

Proper 21 - Series C - 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - September 25, 2016

Readings: Amos 6:1-7; Psalm 146; 1 Timothy 3:1-13 or 1 Tim. 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31

## “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” (LSB #708)

Text: Martin Schalling, 1532-1608

Tune: HERZLICH LIEB (Herzlich lied hab' ich dich, o Herr - “From my heart I hold you dear, O Lord.”), composer unknown.

*I love you, O LORD, my strength. Psalm 18:1*

## “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” – A One-Hit Wonder

Having lived for nearly seven decades, I've listened to enough pop music to appreciate the so called one-hit wonder; the peculiar category of songs gleaned from our nation's top 40 list. A one-hit wonder can be defined as follows:

A one-hit wonder is a Top 40 phenomenon; the combination of artist and song that scores huge in the music industry with one single, but is unable to repeat the achievement. The term can refer to the artist, the song, or both together.<sup>1</sup>

Had there been a Top-40 list of hymns in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” might have topped the charts. As far as we know, it is the only hymn composed by Martin Schalling. His German text was translated into English by the inimitable Catherine Winkworth and appears in her 1858 edition of *Lyra Germanica*. Her text appears in a slightly altered version in the LSB. Though the composer of the tune is unknown, one would be hard pressed to find a more beautiful melody to accompany Schalling's poetic prayer to Jesus than that which appears in *The Lutheran Service Book* on page 708.<sup>2</sup>

## *A Life Filled with Controversy*

Schalling, who studied under Philipp Melancthon at Wittenberg University, was, like many of his contemporaries, caught up in the tumultuous theological disputes of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. He ran afoul of the controversial theologian Matthias Flacius and, as a result of his preaching against him, lost his position as deacon at Regensburg. When Elector Friedrich III became enamored with Calvinistic theology, Schalling and other faithful Lutheran pastors in Amberg, Bavaria, were ousted from their positions. The Elector's son, Ludwig, who had a stronger Lutheran bent, allowed Schalling to continue his ministry in Vilseck, Bavaria. It was during his time (c. 1567) in Vilseck that he wrote “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart.”

After the death of Frederick, Ludwig gave Schalling a dual appointment as the general superintendent at Oberpfalz, Bavaria, and court preacher at Heidelberg. Schalling's refusal to sign the Formula of Concord (1577) resulted in his banishment from the court of Heidelberg and three years of house arrest in Amberg (1580-1582). In 1885 Schalling was appointed as pastor of St. Mary's Church, Nürnberg, where he served until blindness forced him to retire. He died in Nürnberg on December 19, 1608 at the age of 76.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition quoted from Wikipedia (the ultimate authority on all things related to pop culture) at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_one-hit\\_wonders\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_one-hit_wonders_in_the_United_States). If you look under the “Criteria” heading from this site, you will find this definition for Top 40 by Wayne Jancik: Music journalist Jancik, whose book, *The Billboard Book of One-Hit Wonders*, defines a one-hit wonder rather conservatively, as “an act that has won a position on *Billboard's* national, pop, Top 40 just once.”

<sup>2</sup> Another translation of the German text by Henry Lettermann (1932-1996) was included in *Lutheran Worship* (#413). Lettermann was a graduate of Concordia Teacher's College (now Concordia University - Chicago) and went on to complete a M.A. at the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. at Loyola University - Chicago. *A personal aside:* I was privileged to meet Dr. Lettermann at a career day that was sponsored at my high school *alma mater*, Luther High School North, Chicago, IL. His career day presentation was on being a poet. As you might have guessed, a sectional on a career in poetry didn't have much appeal to most high school students and, as it turned out, I was the only one of the approximately 1,100+ students at the school who signed up for it. We spent the whole period discussing poetry in general and hymnody in specific. He was most gracious and encouraged me to write poetry and to try my hand at writing hymns. I am indebted to Henry Lettermann for his insights and kindness to me. He is one of the reasons why I'm a part-time poet and why I've been blessed to have a number of hymns and several poetry books in publication today.

