

3. Amazing Grace

“For by grace you have been saved through faith.” (Eph.2:8)

Even the sound is sweet-grace, grace-it is amazing. Who wrote the words about grace that hundreds of years later are sung around the world?

He was just a little boy of seven when his mother died. Life in 1732 London, England, had been difficult for the young mother and her child. His father was a captain on a slave trading ship and was seldom with them. For those first seven years, the little boy was nurtured in the Christian faith because of his mother’s loving guidance.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6, NIV). This describes the early education of John Newton, composer of the beloved hymn “Amazing Grace.”

After his mother’s death and several years of living with relatives, John joined his father aboard ship. Captain Newton was a different influence from what John had known in his formative years. Daily, John witnessed cruel and harsh treatment toward the natives of West Africa who had been forced from their homes and sold as slaves. He grew hard and cold in this environment, and became a sailor whose goal was power, his motivation greed.

There were years of this degrading life before John Newton experienced a major turning point. During a severe storm at sea, he recognized his inadequacy in the face of death. Fear gripped him and he prayed to be spared. The sea eventually calmed. John Newton’s inner life also had a new calmness and peace as he began to care for those he had once despised. Eventually he abandoned the life of the slave-trading ship. Hearing God’s call to ministry, he entered seminary and was ordained into the Church of England. When he was thirty-nine years old, he began his preaching and music ministry. Of the many hymns he wrote, “Amazing Grace” is the one favored by millions.

John Newton died at the age of eighty-two. Before he left this earth, he was heard to say, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.”

O God, I gratefully receive your loving gift of pardon. It is amazing. Amen.



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.

John Newton, 1779

4. Go Tell It On The Mountain

“Go up to a high mountain... lift up your voice with a shout... do not fear...say ‘Here is your God!’ (Isa.40:9)

The carolers in our town who sing from door to door often sound like a band of angels. One Christmas, in the midst of feverish preparations in the kitchen, I heard them on my front porch, singing one of my favorite hymns, “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.”

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” was printed in a 1907 publication by Thomas Fenner, *Original Folk Songs of the Negro as Sung on the Plantation*. It was then entitled “Christmas Plantation Song.” The original verses have been deleted from modern hymnals.

Two verses were added by John W. Work, Jr., a history professor at Fisk University. His son, John W. Work, III, was the author of *American Negro Songs and Spirituals* (1940), which gives significant insights into the origins of the spirituals. He says, “Many of them were passed down from generation to generation, and after much singing, the texts and melodies varied from place to place. But the gospel message was always proclaimed.”

The gospel message of Jesus is certainly proclaimed by those who sing this carol. We are reminded of his words in Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

Our family will never forget the sermon my husband, Woody, preached on Christmas of 1994, “Where Does God Fit In?” A child had asked that question when he looked at the manger scene. He had heard that God did something wonderful at Christmas, but he didn’t see God in the manger.

Our son-in-law Edward, a nonbeliever, shared with us the good news of the birth of Jesus in his own heart. He joyfully said, “Life will never be the same again. I saw Dad’s enthusiasm as he preached. Now I understand where God fits in. He was in the manger-as baby Jesus.”

We were reminded that thousands of years ago the prophet Isaiah said, “Lift up your voice with a shout! Say, ‘Here is your God!’ “The glorious message never changes.

Jesus, we will go and tell. In your precious name. Amen.



Refrain: Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching
o’er silent flocks by night,
behold throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light.

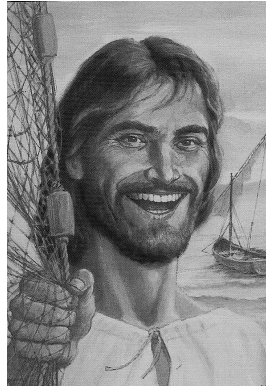
African American spiritual; adapt. by John W. Work, Jr., 1907



*For God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son,
so that everyone who
believes in him would not
perish but have eternal life.*

John 3:16

"Risen Christ by The Sea"



Dear Friends,

In the Bible we read these words of Jesus,
"Believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1)
As we believe, we can know God's perfect love.

