He is risen!

**Awake, My Heart, With Gladness**

**LSB #467 (& TLH #192)**

Resurrection of our Lord – Sunrise

04.04.2021

(He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!)

Some are thinking it is to early to be so joyous at this hour. Yes, a bit groggy are some eyes so early on this day of the Resurrection of our Lord. But this Paul Gerhardt hymn, entitled "Awake, My Heart, with Gladness" seems appropriate for this hour on this holy day.

As we have for this Lenten season’s mid-week services, we will use this wonderful hymn as our text for meditation. I know, some may claim that especially on this day of the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord, Scripture should be used as the text. Indeed, they are right! Look to the bottom of the hymn and note that Colossians 2:15, Romans 8: 35-39, Genesis 3:15, Romans 6:4 are the textual basis for this hymn. I might add that the resurrection narratives of the Gospels are also necessarily texts for this hymn.

It could be said that this hymn by Pastor Gerhardt might, by itself, be a fit homily in poetic form. It might be good just to preach just as it is.

Although it has been sung by us before, how many would find it to be “new”? Why, you ask, would a familiar hymn be new? Because many may know the tune, but not the words. How often do we sing hymns just to get through them, paying little if any attention to the text? Especially if it is more than three of four verses. How often have we prayed that the organist doesn’t make the hymn drag, so we can get through it quickly.

How often do we honestly pay close enough attention to the message of the text we are singing that we fully realize what we are confessing in song? Do we let the words go anyplace other than in our eyes and out our mouths? Do the words move our hearts to see ourselves in the and understand them as a true confession of “MY” faith?

Today I am unwrapping this hymnic sermon to proclaim God's holy Word to you this blessed Easter sunrise morning. So, join me! Awake our hearts with gladness.

Originally in nine stanzas, this hymn presented a story, as it were. It is my hope that we can join in the celebration walk.

It is early morning. We find the tomb empty. Our Lord and Savior has given His life as the atoning sacrifice for sin. But today a new day has dawned. He was laid where our bed should be made – in the grave – the wages of our sin. But today we rejoice in exultant gladness, the tomb is empty.

Awake, my heart, with gladness, See what today is done; Now, after gloom and sadness, Comes forth the glorious sun. My Savior there was laid Where our bed must be made When to the realms of light Our spirit wings its flight.

Our tears were shed when Christ was forsaken upon the cross for our sakes. Satan gloated in gleeful triumph as that somber procession brought Christ to the tomb, wrapped Him in spices and cloth, and then laid Him on the cold, hard, slab. But that was simply because he did not understand! It was upon the cross that the sinless One became sin, and put death to death, burying it in His tomb.

Christ’s empty tomb declares the victory complete and turns Satan’s joy. to sorrow. Christ’s triumph resurrection from the grave declared His strength to save.

The foe in triumph shouted When Christ lay in the tomb; But lo, he now is routed,

His boast is turned to gloom. For Christ again is free; In glorious victory He who is strong to save Has triumphed o'er the grave.

Do you understand what you now behold? What incredible joy and gladness? We now have peace with God! There is never any need for that which holds the greatest sadness – sin and death. Joyful is Christ’s Resurrection for it declares the greatest truth which can never be taken from me. God’s own Son has won FOR ME the victory.

This is a sight that gladdens--What peace it doth impart! Now nothing ever saddens The joy within my heart. No gloom shall ever shake, No foe shall ever take The hope which God's own Son In love for me hath won.

What is the greatest power and temptation which Satan and death can bring to bear against us? Is it the temptation to sin? No! That’s easy! It is the temptation to rely upon ourselves. Satan wants us thinking that either we do not need what Jesus has accomplished – we’re good enough. Or he wants us thinking that there is something left that we have to do to win our salvation.

But all is accomplished. Hell, Satan, and sin have no more power over us. Our next verse makes it personal as we sing it. These foes have no power over ME, nor, as you sing it, over YOU. They still rave and storm, but it is like dancing in the rain.

Now hell, its prince, the devil, Of all their pow'r are shorn; Now I am safe from evil, And sin I laugh to scorn. Grim death with all his might Cannot my soul affright; It is a pow'rless form, Howe'er it rave and storm.

Look around you at the world in which we live. It is in constant combat against us, seeking to drag us from faith and confidence. Yes, it is truly a battle. It appears that the things of this world are fighting against us, but as we are reminded in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph. 6:2)

But the world’s work against us is in vain, we have already overcome. Our hearts are free in the knowledge of what is ours in Christ. Troubles, tribulations, and even the darkest days cannot disturb the depths of our hearts, for the victory is ours in Christ – the resurrected One

The world against me rages, Its fury I disdain; Though bitter war it wages, Its work is all in vain. My heart from care is free, No trouble troubles me. Misfortune now is play, And night is bright as day.

I awake each day with the gladness of heart that I am in Christ Jesus! He is MY Savior! He abandons ME never, but feeds ME of Himself – look to the table He sets before us. And as He destroys death, sin, sorrow, pain, hell, and all our enemies, so too do I – and you – in Him to whom we are united by baptism in faith.

Now I will cling forever To Christ, my Savior true; My Lord will leave me never, Whate'er He passes through. He rends death's iron chain; He breaks through sin and pain; He shatters hell's dark thrall; I follow Him through all.

Yes, as we walk through this life – this valley of the shadow of death – we will endure sufferings, as did Christ. We do share His cross in this life. But, we have a greater joy, the crown of life is ours. Therefore, with all boldness we can look forward to that last day and sing:

He brings me to the portal That leads to bliss untold, Whereon this rhyme immortal

Is found in script of gold: "Who there My cross has shared Finds here a crown prepared; Who there with Me has died Shall here be glorified."

So let it be on that glorious day. Yes, it is good that we Awake our hearts with gladness this holy and blessed morn – and every morning.

He is risen!

He is risen, indeed! Alleluia. Amenis risen, indeed! Alleluia!)