Schalling's often turbulent life was precipitated by his need to follow his conscience when controversies arose. At the time of the Reformation, holding any kind of theological opinion could land you in the theological dock. Schalling was, by all accounts, a peaceful man, but the religious watchdogs of the 16<sup>th</sup> century had a robust penchant for disputations; Schalling found himself in deep waters as a result. In spite of his hardships, his unflinching devotion to the Gospel led him to pen one of the greatest of hymns of the Lutheran canon. Although he only wrote this one hymn, his brilliantly composed poem stands tall among other Lutheran hymnists of the Reformation such as Paul Gerhardt, Philipp Nicolai, and Martin Rinckart, to name but a few. A one-hit wonder for the ages.<sup>3</sup>

### *The First Stanza – Love and Trust*

The first stanza of the hymn is addressed to Christ and contains two themes worthy of note: love and trust. The opening line begins with a declaration of unconditional love for God and a confident request that God will forever stay with us and shower us with tenderness and joy.

Lord, Thee I love with all my heart;  
I pray Thee ne'er from me depart,  
With tender mercies cheer me.

This request is based on the confident hope that assumes God's mercy and grace. In his explanations to the petitions of The Lord's Prayer, Luther is quick to point out how God knows all of our needs even if we don't pray. So too, in this hymn, we pray that all our requests would "come to us also" and in our praying lead us to a fuller comprehension of the love and mercy that God pours upon us.

The prayer we address to Christ the Lord begins with a statement that we hope is true; to love God with all our heart, and by extension our soul and our strength as well. It is something we know we cannot do completely even though it is our desire to do so. We cannot love God perfectly; yet, through God's mercy and grace, we are bold and confident to pray because we trust that God is eager to hear our petitions and stay with us as our Emmanuel.

The first stanza continues:

Earth has no pleasure I would share,  
Yea, heaven itself were void and bare  
If Thou, Lord, wert not near me.

In this we confess that if Christ is not near us (with us), all is for naught. **But** (and praise God for that little three-letter contrasting conjunction) Paul writes:

*For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. **But** in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:16-20 - RSV – Emphasis mine.)<sup>4</sup>*

Since we have been buried with Christ in our baptism, we are raised with Him to new life now and in that future where we shall spend eternity in His presence. Throughout the hymn we are mindful of God's gift of grace that has been lavished on us in our baptism. This gift colors everything we experience, including those times

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<sup>3</sup> "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart" was written as a hymn "for the dying," (See pg. 426 of Fred. L. Precht's *Lutheran Worship Hymnal Companion* (1992), Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, MO.), but, more importantly, it's a hymn that begs to be sung regularly by the living. It's one of my favorite hymns and I'm delighted that it is the hymn of the day in this cycle. That being said, I have a nagging concern that it may be unfamiliar to many of our parishioners. I hope this is not the case, but my paranoia is based on experience. I cannot recall the last time I sung or played the hymn in a worship service; I fear that it may have fallen out of use. I hope I am wrong, but, in any case, having it as the hymn of the day does afford us an opportunity to teach this masterfully composed hymn to those in our congregations who may have, for whatever reason, forgotten it or missed it entirely. Perhaps it could be introduced during Bible classes, in our Lutheran Schools, or learned by our church choirs prior to 9/25/16 so that its singing can be filled with "the Spirit and understanding also." (See 1 Corinthians 14:15)

<sup>4</sup> The conjunction makes all the difference! What follows it is a proclamation of the Gospel. It works like this: "You were dead in your sins, **but** Jesus died and rose to take your sins away! Alleluia!" Or (to quote the refrain of the great Easter carol, "This Joyful Eastertide" - LSB #482): "Had Christ, who once was slain, Not burst his three-day prison, Our faith would be in vain: **But** now has Christ a-risen, arisen, arisen; **But** now has Christ arisen!"

when our hearts are breaking under the weight of grief and distress. Since we have been ransomed by the blood of Christ, “neither death, nor life... nor things present, nor things to come...nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

And should my heart for sorrow break,  
My trust in Thee no one could shake.  
Thou art the Portion I have sought;  
Thy precious blood my soul has bought.

The above beautifully paraphrases a verse from Asaph’s Psalm 73, reminding us again that in spite of the trials of life, God is the giver of strength and inheritance that our body (flesh) heart, soul, strength, and mind desires:<sup>6</sup>

*My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the  
strength of my heart and my portion for ever. (Ps. 73:26 - RSV)*

Now comes the petition that is repeated, with slight alterations, at the end each of the three stanzas:<sup>7</sup>

Lord Jesus Christ,  
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,  
Forsake me not! I trust Thy Word.

The musical accompaniment to “Lord Jesus Christ” begins with by bold, descending half notes that emphasize to whom the petition addressed and then continues with words reminiscent of those spoken by Thomas who, upon seeing Christ in the flesh, declared that Jesus was his Lord and God.<sup>8</sup>

The final words of the first stanza bring to mind Christ’s visitation to his disciples and to Thomas in particular. And, like Thomas, we too confess Jesus as Lord and God; the incarnate Word in whom we place our confidence and trust; the One Lord who loves us dearly and will never forsake us.