The following stories and songs tell of God's
plan for our lives.

God bless you,
Lucy N. Adams

Long's Chapel United Methodist Church
"Jesus Loves You Fellowship"

www.joyfulnoiseletter.com

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1. Jesus Loves Me

"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love." (John 15:9)

This simple, childlike song has its beginnings in a very short poem in a very long novel. Today, millions of people know the poem "Jesus Loves Me." The novel has been forgotten. Anna Bartlett Warner wrote this poem for the book *Say and Seal*, which she coauthored with her sister Susan in 1860. One of the characters speaks the words of loving assurance to a dying child. "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

The Warner sisters were born in New York State and lived all their lives along the Hudson River, adjacent to the West Point Military Academy. On Sunday mornings they taught Bible study classes to the cadets in their home.

When they died, each of the sisters was given military honors in recognition of their spiritual contributions to the cadets. Their home on Constitution Island was willed to the Academy and was made into a national shrine.

A well-known composer and publisher of gospel hymns, William Bradbury, discovered this poem and developed it into the version we all know and love today. Feeling the simple power of its message, he added the chorus in 1861, which emphasizes its theme: "Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so."

Karl Barth, one of the greatest theologians in this century, said that these first two lines capture the depths of the Christian gospel.

When I feel that what I do is not very significant, I remember the brevity of this little song and the millions of people it touches. The simple form can distract me from its deep, fundamental message. With God's love flowing through me, my simple deeds become mighty acts of God that produce abundant life.

Did I give a loving smile to a lonely person today? Did I pat a shoulder that is heavy with burdens? Did I give a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul?

Jesus, you bless me with your love and presence. Help me to reach out and love others in your name. Amen.



Jesus loves me! This I know,
for the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong;
they are weak, but he is strong.

Refrain: Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.

Anna B. Warner, 1860 (St. 1)

Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (1989). For further study read the following:
John 10:10, John 14:1, John 16:33.

2. Softly And Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." (Eph. 4:1)

The dynamic preaching of evangelist Dwight L. Moody was over: he lay on his deathbed. Composer Will Thompson sat by that bed for their final visit. Dr. Moody gestured to his friend. Thompson leaned in close.

"Will," said Moody, "I had rather have written 'Softly and Tenderly' than anything I have been able to do in my life."

Will Thompson, author of "Softly and Tenderly," was born on November 7, 1849, in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, but the family soon moved to East Liverpool, Ohio. His father, who was a banker and member of the Ohio state legislature, urged his son to enter the business world.

But music was an integral part of Will's makeup. He enrolled instead at the New England Conservatory of Music and graduated with honors. When he established his own publishing firm in his hometown, the business prospered, as did his talent for composing and singing. At that time, his interest centered on patriotic and popular songs.

But one day, as he sat in one of Dwight Moody's evangelistic crusades, Thompson was mightily touched by the hand of God. He experienced a major change in his outlook on life. He now wanted to write songs that would lead others to a deeper knowledge of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. He had a new mission: "Softly and Tenderly" became a symbol of that new vision.

Although we do not know the exact circumstances of the song's birth in 1880, the line "Ye who are weary, come home," is very revealing. Could it be that Will Thompson remembered his earlier resistance to God's call?

That phrase also reminds me of Jesus' call in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Even though I have answered God's call to discipleship, I get weary. When I wrestle with decisions that are confusing, I must listen to the soft and tender call of Jesus and ask for his direction.

The final call that comes to everyone is death. I am at peace when I read the promise of Jesus in John 14:2, "In my father's house are many mansions I go to prepare a place for you" (KJV).

Lord, keep the ear of my heart open to your voice. Amen.



Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me;
see, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.

Refrain: Come home, come home; you who
are weary, come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling, calling,
O sinner, come home!

Will L. Thompson, 1880