood and the gall" (verse two), and "breathless clay" (verse four). What is the meaning behind these phrases, and what do they contribute to the overall theme of the hymn?

- a. Wormwood is a bitter shrub used for medicinal purposes, and gall can refer either to bitter poppy juice or bile (as in the gallbladder). Symbolically, they represent bitter medicine to be swallowed.
- b. In Genesis, humans were created when God breathed life into dust, or clay, (Genesis 2:7). Breathless clay represents Christ as not just dead, but completely separated from God. (As the Apostles' Creed says, "He descended into hell".)