

Proper 19 (Series B)

“Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness” (Lutheran Service Book #849)

For our hymn of the day assigned to this Sunday, we are fortunate to have insight from the author himself, Rev. Rusty Edwards. He says about his hymn text:

*“Have you ever started to do one thing, and then ended up doing something else? That’s exactly what happened with the writing of ‘Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness.’ I intended to create a Bible study. This study would look at the life and unique ministry of Jesus. I wanted people to get closer to Jesus. We would ask the question, ‘What on earth did Jesus really do?’ Of course, the way to build a study such as this was to go back to the Bible, and read again, with new eyes, the story of his life. I did just that, and was amazed at what he did. I began with the gospel of Mark, but then continued with the three other gospels. As I prayed, studied and thanked God for the life of Jesus, I began to write down some of his works. The list grew longer. Suddenly, I gazed down at the list, and the list looked almost like a hymn. That’s when the Bible study got put on hold for a while! I wish I could take credit for the wide use of the hymn, but I really can’t. The Holy Spirit was the one who changed my mind, the Bible study became a song. The popularity of this song has everything to do with the message of the story. It has everything to do with Jesus. The text points directly to him, and the gospel unfolds in the words of the song. That is why we sing it. Look for a moment at some of the things he was able to do. Besides being a liberating light, he freed prisoners from their inner chains. He gave sight to the blind. He preached. He was a healer. He fed the hungry. He calmed the storms. He was living water! Most of all, Jesus was love incarnate. John 3 reminds us that God didn’t send Jesus to earth out of anger, but out of love for the world. Jesus was even willing to die, so that we might know the grace of God. And he rose from the dead! The song ends with words of joy. If anyone wonders if the church has any redeeming value, this hymn answers the question. Jesus is our redeemer. (Edwards, Rusty. “Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness.” CrossAccent, vol. 15, no.2)*

As we sing this hymn, we are reminded of God’s glory made manifest in Christ Jesus throughout His ministry, submission to the cross, and victorious resurrection. Praise the One who has come to bring deliverance from spiritual darkness in a world estranged from Him! Because of His gifts of grace and mercy, we can undoubtedly “sing for joy and gladness” that eternal life has been purchased for us.

*Gracious Redeemer, I praise and admire you for your many miracles. Thank you for taking on flesh to bring healing, hope and salvation to the world, which allow me to live in joy and peace. Forgive me when I take for granted the care you so lovingly bestow upon both my body and soul. In your name I pray, Amen.*

Rachel Schlie  
Federicksburg, TX



\*\*\*\*\*

Praise the One who breaks the darkness with a liberating light;  
praise the One who frees the pris'ners, turning blindness into sight.  
Praise the One who preached the Gospel, healing ev'ry dread disease,  
calming storms, and feeding thousands with the very Bread of peace.

Praise the One who blessed the children with a strong, yet gentle, word;  
praise the One who drove out demons with a piercing, two-edged sword.  
Praise the One who brings cool water to the desert's burning sand;  
from this Well comes living water, quenching thirst in ev'ry land.

Let us praise the Word Incarnate, Christ, who suffered in our place.  
Jesus died and rose victorious that we may know God by grace.  
Let us sing for joy and gladness, seeing what our God has done;  
let us praise the true Redeemer, praise the One who makes us one.

---

Text: Rusty Edwards, b. 1955. Text copyright © 1987 Hope Publishing Co.  
Tune: BEACH SPRING *The Sacred Harp*, Philadelphia 1844. Public domain.

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

**Editor's note:** Pastor Edwards is not only a Lutheran pastor but evidently a person of boundless energy and interests. Here is a quick snapshot of his career highlights so far—

- Over two dozen of his hymns appear in 70 hymnals used by 40 denominations in Australia, Canada, China, England, Japan, New Zealand, Scotland, and the United States.
- Five collections of his hymns have been published
  - *The Yes of the Heart* (Foreword by Chick Corea)
  - *Grateful Praise*
  - *As Sunshine to a Garden*
  - *Each Breath Every Heartbeat*
  - *Bidden, Unbidden*
  - *Uncommon Mercy*
- His hymns have been sung on every continent, including the Chapel of the Snows in Antarctica.
- 2013 Recipient of the Lutheran Services of Georgia “Heroes of Hope, Healing, and Strength” award
- Was local manager of the 2003 ELCA Youth Gathering in Atlanta
- Sang on a Grammy nominated CD with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Robert Shaw

- Wrote the Top Ten Western song “Smoke of a Thousand Campfires” performed by the Tucson Symphony Orchestra
- Dave Brubeck wrote the tune for one of his hymns, “As the Moon Is to the Sun”
- Oxford Foundation Fellow 1998
- Visiting fellow at Yale University Institute of Sacred Music
- Visiting fellow at the African University of Zimbabwe
- Brotherhood member of The Allman Brothers Band Museum at the Big House in Macon, GA
- Member of the Blues Hall of Fame.
- Recorded an original work, “Prism”, with the Chick Corea Master Workshop
- A Kentucky Colonel
- Honorary Citizen of Austin, TX
- Tyler, TX held a “Rusty Edwards Day” in 2009
- Education
  - M. Div. Luther Seminary
  - D. Min, Graduate Theological Foundation, Notre Dame
  - Certificates from
    - Blackstone School of Law, Dallas TX
    - Seminary of the Southwest, Austin TX
    - Pecos Benedictine School of Spiritual Direction, NM

[Sources: Wikipedia, Selah Publishing website, *Companion to Evangelical Lutheran Worship* - Paul Westermeyer]