**My Song Is Love Unknown**

**Hymn #430**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This is an incredible hymn. Interestingly, the melody by John Ireland is from the 20th Century, with Ireland dying in the year of my own birth. Samuel Crossman is the author of the text, but he credits George Herbert’s (1593-1632) epic poem *The Temple* as being the inspiration to his poetic writing of this work.

This text is like unto the idea of the Reproaches of the Liturgy for Good Friday in which Jesus addresses those who are crucifying Him. The Reproaches contrast the kindness of Christ unto them, even as they crucify Him. It is designed to bring to the mind of those singing this hymn their own guilt in what Jesus endured upon the cross.

Unlike the reproaches however, our hymn makes it a meditation focusing upon the Gospel, the “love unknown” which is expressed most vividly with Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross. That unknown love is the love of God in Christ Jesus for sinners. And most importantly, we can each claim – as we do in this hymn – that love of Christ is for me, “my Savior’s love to me.”

*My song is love unknown, My Savior’s love to me, Love to the loveless shown That they might lovely be. Oh, who am I That for my sake My Lord should take Frail flesh and die?*

 We have a head knowledge of God’s love, we know it, but this love is unknown. Who would die for another? Especially, when the other is loveless? In honest reflection, we are loveless. We love self, sometimes even at the expense of our own family – our closest loved ones. When this realization strikes us fully, why would Jesus take my flesh and die for me? I know all that He did for me, yet I treat Him – and His Father who sent Him – as I do? Why?

*He came from His blest throne Salvation to bestow; But men made strange, and none The longed-for Christ would know. But, oh, my friend, My Friend indeed, Who at my need His life did spend!*

How sad it is that He gave up His power, might, reign, and glory to bring salvation to sinners. From the time of Adam the promise of His coming had sounded forth for generations – through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and all the prophets. Yet when He appeared, how did they treat Him? They declined to know Him. He was to them – and to me – the best of friends!

How many other friends have I failed, who chose to remain friendly? Christ is so far above the best of any friends I can name in this life, for He, in my need, in the midst even of my denials of Him as my friend before unbelievers, gave His life – spent His life – as the redemption payment for my sinfulness – even my unfriendliness

*Sometimes they strew His way And His sweet praises sing; Resounding all the day Hosannas to their King. Then “Crucify!” Is all their breath, And for His death They thirst and cry.*

This coming Sunday is Palm Sunday. We will join in rejoicing at the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. We will raise our voices in the sweet praises of Hosanna to our King. This same town gathered people again only a few days later who cried out something different, they cried out, “Crucify Him!” Were these the same people who sang His praise only days earlier? We do not know. Some surely may have been. But we simply do not know.

We do know that word Hosanna means, “Save Now!” In crying out to crucify Him, they are, without their knowledge, begging for the very thing – in fact, the only thing – which can save them from sin and death. His crucifixion is the only thing that can “Save them now” and forever. Although, that is not what they mean by their clamoring for His death.

*Why, what hath my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite? He made the lame to run, He gave the blind their sight. Sweet injuries! Yet they at these Themselves displease And 'gainst Him rise.*

We sit here in our pews these two thousand one hundred years later and question why they did this? What had He done? How could they be worked up into such a state of rage and anger against Him who had only spoken kindly and brought healing to their sick? All Jesus did for them in kindness and love, yet they are displeased with Him? He even raised the dead, but now they desire Him to die?

*They rise and needs will have My dear Lord made away; A murderer they save, The Prince of Life they slay. Yet cheerful He To suff'ring goes That He His foes From thence might free.*

Pilate even saw the unreasonableness of their demands. He knew it was the Jewish leadership that had stirred up the crowd. Their jealousy of the popularity of Jesus, His ability to heal, His winning over the masses with His Word, and they responded with rage. Pilate chose the most, vile criminal in prison, one deserving of the death penalty, to offer as the one to be freed – or Christ. He thought the madness would end and reason be restored, they would never free the sick murderer. He was wrong, He who brought all life into existence was sent to the cross. Yet that was God’s plan from before creation.

For the joy set before Him, that is, all sinners, Jesus endured the cross, scorning its shame is what we learn in the letter to the Hebrews. (Hebrews 12:2)

Yes, it was God’s plan that even the foes of Jesus might have even their sins against Him – against God – paid in full. His suffering and death would be that atoning sacrifice which frees them, and all, from their sins.

*In life no house, no home My Lord on earth might have; In death no friendly tomb But what a stranger gave. What may I say? Heav'n was His home But mine the tomb Wherein He lay.*

God took on human flesh, our Lord wandered His creation without an earthly home. Even in His death, it was the tomb of a stranger in which He was laid. Why? How could this be? Simply put, He had left His home – His heavenly home and throne – to die the death you and I deserve. The home we deserve? Our sinfulness, if rightly acknowledged, would declare that it is the tomb in which He lay.

That dear friends in love unknown. This is what your God has done for you. He has freed you from fear of the grave. Sin and death have been conquered, fully and completely defeated, when the Son of God took our sins and death into Himself.

This love is completely foreign to anything that you and I can even begin to comprehend by our feeble human understanding. Love unknown because it makes no sense to us? Why would the Creator die for His creatures who love so much to be disobedient to Him?

This love is not something we grasp with the mind. That is why God gives to us His Word, for it is in the Word that His Holy Spirit works faith. Faith may not always come with complete and full understanding in our minds. Faith simply clings to that which is love unknown, Jesus, God’s Christ.

We pray that God would keep us in this faith in Christ Jesus – till our last day – and unto life everlasting.

 *Here might I stay and sing, No story so divine! Never was love, dear King, Never was grief like Thine. This is my friend, In whose sweet praise I all my days Could gladly spend!*

So grant this too us, O Lord. Amen.