

Proper 22 (October 5, 2014)

“O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High” (*Lutheran Service Book* #544)

To write a devotion on this hymn is an exciting assignment as it traces the life of our Savior from birth to resurrection. It's the Church Year in five stanzas! It's the same Savior that the author of the text, Thomas à Kempis, believed in and trusted his life in the late 1400s. Perhaps as starters, as we read this devotion, we can take a moment to reflect on how Christ's life is mirrored in our life.

We are mere 'mortals' as stanza one points out. God's love is so 'broad', 'deep', and high that he came as a child for each one of us. Did you get that? He came for us personally to the point of 'beyond all thought and fantasy'. So even as we sing this hymn with the assembled people of God it is the personal touch that we are reminded of in stanza one.

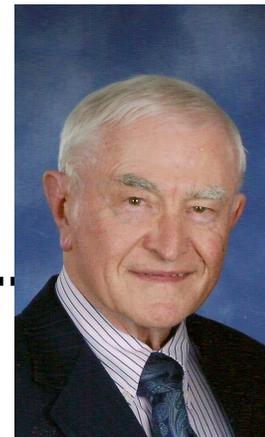
Now what did our Savior do for us 'personally'? He faced temptations, hunger and all the 'human' elements that we face. But, who came out on top? It is he that the 'tempter overthrew'. That's why we can meet all of the daily challenges that we will face during this week.

Not only did our Savior have to live with all the challenges of temptation, hunger and so forth. He had to be beaten and undergo the tortured death on the 'shameful cross' for us. Many of those reading this devotion will think back how that 'shameful cross and death' was depicted through the music chosen during the solemn period of last Lent and Holy Week. Instead of 'choosing music' to depict our Savior's suffering what if we had to do it? Well, we don't — 'for us (he) gave up his dying breath!

Now at this point in the hymn as the writer plays the hymn for the assembled people of God he chooses to play a fanfare because he is using the associated hymn melody, DEO GRACIAS. It is the fanfare that introduces the resurrection stanza. "He is Risen" — "He is Risen Indeed". That is what Thomas à Kempis pens "For us (note 'for us personally') he rose from death; for us he ascended; for us he sent his Spirit; all for the purpose of getting us through this week 'strengthened', guided and cheered — how about a smile!

But —it's not over —give me another fanfare please. "All Glory to our Lord and God, for love so deep, so high so broad: the Trinity whom we adore forever and forevermore"...in the 1400s...and in 2014...today...tomorrow and every day that God puts us on this planet to live out the life that our Savior has outlined and lived for us!

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O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
Beyond all thought and fantasy,
That God, the Son of God, should take
Our mortal form for mortals' sake!

He sent no angel to our race,
Of higher or of lower place,
But wore the robe of human frame,
And to this world himself he came.

For us baptized, for us he bore
His holy fast and hungered sore;
For us temptations sharp he knew;
For us the tempter overthrew.

For us he prayed; for us he taught;
For us his daily works he wrought,
By words and signs and actions thus
Still seeking not himself but us.

For us by wickedness betrayed,
For us, in crown of thorns arrayed,
He bore the shameful cross and death;
For us he gave his dying breath.

For us he rose from death again;
For us he went on high to reign;
For us he sent his Spirit here
To guide, to strengthen, and to cheer.

All glory to our Lord and God
For love so deep, so high, so broad;
The Trinity whom we adore
Forever and forevermore.

Text: Attributed to Thomas à Kempis (1390-1471). English translation prepared by Benjamin Webb, 1819-85, altered.
Tune: DEO GRACIAS, English, 15th century.

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