

Hymns About Our Daily Life

Even as We Live Each Day

Although this hymn about our daily life was written by Martin Luther in 1524, it was only translated in 1978. The hymn only appears in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (#350). The hymn speaks to us today as we are expected to dedicate so much energy to our work, careers, and education. Our lives are consumed in our consumer culture of working for goods!

But notice the two images of a flood presented by Luther - the flood of LIFE in the water and blood of the holy sacraments and the flood of our fear of DEATH. We may experience death in unexpected and unnatural ways of accidents, terror, and crimes.

Luther's hymn assures us of God's grace and forgiveness in a crescendo of four lines of God's holiness and love.

*Even as we live each day,
Death our life embraces.
Who is there to bring us help,
Rich, forgiving graces?
You only, Lord, you only!*

*Baptized in Christ's life-giving flood;
Water and his precious blood -
Holy and righteous God,
Holy and mighty God,
Holy and all merciful Savior,
Everlasting God,*

*By grace bring us safely
Through the flood of bitter death.
Lord, have mercy.*

God is Our Refuge in Distress

These are the words in a poem written by Martin Luther that was published in *The German Psalmody* and translated into other languages after his death. These words are based on Psalm 46 and they speak directly to our expectations of God. We will face hardship and calamity in this life. It is only natural that we turn to God for help but our expectation that He will spare us of all danger is not what God promises.

God is our refuge and in our most difficult situations we should turn to God for strength, guidance, wisdom, patience, and that our faith will remain strong. God always delivers on His promise to take care of us - for He paid for our forgiveness with the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, His only Son.

It is because of our baptism and our faith that Jesus Christ is in our hearts - this is why Martin Luther writes, "*The Lord of Hosts is ever near!*"

*God is our refuge in distress,
Our shield of hope through every care,
Our Shepherd watching us to bless,
And therefore will we not despair;
Although the mountains shake,
And hills their place forsake,
And billows o'er them break
Yet still will we not fear,
For Thou, O God, art ever near.*

*God is our hope and strength in woe;
Through earth He maketh wars to cease;
His power breaketh spear and bow;
His mercy sendeth endless peace.
Then though the earth remove,
And storms rage high above,
And seas tempestuous prove,
Yet still will we not fear,
The Lord of Hosts is ever near.*

Happy who in God's Fear Doth Stay

*Happy who in God's fear doth stay,
And in it goeth on his way;
Thine own hand shall thee find thy food,
So liv'st thou right, and all is good.*

*So shall thy wife be in thy house
Like vine with clusters plenteous,
Thy children sit thy table round
Like olive plants all fresh and sound.*

*See, such rich blessing hangs him on
Who in God's fear doth live a man;
From him the curse away is worn,
With which the sons of men are born.*

*From Zion God will prosper thee;
Thou shalt behold continually
Jerusalem's now happy case,
To God so pleasing in her grace.*

*He will thy days make long for thee,
With goodness ever nigh thee be,
That thou with thy sons' sons may'st dwell.
And there be peace in Israel.*

Happy the Man who Feareth God

The Reformation brought marriage into the church and this hymn recognizes the importance of marriage and the family as a divine institution. It is based on the beautiful words of Psalm 128 which inspires us in understanding the role of a husband, wife and children as a family in the faith of Abraham. Our lives have meaning because we know that our family will be together with Jesus Christ in heaven for eternity. This is why families have their children baptized, worship in churches, and read God's Word. Martin Luther wrote this hymn in 1524, although the tune was revised in 1533 to the present one.

"May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, and may you live to see your children's children." (Psalm 128:5,6)

There are more than 70 million fathers in the United States. Father's Day was made a holiday in June 1972.

