

Third Sunday in Lent

“May God Bestow on Us His Grace” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #823-24)

“You can’t out give the Lord!” My wife’s Aunt Annie used to say that, and Martin Luther begins this hymn with the same thought—how the “brightness of (God’s) face” shines on his people, guiding to life eternal. We are blessed!

However, God’s grace is never the *private* keepsake of his people; so stanza one (and Psalm 67, on which the entire hymn is based) hurries to point out the Church’s mission also—our calling not only to receive “Christ’s riches without measure,” but also to give Christ’s riches away. We are a blessing also!

Stanza two anticipates the day when the light of Christ has prevailed over every darkness. The whole world will sing its grateful hymn of praise, for God will “judge the earth” (that is, “rule equitably,” as in Psalm 98:9) and sin’s terrible tyranny will be defeated. All will be “pastured” by God’s Word and led in “paths of righteousness” (as in Psalm 23:2-3).

In stanza three, humanity is called to praise God by an increase of “all good works.” Even the land “hears” the Word of God’s blessing and by yielding “plenteous fruit” gives the world of nature its part also in this great “Te Deum” to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the end all believers are invited join the chorus in “solemn awe” and faithful “Amens.”

You may choose to sing this classic hymn with the Psalm 67 tune long associated with it, (ES WOLLE GOTT UNS GENÄDIG SEIN/LSB #823), or with a new tune called ELVET BANKS, (LSB #824) named by its 20th century British composer David Lee as an homage to the University of Durham, his alma mater.

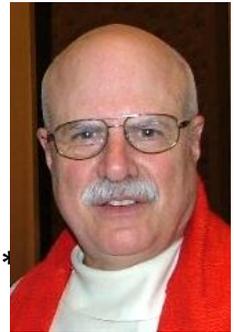
Make no mistake, however—we can never out give the Lord, but we are still quite capable of “stopping up” His mercy! One year, when the summer downpours came, water was cascading off our church roof, over the gutter and all down the west wall. “Look,” said the kids, “it’s a waterfall!” The property committee was less appreciative, and soon a nifty cherry-picker truck

was lifting a roofer forty feet up for a look. "No mystery here!" he shouted, tossing down the half-full plastic pop bottle he found blocking the top of the downspout.

So richly God showers grace into our lives—more than enough to bless his people and his world both. Consider yourself—consider your congregation—as a “down-spout” for all that generous love of God for the world. Identify whatever may be “bottling up” those blessings, and ask our gracious Lord for help removing it.

Feast on “Christ’s riches without measure”—and share the Gospel wealth as well.

David J. Susan
Madison, WI



May God bestow on us his grace, with blessings rich provide us;
and may the brightness of his face to life eternal guide us,
that we his saving health may know,
his gracious will and pleasure,
and also to the nations show Christ's riches without measure
and unto God convert them.

Thine over all shall be the praise and thanks of ev'ry nation;
and all the world with joy shall raise the voice of exultation.
For thou shalt judge the earth, O Lord, nor suffer sin to flourish;
thy people's pasture is thy Word their souls to feed and nourish,
in righteous paths to keep them.

O let the people praise thy worth, in all good works increasing;
the land shall plenteous fruit bring forth, thy Word is rich in blessing.
May God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit bless us!

Let all the world praise him alone;
let solemn awe possess us.
Now let our hearts say, "Amen!"

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Text: Martin Luther; English translation by Richard Massie

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