

Proper 8 (June 29, 2014)

“Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #685)

{Luke 18:31-43 ???}

The singing of this hymn raises a lot of images in our minds. Some of us had this hymn sung at our baptisms. The gathered community, including our grandparents and baptismal godparents, joined together in prayer for their little ones who has just been received into a covenant relationship with our Lord.

Some of us had this hymn sung at our confirmation services. Some of the same people had gathered. They had observed our preparation for this day. They knew something of what we knew. They were more aware of how we were acting.

Some of us had this hymn sung on our wedding day. It was a public statement of what we intended to do in our married lives. It was the prayer of those who were gathered. They had some memory of our past. They had earnest prayers for our future. It was their prayer that this man and this woman would “ever walk with Jesus.”

Some of us may have had this hymn sung at our commissioning or our ordination into the ministry to which we had been called. It would have been our prayer and the prayer of the community.

I would expect that this is what the author had in mind when he was moved to write this hymn. *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal* shares a bit of the experience of Pastor J. Adam Rimbach in his first experience with the hymn and his translating it into English. He first heard it at a convention of the Central District in La Porte, Indiana when Dr. Franz Pieper was preaching. Dr. Pieper had this hymn sung. Pastor Rimbach immediately fell in love with it.

Pastor Rimbach was starting a school in Ashland, Ky. His wife taught the hymn to the children in the school. They loved it, but didn’t understand what they were singing. So one Sunday afternoon, after finishing his sermon for the English evening service, he decided to tackle a translation. He says: “And lo! The heavenly Muse came to my assistance, and within an hour or two I had something like a translation completed. “ That translation, with minor changes, has stood through the ages.

The original Biblical text upon which this hymn was based is Luke 18:31-43. The disciples have heard Jesus predict what lay before him. They did not understand, but they were willing to “walk with Jesus.” The text concludes with the blind man, who continually called out for Jesus attention, upon being healed, followed Jesus.

We do not understand everything about Jesus – but we are determined to follow him. Our blindness has also been healed. We are so very grateful. Whatever lay before us, “let us ever walk with Jesus.” Others have prayed it on our behalf. We pray it for so many others.

Rev. Vern Gundermann
St. Louis MO



Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure,
Through a world that would deceive us and to sin our spirits lure.
Onward in his footsteps treading, pilgrims here, our home above,
Full of faith and hope and love, let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where you guide.

Let us suffer here with Jesus and with patience bear our cross.
Joy will follow all our sadness; where he is, there is no loss.
Though today we sow no laughter, we shall reap celestial joy;
All discomforts that annoy shall give way to mirth hereafter.
Jesus, here I share your woe; help me there your joy to know.

Let us gladly die with Jesus. Since by death he conquered death,
He will free us from destruction, give to us immortal breath.
Let us mortify all passion that would lead us into sin;
And the grave that shuts us in shall but prove the gate to heaven.
Jesus, here with you I die, there to live with you on high.

Let us also live with Jesus. He has risen from the dead
That to life we may awaken. Jesus, you are now our head.
We are your own living members; where you live, there we shall be
In your presence constantly, living there with you forever.
Jesus, let me faithful be, life eternal grant to me.

Text: Sigismund von Birken, 1626-81; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*, 1978, alt.
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[This devotion was prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music, Concordia University Chicago. It may be downloaded and printed for local use.]