*Happy the man who feareth God,
Whose feet His holy ways have trod;
Thine own good hand shall nourish thee,
And well and happy shalt thou be.*

*So shall thy wife be in thy house
Like vine with clusters plenteous,
Thy children sit thy table round
Like olive plants all fresh and sound.*

*See, such rich blessing hangs him on
Who in God's fear doth live a man;
From him the curse away is worn,
With which the sons of men are born.*

*From Zion God will prosper thee;
Thou shalt behold continually
Jerusalem's now happy case,
To God so pleasing in her grace.*

*He will thy days make long for thee,
With goodness ever nigh thee be,
That thou with thy sons' sons may'st dwell.
And there be peace in Israel.*

A New Song Now Shall be Begun

The Reformation was less than two years old from Luther's excommunication and on July 1, 1523, Heinrich Voes and Johann Esch became the first martyrs. They were Augustinian monks in Belgium who followed Luther's teachings on faith instead of works. It is said that this is the first hymn of the Reformation!

Heinrich Voes and Johann Esch were monks in Luther's Augustinian order. The charges against them were never read in public, as was the custom, for fear that the people would protest. After they were burned, rumors were spread that they recanted as they were being burned and Luther was appalled at this deception. Without the mass media, a folk ballad was the most practical way of honoring these men for their faith in Jesus Christ.

*A new song now shall be begun,
Lord, help us raise the banner
Of praise for all that God has done,
For which we give Him honor.
At Brussels in the Netherlands
God proved Himself most truthful
And poured His gifts from open hands
On two lads, martyrs youthful
Through whom He showed His power.*

*One was named John, a name to show
He stood in God's high favor.
His brother Henry, well we know,
Was salt of truest savor.
This world they now have left behind
And wear bright crowns of glory.
These sons of God had fixed the mind
Upon the Gospel story,
For which they died as martyrs.*

*From where the Foe in ambush lay,
He sent to have them taken
To force them God's Word to betray
And make their faith be shaken.
Louvain sent clever men, who came
In twisting nets to break them.
Hard played they at their crooked game,
But from faith could not shake them.
God made their tricks look foolish.*

*Oh, they sang sweet, and they sang sour,
They tried all their devices.
The youths stood firmly like a tow'r
And overcame each crisis.
It filled the Foe with raging hate
To know himself defeated
By these two lads, and he so great.
His rage flared high, and heated
His plan to see them burning.
Their cloister-garments off they tore,
Took off their consecrations;*

*All this the youths were ready for,
They said Amen with patience.
They gave to God the Father thanks
That He would them deliver
From Satan's scoffing and the pranks
That make men quake and shiver
When he comes masked and raging.*

*The God they worshiped granted them
A priesthood in Christ's order.
They offered up themselves to Him
And crossed His kingdom's border
By dying to the world outright,
With ev'ry falsehood breaking.
They came to heaven pure and white;
All monkery forsaking,
They turned away from evil.*

*A paper given them to sign—
And carefully they read it—
Spelled out their faith in ev'ry line
As they confessed and said it.
Their greatest fault was to be wise
And say, "We trust God solely,
For human wisdom is all lies,
We should distrust it wholly."
This brought them to the burning.*

*Then two great fires were set alight,
While men amazed did ponder
The sight of youths who showed no fright;
Their calm filled men with wonder.
They stepped into the flames with song,
God's grace and glory praising.
The logic choppers puzzled long
But found these new things dazing
Which God was here displaying.*

*They now regret their deed of shame,
Would like to slough it over;
They dare not glory in their blame,
But put it under cover.
They feel their gnawing infamy,
Their friends hear them deplore it.
God's spirit cannot silent be,
But on Cain's guilty forehead
He marks the blood of Abel*

*The ashes of the lads remain
And scatter to all places.
They rise from roadway, street, and lane
To mark the guilty faces.
The Foe had used a bloody had
To keep these voices quiet,
But they resist in ev'ry land
The Foe's rage and defy it.
The ashes go on singing.*

*And yet men still keep up their lies
To justify the killing;
The Foe with falsehood ever tries
To give the guilt clean billing.
Since these young martyrs' holy death
Men still continue trying
To say, the youths with their last breath
Renounced their faith when dying
And finally recanted.*

*Let men heap falsehoods all around,
Their sure defeat is spawning.
We thank our God the Word is found,
We stand it its bright dawning.
Our summer now is at the door,
The winter's frost has ended,
Soft buds the flowers more and more,
By our dear Gard'ner tended
Until He reaps His harvest.*