

Week 2: Addressing God

Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior

Text: Fanny Crosby (1820–1915), 1868

- Descended from a long-time American family, her ancestors include Mayflower pilgrims, a Revolutionary war hero, and a founder of Harvard College
- Blind since six weeks of age, attended the New York Institution for the Blind, where she later taught
- Began writing poetry at age eight, also studied music and memorized large portions of scripture
- Advocated heavily for education of the blind, and became the first woman to speak in the U.S. Senate
- Following an 1849 cholera outbreak in New York City, rededicated herself to Christ and mostly left activism
- Wrote over 8,000 hymn texts (including “To God Be The Glory” and “Blessed Assurance”) in addition to many secular songs and poems
- About her blindness, she has said:

It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not accept it. I might not have sung hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me.

If I had a choice, I would still choose to remain blind... for when I die, the first face I will ever see will be the face of my blessed Saviour.

Tune: William Howard Doane (1832–1915), 1870

- Born into a Christian family in Connecticut, hired by the large woodworking firm J. A. Fay & Co.
- Eventually rose to become manager of their Cincinnati factory and then company president
- Although a hobbyist composer and lifelong Christian, focused his attention on classical music
- Following a heart attack at age 30, he turned to sacred music and began writing Sunday School songs
- While in New York for business, was sent a hymn text by Fanny Crosby, launching a lifelong collaboration
- Hearing about a prison visit made by Crosby, Doane suggested she write a text based on words spoken by one of the prisoners: “Good Lord, do not pass me by!”

1. What does it mean for our savior to be a “gentle savior”? Why does Crosby choose this phrase rather than one like “mighty savior” that implies strength? How does this fit into the overall message of the text?
 - a. Gentleness actually **requires** strength - it’s the combination of strength and restraint
 - i. Phrases like “gentle giant” give the impression of a powerful person who is careful how they use their strength
 - ii. Conversely, “gentle insect” doesn’t make much sense - since they’re too small to be anything other than gentle
 - iii. In fact, we see references to Jesus’ power in his “throne”
 - b. Our savior is gentle because He cares about the meek and lowly
 - i. In this hymn, Christ is the one doing all the action: listening, hearing, comforting
 - ii. We are dependent on God’s work in our life, not the other way around
 - iii. This view is Calvinistic in some ways: God calls us, rather than us choosing Him
2. The cries for help and mercy in the hymn bring to mind gospel stories of people asking Jesus for help. Specifically, which story comes to your mind first? What lines from the text could you imagine them saying?
 - a. The phrase “help my unbelief” is a quote from Mark 9:24
 - i. The speaker is the father of a demon-possessed child; in response to Jesus’ statement that “all things are possible to him who believes”, the father says, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”
 - b. In Matthew 15:21-28 a mother with a demon-possessed daughter also comes to Jesus
 - i. Jesus says, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs”, but the woman says “even dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table” and Jesus praises her
 - c. Another possibility is the centurion in Matthew 8:8 who says “I am not worthy for you to come under my

roof", after asking for his son to be healed

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Text: Thomas O. Chisholm (1866–1960), 1923

- Born in rural Kentucky, had very little formal education
- Ordained in the Methodist church, but only served briefly as minister due to his health
- Edited the local newspaper, but worked most of his career as a life insurance salesman
- Wrote this text from a “morning by morning realization of God’s personal faithfulness”
- After a long life, retired to the Methodist Home for the Aged in Ocean Grove, New Jersey

Tune: William Runyan (1870–1957), 1923

- The son of a Methodist minister, was later ordained himself at the age of 21
- Showed musical talent at an early age, serving as substitute church organist at twelve years old
- In addition to pastoring, worked as an editor for Hope Publishing Company for 20 years
- Writing tunes for a number of his friend Chisholm’s texts, this one stood out from the others

This particular poem held such an appeal that I prayed most earnestly that my tune might carry over its message in a worthy way, and the subsequent history of its use indicates that God answers prayer.

- Though popular at the Moody Bible Institute where Runyan served, the hymn remained mostly unknown
 - Only following its use by Billy Graham in the late 1950’s did it reach its full popularity
1. Looking at the theme of each verse, we first see God’s faithfulness revealed in His word, then revealed in creation, and finally in our own lives. Does one of those themes speak to you personally? How have you seen God’s faithfulness at work in that area?
 - a. Scriptural inspiration comes from Lamentations 3:22-23
 - b. Verse one is a paraphrase of James 1:17, “shadow of turning” is from the King James Version
 - i. The word “shadow” means “even the slightest appearance”, as in “beyond a shadow of a doubt”
 - ii. The word “turning” comes from the Greek word “trope” (from which we get “entropy”)
 - iii. As a phrase, this is saying God is without even the slightest appearance of change
 - c. Verse two speaks to the theological concept of “general revelation”, the idea that God makes Himself known through the physical universe
 - i. See Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork”
 - d. Verse three ties God’s past faithfulness (in the first two verses) to the present time and to the future
 - i. Covers quite a few blessings of God: pardon, peace, comfort, guidance, strength, and hope!

All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night

Text: Thomas Ken (1637–1711), 1709

- Raised by an older stepsister and her husband after both parents died early in Ken’s childhood
- Oxford-educated, ordained in 1662, served in a number of chaplainships including at Winchester College
- Wrote this text as one of three hymns for morning, evening, and nighttime use by the students
- Later rose to become bishop of Bath and Wells, with a reputation for principled leadership
- Unafraid to clash with royalty, he protested court corruption, refused to house the King’s mistress, and fought against the King’s Declaration of Indulgence
- Eventually led to temporary imprisonment and loss of his position as bishop, but continued to write in retirement

Tune: Thomas Tallis (c.1505–1585), 1561

- First served as organist in Dover in 1532, then later in London churches and Canterbury Cathedral
- Avoided conflict throughout theological battles of the reformation, remaining an “unreformed Roman Catholic”
- With his student William Byrd, obtained from Queen Elizabeth a monopoly on the printing of music
- Originally wrote this tune for a setting of Psalm 67, later revised by Thomas Ravenscroft in 1621
- The name TALLIS CANON is given because the tune can be sung as a unison canon (or “round”)

1. The tradition of prayer at set times of day dates back to Jewish practice and has a long history in the Catholic tradition (where it's known as "divine office" or "hours"). However, with the exception of occasional vespers services, the practice has largely fallen out of favor in mainline churches. Do you see benefit to following structured prayers based on time of day? Is this something more Christians should adopt today?
 - a. The "method" in Methodism is a similar idea, using structure and systematic study to drive spiritual growth
 - b. Why has it fallen out of favor?
 - i. Many people associate structure with "legalism"
 - ii. Busy lives, hard to schedule - but where are our priorities?
2. Looking at the hymn as a prayer, do you see any structure in the way that prayer is constructed? Do you follow any particular pattern when praying yourself?
 - a. The text both starts with and ends with praise
 - i. In the first verse, the praise is an outflow of thankfulness
 - i. As originally written, the first line reads "Glory to Thee, my God, this night"
 - ii. The final verse is a simple doxology (from Greek, literally "speech of glory")
 - i. Due to its ubiquitous use in Protestant churches, commonly called just "**The** Doxology"
 - ii. This was also the final verse in Ken's companion "morning" hymn, "Awake, My Soul, and with the Sun"
 - b. In between, we find requests for shelter, forgiveness, guidance, and comfort (supplication)
 - c. Notably missing? Intercession (prayer for others), but this is hard to do in a hymn form...