### ***The Second Stanza – Our Vocation and the Comfort of Christ***

The first half of stanza two continues the prayer to our Savior with a meditation on what it means to live as a follower of Christ. It is a beautiful reflection on Luther’s concept of vocation, wherein we dedicated our lives in service to our family, occupation, community, church, and the world. Here Schalling reflects on the Lord’s bounty:

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave  
My body, soul, and all I have  
In this poor\* life of labor.      \*Poor here means humble.

The reference to body, soul, and all we have, calls to mind Luther’s explanation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Article of the Apostles’ Creed:

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<sup>5</sup> See Romans 8:31-39, especially verses 38-39.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 22:37-40: And he (Jesus) said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.” (RSV)

<sup>7</sup> The use of repetition to emphasize certain words in a poem is an ancient literary device that finds its roots in the Psalms. This type of poetic repetition has aesthetic and emotional appeal. When coupled with music, the dramatic effect of the repetition is intensified as we sing: “Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord” & “my prayer attend, my prayer attend.” Note also Martin Luther King’s memorable use of poetic repetition in his famous “I have a dream!” speech, Jesus’ use of repetition in the Beatitudes (“Blessed are the poor...Blessed are the meek...” etc.), and the use of repetition in the liturgy e.g., “Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us.” See poetic terms such as *Anaphora* (“The repetition of a word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, or lines to create a sonic effect.”) and other literary devices that employ poetic repetition for emphasis at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/resources/learning/glossary-terms>.

<sup>8</sup> John 20:26-28: *Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”* This is, perhaps, the highest accolade spoken directly to Christ in the New Testament. After nearly 2,000 years, I believe that Thomas has been vilified enough. Had I been absent from the first meeting at which Jesus appeared, my reaction would have been the same as his. The Doubting Thomas agnomen has overshadowed his subsequent repentance and profound acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord and God.

“...that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my member, my reason and all my senses... for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him.”

God has given us bounteous and varied gifts to be used to be used in service to God and our neighbors both near and far away; this is our true vocation. As seen in the next three lines of stanza two, this true and proper work is done as we, having been lavished with grace, live our lives in service to others.

Lord, grant that I in every place  
May glorify Thy lavish grace  
And serve and help my neighbor.

Two scripture passages come to mind in response to the above:

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16 - RSV)*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10 – RSV)*

The Matthew passage speaks metaphorically regarding our vocation as “the light to the world.” Jesus encourages us to glorify God’s “lavish grace” as our light of service shines forth so others may see it and glorify our Father in heaven. The Ephesians passage reminds us that we have nothing to boast about regarding our works; however, we are enabled to walk in them because we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. To those who have been saved by grace, doing God’s work is a privilege and source of joy.

The second half of the stanza is a call to remain faithful and bear our cross as we follow Christ until that time when we pass from this life into the comforting arms of Jesus.

Let no false doctrine me beguile  
And Satan not my soul defile.  
Give strength and patience unto me  
To bear my cross and follow Thee.  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,  
In death Thy comfort still afford.

This could be seen as a paraphrase of the following prayers:

O Lord...You have safely brought us to the beginning of this day. Defend us in the same with Your mighty power and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Your governance, may be righteous in your sight...<sup>9</sup>

...I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.<sup>10</sup>

After petitions that we be held safe from the enticing nature of false doctrine and the entrapment of our souls by Satan, we see, in this penultimate stanza, where the hymn is leading us. We pray for strength and patience to take up our cross and follow our Master and are bold to ask that we be comforted in the hour of our death.

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<sup>9</sup> From the Collect for Grace - LSB pgs. 228 & 241.

<sup>10</sup> Excerpt from Luther’s Morning Prayer found in *Luther’s Small Catechism* (see LSB p. 327 – Section 2 – Daily Prayers) and LSB page 295 under *Daily Prayer for Individuals and Families*.

