

Proper 13/Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Series C)

“Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings” (*Lutheran Service Book* #782)

Every hymn in any hymnbook, including *Lutheran Service Book*, has at least two stories that relate to the history of how it came to be used in the life of the Church. There is the history of the melody to which the text is sung and there is the history of the text itself. Sometimes the two stories are quite inter-related; at other times they are not very closely linked.

The melody chosen for “Gracious God, You Send Great blessings” is the lively tune known as HOLY MANNA. Coming from the tradition of Early American hymnody, it first appeared in *The Columbian Harmony*, which was published in Cincinnati in 1825. The hymn text that was initially united with the simple melody is “Brethren, we have met to worship.” For about two centuries, God’s people have been energized by singing this delightful tune as they have met to worship and to offer their praises to the God of all Creation.

The selection of the tune HOLY MANNA to support the text of “Gracious God, You Send Great Blessings” is a natural choice. After celebrating the goodness of God in the first stanza by recounting how the blessings of the Lord are new every morning, the hymn continues in the second stanza to praise God for the richness of creation. Part of the story of this hymn text is that it was written during an airline flight between Saint Louis, Missouri and Hartford, Connecticut, on a wonderfully clear evening when the magnificent beauty of God’s creation was especially evident from the perspective of 36,000 feet about the ground.

One of the Bible references related to the hymn that did not make it on to page 782 in *LSB* but could well be there is Luke 10:38 where we read of a woman named Martha who, along with her brother Lazarus and sister Mary, welcomed Jesus into their home. They were able to care for the Lord in ways that we have opportunities to care for His people through offering Christian hospitality. The third stanza of “Gracious God...” reminds us that each season of the year invites us to be those who show care in the name of Jesus, our Redeemer.

The final stanza of the hymn is a prayer that the good and gracious will of God may indeed be done through us—a reflection of what we ask of God as we say “Thy will be done” each time we speak the Lord’s Prayer. Whether it is at a time when we are “met to worship” or at a time when we extend the hospitality of our homes, God’s blessings are sent to us for sharing!



Rev. Dr. Gregory J. Wismar

Southbury CT

Gracious God, you send great blessings
new each morning all our days.

For your mercies never ending,
for your love we offer praise.

*Lord, we pray that we, your people
who your gifts unnumbered claim,
through the sharing of your blessings
may bring glory to your name.*

By your Word you formed creation
filled with creatures large and small;
as we tend that endless treasure
may our care encircle all.

Lord, we pray that we...

In his earthly life, our Savior
knew the care of faithful friends;
may our deeds of dedication
offer love that never ends.

Lord, we pray that we...

Heav'nly Father, may our caring
bear the imprint of your grace;
with the Son and Holy Spirit,
praise be yours in ev'ry place!

Lord, we pray that we...

Text: © Gregory J. Wismar. Used by permission.

Tune: HOLY MANNA. Found in *Columbian Harmony*, Cincinnati, 1825.

[This devotion was prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music. It may be downloaded and duplicated for local use.]