

Hymns to Inspire People Around the World

A Mighty Fortress is Our God

*A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need That hath us now o'er taken.
The old evil Foe now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal.*

*With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord, and there's none other God; He holds the field forever.*

*Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill, They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none, he's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.*

*The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife,
Though these all be gone, they yet have nothing won; The Kingdom ours remaineth.*

This hymn first appeared in a 1531 hymnal although it was likely sung in 1527 as the plague killed thousands in Europe. It is based on Psalm 46. This hymn clearly deserves a place on the top of the charts! The hymn is the "Marseillaise of the Reformation" and was sung at the state meeting of the Diet of Augsburg. In Luther's time the people sang this hymn in the streets and by martyrs in exile and at their death. This hymn is considered the national hymn of Protestant Germany!

This hymn continues to appear in our popular culture. It was sung during the funeral services of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and during the Prayer Service for victims of 9/11 at the National Cathedral.

All Praise to You, my God, this Night

*All praise to You, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light.
Keep me, O keep me, King of kings,
Beneath the shelter of Your wings.*

*Forgive me, Lord, for this I pray,
The wrong that I have done this day.
May peace with God and neighbor be,
Before I sleep restored to me.*

*Lord, may I be at rest in You
And sweetly sleep the whole night thro'.
Refresh my strength, for Your own sake,
So I may serve You when I wake.*

This hymn was written by the Anglican (Episcopal) Bishop Thomas Ken (1637 - 1711) who lived in England. Both his parents died during his childhood. He was the chaplain to King Charles II, imprisoned and acquitted during the reign of King James II. He lived during the Glorious Revolution in England when William & Mary arrived from Holland supporting Protestant beliefs.

This hymn was written for the evening and directs our thoughts in praising God for the blessings of this day, asking for forgiveness from God and our neighbors, and giving us a restful night of sleep in preparing us for serving God tomorrow. In our 21st century lives, sleep has become a scarce resource for many as the stress and pace of our "normal" daily lives experiences an emotional roller coaster of emails, rude behaviors, tension, and self-centered personalities. The hymn is not about sleep but about doing God's work of serving others and finding opportunities to share God's love and promise of forgiveness with another person.

St. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 2:14 that "*through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.*" This is how the good news has been revealed throughout history - by people sharing it with another person they care about.

Away in a Manger

*Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay;
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

*The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus: look down from the sky
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.*

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay
close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care;
prepare us for heaven to live with you there.*

Although the text has been contributed to Martin Luther, it is unlikely that he wrote the words. The tune was composed by James R. Murray and first published in 1885 in *Dainty Songs for Little Lads and Lasses*. James Murray was born in Andover, MA in 1841 and active in the New Church in Chicago until his death in 1905.

The third verse can be credited to Rev. John McFarland, a Methodist minister from Maplewood, NJ, who wrote it between 1904-1908. Today, this is more than a popular children's song at Christmas, as it is a favorite around the world because it illustrates that we have a personal God who keeps His promises and came into our world to redeem us from all the forces of evil! God is LOVE and we are LOVED!

Welcome to Earth, Thou Noble Guest

*Welcome to earth, Thou noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
Thou com'st to share my misery;
What thanks shall I return to Thee?*

*Ah, Lord, who hast created all,
How weak art Thou, how poor and small,
That Thou dost choose Thine infant bed
Where humble cattle lately fed!*

*Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
It yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.*

*For velvets soft and silken stuff
Thou hast but hay and straw so rough,
Whereon Thou, King, so rich and great,
As 'twere Thy heaven, art throned in state.*

Johann Sebastian Bach was inspired by this hymn and he wrote three versions of this glorious Christmas song. The first version was performed in Nuremberg in 1747 on the occasion of Bach's entry as the 14th member of Mizler's Music Society in Leipzig. The second arrangement was part of BWV 769a which included six trio sonatas for the organ and the last version is part of the *Great Eighteen Chorale Preludes*. Bach's brilliant sound of ringing bells announces the Savior's birth in a way that unites all children with faith who are Redeemed by God, our heavenly Father!!!!

Amazing Grace

*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far
and Grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

*When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.*

The lyrics of *Amazing Grace* are the biographical story of John Newton. His mother taught him how to pray to Jesus Christ before she died. At age 11, Newton traveled the sea with his father and at the age of 19 he was taken from his father's ship and forced to join the British navy (impressment). He was later a servant to the captain of a slave ship and traveled from Sierra Leone to America. He marked the date of May 10, 1748 as the day of his conversion. When his ship was about to sink during a violent storm, he proclaimed, "*Lord, have mercy on us!*"

*T'was Grace that taught my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed.*

He was influenced by the Great Awakening movement in New England, the preaching of George Whitefield, and the music of the Methodist evangelist, John Wesley. After he retired as the captain of a slave ship, he felt called to become a minister but the Archbishop of York (England) refused to ordain him. Newton eventually preached at Olney (Buckinghamshire), conducted small group prayer meetings, and wrote many popular hymns. (*How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds!*, *Let Us Love*, and *Sing, and Wonder, Approach, My Soul, the Mercy-seat.*)

*Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far
and Grace will lead me home.*