## *The Final Stanza – The Wonder beyond All Wonders!*

To summarize, the preceding two stanzas spoke of the following:

Our love of Christ and His mercy to us;  
Earth and heaven are empty without Christ's presence;  
Unshakable trust in Christ in the midst of heartbreak and sorrow;  
A life of poor (i.e. humble) labor that might glorify God as we, in faith, serve others;  
Resistance to Satan and false teaching;  
Strength and patience to take up our cross and follow Jesus;

The first two stanzas serve as the prelude to the hymn's ultimate petition in which the themes of love and unwavering trust find their fulfillment in God's promise that we, like Poor Lazarus, shall be carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham and receive eternal comfort, peace, and joy because of what our Savior has done for us though His sacrifice on the cross.<sup>11</sup> For those who are in distress, suffering from illness, facing their final hours, or grieving over loss of a loved one, the following words are a comforting and confident proclamation of the Good News:

Lord, let at last Thine angels come,  
To Abram's bosom bear me home,  
That I may die unfearing;  
And in its narrow chamber keep  
My body safe in peaceful sleep  
Until Thy reappearing.

To die unfearing till Christ's reappearing is our final prayer. Here the poem takes on a slightly different tone as Schalling's gentle text leads us to an image of peaceful sleep until the final return of Christ. Death is but a brief slumber from which we shall be gently awakened by our Savior.

And then from death awaken me,  
That these mine eyes with joy may see,  
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,  
My Savior and my Fount of grace.

It will be as if we were children sleeping safely at home in the comfort of our beds, and then awakened by our parents knowing that everything is well. Our eyes will see the face of our Savior not through the haze of a dim mirror, but we shall behold Christ in all His glory; the veil will be lifted, and with joy we shall see the Son of God, our Savior and Fount of Grace!<sup>12</sup>

Lord Jesus Christ,  
My prayer attend, my prayer attend,  
And I will praise Thee without end.

J. S. Bach chose this stanza as the closing chorale of his St. John's Passion; a simultaneously tranquil, but powerful reflection on death and resurrection.<sup>13</sup> The last three lines above are sung with boldness, conviction, and in the certainty that Jesus indeed attends to our prayer. All is fulfilled because Jesus took on the sins of the world and, through His sacrifice, death itself is vanquished; we will rest in the bosom of Abraham, but even more, we shall rest in the bosom of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> We will awaken to the wonder beyond all wonders! No sorrow - only

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<sup>11</sup> See Luke 16:19-31 – *The Parable of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus*

<sup>12</sup> See I Corinthians 13:12.

<sup>13</sup> To watch a performance Bach's St. John's Passion (BWV 245) go to: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrIrr\\_sYIwc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrIrr_sYIwc). "Lord, They I Love with All My Heart" (Chorale: *Ach Herr, lass dein lieb Engelein*) begins at the time stamp: 1:35:55 in the web site video.

<sup>14</sup> See James Weldon Johnson's (1871-1938) *Go Down Death: A Funeral Sermon*, from his collection of poems entitled *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*. In *Go Down Death*, God commands Death to go down to Earth and carry the departed Sister Caroline up to her heavenly home. His poem begins and ends as follows: "Weep not - weep not, She is not dead; She's resting in the bosom of Jesus." An electronic version of *God's Trombones* can be found online at:

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/johnson/johnson.html>.

everlasting joy! No sighing - only the unending gladness of heaven wherein we will see our Lord and our God and praise Him without end.

*And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah 51:11 (RSV)*

***Prayer:***

***A Doxology to Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart***

Lord, Father, truest heav'nly friend,  
All praise and thanks to Thee ascend  
For all Thou hast created.  
Lord, Holy Spirit, comforter,  
Hold us in faith for evermore  
And guide us when we falter.  
O Dearest Jesus, God's own Son,  
May we, in faith, place trust and run  
Our race with our eyes fixed on Thee,  
Until in heav'n Thy face we see.  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
Our prayers attend, our prayers attend,  
And we shall praise Thee without end.

*The prayer above can be sung to HERZLICH LIEB as a doxology.  
A Doxology to Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart  
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**“Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” (LSB #708)**

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If Thou, Lord, wert not near me.

And should my heart for sorrow break,  
My trust in Thee no one could shake.  
Thou art the Portion I have sought;  
Thy precious blood my soul has bought.  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
My God and Lord, my God and Lord,  
Forsake me not! I trust Thy Word.

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave  
My body, soul, and all I have  
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Lord, grant that I in every place  
May glorify Thy lavish grace  
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Let no false doctrine me beguile;  
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Text: Martin Schalling, 1532-1608; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-78, alt.  
Tune: *Zwey Bücher...Tabulatur*, Strassburg, 1577; setting in LWB by Friedrich Zipp, 1914-97  
Text and tune: Public Domain  
Tune: HERZLICH LIEB  
Meter: 887 887 88 88 88