

Reflections from a Service of Hymns

All the Way My Saviour Leads Me

Fanny Crosby is known as America's hymn queen. She wrote over 9,000 hymns, most of which were written after she turned forty. Some of our best-known hymns were written by her pen. Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine; Praise him, praise him, Jesus our blessed redeemer; To God be the Glory; all come out of her gift for words.

What you may not know is that Fanny was blind from infancy. An infection in her eyes at six weeks of age and the remedy of a traveling doctor left her eyes damaged and blindness followed. But that did not stop Fanny from living a full and productive life.

Turns out Fanny had an amazing capacity for memorization. As she and her grandmother spent time together, learning about the world, her grandmother described everything to her on their walks, shared the words of scripture, which Fanny memorized, and taught

Fanny many things. Fanny took it all in. She left home to go to the New York School for the Blind and, because Brail was not widely used yet, her capacity for memorization was of great benefit.

Fanny became a teacher and advocate for the school, traveling around the country raising funds and awareness. She married and together with her husband, a former student and then music teacher at the school, shared a love of music and poetry.

It came to pass that "Publisher and hymn writer William B. Bradbury was unhappy with the quality of many of the hymns that were submitted to him for publication. He heard of Fanny's talent, and after verifying her ability, promptly hired her to write hymns for his company, telling her, 'While I have a publishing house, you will always have work!'"¹

It can be said of Fanny, and of all the female and male composers and writers of hymns, that in their music and words we experience the depth of human emotions and concerns, as well as the hope, forgiveness, love of, and grace of God that is found in the scriptures and through the lived experience of God's people.

And that is what the scriptures and hymns are, the lived experience of God's people. The first words of 1 John are the testimony of what the people have lived, "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the world of life – this life was revealed [in Jesus], and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you

¹ <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/fanny-crosby-americas-hymn-queen-11630385.html> Accessed April 7, 2018.

the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us...We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete” (1:1-2, 4).

Both the Gospel of John and the words of 1 John are about hope, of light coming to the darkness of our lives, of forgiveness, and of peace. Again from 1 John we read, “if we walk in the light as he himself is the in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1:7). And from the Gospel of John, the testimony or witness of those who were the first Christians, who saw Jesus after the resurrection, the first Easter people, and Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (20:21-22).

Our work now is to be the ones who testify as witnesses to the work of God the creator, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit in our lives. We each do this in our own way, those who are hymn writers do it through word and music, sculptors through sculpting, doctors and nursing in healing, teachers through teaching, parents and care-givers through love and devotion, miners, foresters, geologists, through their care of creation through the work they are called to, grandparents through experience and compassion. Each of us is called to witness, to testify, to teach about and share our own experience and the experience of those whose stories we know, and sharing with others the amazing love of God for people.

Let us ponder our role and God’s leading in this as we sing Fanny Crosby’s song of hope...

All the Way My Saviour Leads Me

1. All the way my Saviour leads me;
what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt his tender mercy
who through life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,
here by faith in him to dwell;
for I know, whate'er befall me
Jesus doeth all things well.

2. All the way my Saviour leads me,
cheers each winding path I tread,
gives me grace for every trial,
feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,
and my soul athirst may be,
gushing from the rock before me,
lo, a spring of joy I see.

3. All the way my Saviour leads me,
oh the fullness of his love!
Perfect rest to me is promised
in my Father's house above.
When my spirit, clothed immortal,
wings its flight to realms of day,
this my song through endless ages,
'Jesus led me all the way!'
Words: Fanny J. Crosby, public domain