**A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth**

**TLH #142 & LSB #438**

Good Friday - 04.02.2021

Paul Gerhardt is considered by many to be the most beloved of all those who wrote hymns auf Deutsch, that is, in German. Only the hymns of Martin Luther outnumber his. This hymn has long been designated for Good Friday, and along with his other hymn, “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded,” may be the most significant for this day in Lutheran practice.

Initially Gerhardt’s hymn boasted ten verses. In The Lutheran Hymnal six are used, and in Lutheran Service Book they have been paired down to only four. This is not the only hymn to have been gutted for the sake of expediency. Sad indeed it is that so much has been lost in order to conserve time that we might have to spend singing hymns – just so we can get out and get back to “our lives.” Too often we are in a hurry just to get the hymns sung that we fail to immerse our minds and hearts into the texts and fully appreciate all that is expressed in them. How often do we open to a hymn, get discouraged by the number of verses there are – knowing pastor will make us sing all of them – and so do not even pay attention to the beautiful richness of God’s grace revealed in them.

Today’s hymn fits our times, it expresses wonderfully the understanding that our resilience is solely upon the grace of God in Christ’s redemption. For our meditation today, we will use the verses as found in The Lutheran Hymnal.

Beginning in the garden of Eden, we are pointed forward to a sacrifice which would be made to pay the atonement price for the sins of all. In Abraham’s words to Isaac on the way to give him as a sacrifice, God’s people were pointed to a Lamb which would be that sacrifice. And, by the finger and voice of John the baptizer, we have ever known Jesus as that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This Lamb endured all that was done to him silently, just as had been prophesied that He would in His Passion. Can it be expressed any better than the text which flowed forth from Pastor Gerhardt’s pen?

A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth, The guilt of all men bearing; And laden with the sins of earth, None else the burden sharing! Goes patient on, grow weak and faint, To slaughter led without complaint, That spotless life to offer; Bears shame and stripes, and wounds and death, Anguish and mockery, and saith, "Willing all this I suffer."

Yes, willingly He suffered. He offered His sinless life unto death, bearing the weight of our sinfulness. But this is His Father’s will.

Out next verse declares that Christ be the Lamb who gives His life as the sacrifice to save the souls of men. It is in the Son of God that you and I gain the favor of the Father. In Christ, we are freed from that which holds for all the greatest terror – death.

This is no easy task, as revealed by the voice of the Father speaking to The Son in the latter portion of the next verse. He knows what He is requesting of His Son to endure, and what it will accomplish. He instructs His Son to bear the guilt and condemnation by which we have rightly earned God’s wrath. He is to be Lamb who bears that wrath and suffers the punishment sinfulness deserves. In so doing, He is willing His Son to suffer so that the fruit of salvation might be shared with us.

This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great Friend, The Lamb of God, our Savior; Him God the Father chose to send To gain for us His favor. "Go forth, My Son," the Father saith, "And free men from the fear of death, From guilt and condemnation.

The wrath and stripes are hard to bear, But by Thy Passion men shall share The fruit of Thy salvation."

Our next verse begins with Jesus’ response to the will of the Father, expressing His willingness to do as the Father desires.

In the latter half of the verse, we express our full understanding of Christ’s Passion. The sacrifice of the Father, the willingness of the Son, and the horrific cost – all out of the incredible, merciful love of God to save us.

"Yea, Father, yea, most willingly I'll bear what Thou commandest; My will conforms to Thy decree, I do what Thou demandest." O wondrous Love, what hast Thou done! The Father offers up His Son! The Son, content, descendeth! O Love, how strong Thou art to save! Thou beddest Him within the grave Whose word the mountains rendeth.

How does the believer respond to such love of God? How should the Christian live, knowing the great sacrifice His Heavenly Father made to offer His only begotten Son to pay for his/her sins? What we ought to do is clearly stated in the next verse. Do not only listen closely, but ponder deeply – what we are confessing that our DAILY lives ought to be.

From morn till eve my theme shall be Thy mercy's wondrous measure; To sacrifice myself for Thee Shall be my aim and pleasure. My stream of life shall ever be

A current flowing ceaselessly, Thy constant praise outpouring. I'll treasure in my memory, O Lord, all Thou hast done for me, Thy gracious love adoring.

This new life of faith that we live is borne as a fruit of the Spirit’s indwelling us. It is only by His work that we have a complete understanding of God’s grace.

This leads us also to a greater confidence. What is it that looms large in our daily lives? Yes, the fragility of this life! We are all too aware that we walk each day “in the valley of the shadow of death.”

Now this hymn makes it personal to you and to me. I have a renewed life. Do I fear? No longer! I know the truth. I know the love of God in Christ Jesus. I rest in that “cooling shade,” as it were, of the cross. Even in the midst of all the storms and troubles of this life. Christ is my assurance. In all the struggles of this life I rest secure in the holy ark of Christ’s Church.

Of death I am no more afraid, New life from Thee is flowing; Thy cross affords me cooling shade When noonday's sun is glowing. When by my grief I am opprest, On Thee my weary soul shall rest Serenely as on pillows. Thou art my Anchor when by woe My bark is driven to and fro On trouble's surging billows.

How many times in the Scripture do we see men fall to their knees in terror when the glory of the Lord appears before them? Moses falling to his face before the burning bush. The Israelites in terror at the foot of the Holy Mountain. Isaiah expressing his woe for he is a man of unclean lips. Shepherds on a Judean hillside before they are heralded the message of the newborn Savior. The disciples upon numerous occasions, a now becalmed boat and the mount of transfiguration among others.

You dear friends have a new confidence in the face of that glory of God. You know His will toward you because it has been declared in the suffering and death of the only begotten of the Father upon the cross.

Yes, you and I know only too well the grievous nature of our sinfulness, it is appalling. It is a dreadful weight which bends us to bow in deep repentance. But we know greater still the love of God.

You and I know it full well. Our sinfulness has been paid in full, Christ declared from the cross, “Tetelestai!” It is finished! All is accomplished! You and I now look forward to that last day – to standing before the glory of God – and of that day we can boldly sing:

And when Thy glory I shall see And taste Thy kingdom's pleasure, Thy blood my royal robe shall be, My joy beyond all measure. When I appear before Thy throne, Thy righteousness shall be my crown, With these I need not hide me. And there, in garments richly wrought As Thine own bride, I shall be brought To stand in joy beside Thee.

Yes, I look forward to that day! Come, Lord Jesus! Yea, quickly! Amen