

Week 9: Crucifixion and Salvation

The Old Rugged Cross

Text: George Bennard (1873–1958), 1913

- Son of a coal miner, began work in the mines at age 15, to support his family after his fathers' death
- Attended a Salvation Army meeting as a teenager out of interest, where he became a Christian
- Later married and started ministry in the Salvation Army, then ordained in the Methodist Episcopal Church
- Traveled the Upper Midwest preaching and leading revivals, particularly in Michigan and Wisconsin
- During his travels, he stayed for a time in Albion, Michigan, where the hymn was written
- He continued in evangelism for 40 years following, up to the age of 80

Tune: George Bennard (1873–1958), 1913

- The hymn tune was actually written first, with several attempts at lyrics before the current version
 - Though not a trained performer, Bennard often sang and played guitar at revivals
 - Voted “most popular hymn” in a national survey of 1960, as reported by *The Flint Journal*
1. Despite nearly instant popularity, “The Old Rugged Cross” has also been subject to fierce criticism (it took 50 years to be included in the Methodist hymnal). In 1967, the prominent hymnologist and scholar Erik Routley called it “a monstrous blasphemy,” saying, “I believe it to be wrong, misleading, and spiritually wicked to treat the Cross as affectionately as that lyric does.” Or consider this quote from a 2003 symposium of the Christian Conference of Asia (Dr. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, Silliman University Divinity School):

Shall I cling to the “old rugged cross”? My answer is no. I refuse to cling to the mystified and romanticized symbol of violence that had for centuries endorsed the subjugation of peoples and reinforces the suffering of women at the intersection of patriarchy, sexism, classism, racism, and ethnocentrism.

What is the proper place of the cross in Christian worship? Do we focus on it too much? Too little?

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Text: Isaac Watts (1674–1748), 1707

- Born into a strong Dissenter family, his father was jailed three times for his religious views
- A bright child, began learning Latin at 4 years old, and then Greek, French, and Hebrew all before age 13
- As a Nonconformist, he was disallowed from attending Oxford or Cambridge, but instead attended a Dissenting academy and after graduation worked as a pastor and private tutor
- Often ill, a prolonged fever forced him to leave pastoral ministry and live in the residence of Sir Thomas Abney, a parishioner famous for election as Lord Mayor of London in 1700
- In addition to his sermons and poems, by his death he had written books on Grammar, Pedagogy, Ethics, Psychology, Theology, and Logic
- Often given the title “father of English hymnody” for his work in expanding church music beyond the metrical psalms in common use earlier

Tune: Lowell Mason (1792–1872), 1824

- Born in Medfield, Massachusetts but moved to Savannah, Georgia as a young adult to work as a banker
 - Outside his professional life, he was an amateur musician and teacher, serving as a church choir director and organist and helping to start the first Sunday School for African-American children in the US
 - Worked to assemble a hymnal using music of classical composers, but struggled to find a publisher
 - Eventually the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston agreed to publish the hymnal in 1822 (Mason asked to be anonymous), a later edition of which contained this tune HAMBURG, based on a Gregorian chant
 - Moved to Boston in 1827, continuing to work as a banker but later devoted himself fully to music
 - A natural teacher, Mason founded the Boston Academy of Music aiming to bring music education into public school system, with his efforts endorsed by renowned education reformer Horace Mann
 - Other popular hymn tunes include AZMON (“O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”) and ANTIOCH (“Joy to the World”, also a text by Isaac Watts)
1. In contrast to “The Old Rugged Cross”, this hymn of Watts is highly praised by scholars and critics, considered to be one of his finest, if not the very best. The British poet Matthew Arnold called it “the greatest hymn in the English language”, and it’s reported that Charles Wesley once said he would give up all of his other hymns to have written this one. The imagery is not complex, but it is powerful. Of the poetic devices in

the hymn, which are most poignant to you? Why?

Sinner, Where is Room for Doubt?

Text: David L. Ward (1974–), 2012

- Became a Christian at age 12 attending a Christian summer camp in North Carolina
- Although an amateur jazz musician from childhood, earned his college degree in mathematics and worked as a software engineer for 8 years
- Returned to study worship at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and currently serves as a worship leader and songwriter in Nashville, Tennessee
- Ward is a founding member of Thousand Tongues, a non-denominational organization promoting deep, meaningful, Christ-centered worship in today's church
- Inspired by an obscure hymn "Sinner, Where Is Room for Doubting?" written in 1862 by Albert Midlane

Tune: Joanie Madden (1965–), 1999

- Daughter of Irish immigrant musicians, she started playing fiddle and piano as a child, but soon settled on the tin whistle for her instrument
 - Winner of All-Ireland Championships on both flute and tin whistle, she gained further visibility as a member of the Irish folk trio "Cherish the Ladies"
 - The tune KILKEE was adapted by Ward from a "Cherish the Ladies" air titled "Waves of Kilkee"
1. In the first verse, the phrase "Did He not lay down His life / and the Father's wrath remove?" is reminiscent of the well-known song "In Christ Alone" when it says "Till on that cross as Jesus died / The wrath of God was satisfied". In fact, that line recently caused the hymnal editorial committee for the Presbyterian Church (USA) to exclude "In Christ Alone" from their hymnal, as they wanted to modify it to read "the love of God was magnified" but the authors (Keith Getty and Stuart Townend) would not grant permission. What is your own understanding of the "wrath of God" as it relates to Christ's death and resurrection? Would you include this hymn in a hymnal?
 2. The hymn is organized by facets of our lives that Jesus came to take away ("doubt", "guilt", "toil", and "pride"), yet it seems that every person still struggles with one or more of these. Which do you find most relevant personally, and how does this hymn change your perspective on it (if at all)?