For the second time we have a hymn written by a layman. Johann Franck was a lawyer by trade and a poet by desire. His hometown of Guben was severely ravaged during the Thirty Yeas’ War by Swedish and Saxon troops who invaded the city. Seeing the devastation wreaked upon his beloved community, he comes to know that the only place where true joy could be found was in Jesus. (Interesting tidbit is that Russians sang this song in 1724 as Peter the Great had it translated into that language.)

**Jesus, Priceless Treasure**

**Hymn #743**

Mid-week Lent IV

03.17.2021

This beautiful text expresses the unfailing love of God for a humanity broken by the many ravages of sinfulness – both in ourselves and wrought in our lives by others. Sadly, my German is not good enough for a decent translation, but there is imagery in this first verse of Jesus as not only friend, but as Bridegroom – and the Church as His Bride. But that is only in the German. Unfortunately, the English translator did not render that imagery into the English meaning that, while our version is faithful, it is not quite as rich as it might possibly be.

There are things we should remember always from this first verse. *Jesus, priceless treasure, fount of purest pleasure, truest friend to me, ah, how long in anguish, shall my spirit languish, yearning, Lord, for Thee? Thou art mine, O Lamb divine! I will suffer naught to hide Thee; naught I ask beside Thee!*

Last Sunday we talked about faith, trusting in God above all things. That love and trust of God is what this verse expresses. Jesus is our priceless treasure. Why is He our “priceless treasure?” Because ***you*** are ***His*** most priceless treasure. What equivalency can you put upon the purchase price He paid to free you from the bonds of your slavery to sin and death? You know how He purchased you? Yes, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious, blood – and His innocent suffering and death. Christ gave His own life for you, dying upon the cross in order to purchase you back from all sin and death.

Bride and bridegroom are to be the most priceless gifts to one another, those through whom we are to find our greatest pleasure. Christ alone is the fount of purest pleasure – He alone is the perfect Bridegroom.

Yeah, I know, we think many things in our lives are pure pleasure. I had the joy of taking a young man whom I baptized and confirmed out Steelhead fishing. It was truly incredible to watch him hook into a couple fish. I took great “pleasure” in that – just as I take great pleasure in just being out fishing. But do we consider that Christ is the fount of that pleasure, that He created all that exists? Or at that time, even claiming we worship God best in nature, we forget all about Him in that moment? Or if the fish are not biting, we do find time to blame Him?

Each day we face things that make us question life in general. Why does this happen? Who brought this tribulation into my world? Where did this problem come from into my life? How come this situation is assaulting me? Sinfulness abounds!

Christ is the fount through which the purest pleasure flows. Christ forgives sins! Christ feeds me His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen my faith. Christ pours out these gifts that I may have no fears in this life, for I have life eternal in him – the purest pleasure. He is the *truest friend to me.*

You and I have had friends that fail us, friends that betray us, friends who have hurt us. Some of Jesus’ friends did such things to Him, His disciples abandoning Him and even denying Him with curses in His darkest hour. But Jesus has never lied to us, hurt us, nor betrayed us.

That is why as we endure hardship and suffering in this life, we long for that day when we will join Him eternally. We languish in anguish, yearning for the Lord’s redemption, His revealing of His eternal kingdom. We know it comes only in Christ, the Holy Lamb of God. Come, Lord Jesus.

Knowing what we know about our eternal future, we continue with our second verse, resting in the arms of our Savior. It is only there that we can rest securely, knowing that our foes who would molest us – sin, death, and Satan – cannot reach us to harm us in any way detrimental to our eternal well-being. We are secure only as we are in our Savior’s embrace.

*Though the earth be shaking, every heart be quaking.* What is causing fear in the world today? Incredible, record-breaking, snowfalls west of here? Threat of tornadoes down south? COVID?  *Jesus calms my fear. Lightnings flash and thunders crash; yet, though sin and hell assail me,* Let’s get to the heart of it, sin and hell are the worst of it. Things in this world are passing away, they all fade. So that which could bring us the worst harm are those things which have the potential to be eternally destructive. In the face of them, *Jesus will not fail me.*

With our baptismal confidence in Christ, we can boldly sing in defiance of Satan, death and all fears that they bring into our lives. *Satan I defy thee; Death, I now decry thee, fear, I bid thee cease.* Neither the things of this world which are enticing us, nor the threats which come at us in this physical realm, can harm nor alarm us. Why? Because we know of the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. We hear God’s promise with those words from Philippians after every sermon.

Now, we confess it in song. It is so very true that *God’s great pow’r guards ev’ry hour.* In fact, all creation has a better understanding of God’s dominion and power than some people do, for many are the people who deny God and His dominion. On the other hand, *earth and all its depths adore Him,* and *silent bow before Him.*

How should we then respond to the things of this world? Let’s face it, the earthly pleasures are the things which, unfortunately, consume too much of our time and into which we are too heavily invested. Understanding this is why we pray God grants us the attitude of our third verse. *Hence, all worldly treasure! Jesus is my pleasure, Jesus is my choice. Hence, all empty glory! What to me thy story told with tempting voice? Pain or loss or shame or cross shall not from my Savior move me, since he chose to love me.*

We have to remind ourselves again and again over the tempting siren voices of worldly and fleshly desires, that God chose us to be His own children – that we are part of His eternal plan. No matter what may come upon us, trial or tribulation, pain, loss, shame or cross, they shall not destroy our faith. Why? Because He chose to love us. We did not choose Him, but He chose us!

We face the threats of this world with confidence and hope. In fact, what is it that most stands in the way of confident hope? What is it the brings about the most fear? What is it we desire not to talk about? Death, the wages of sin.

How many have said something along the lines of, “don’t you know that while you might not die, your choice might endanger the life of another unto death?” The world would have us believe that existence in this flesh is the greatest there is. There is this worldly attitude that somehow “death,” the cessation of physically breathing, thinking, and doing in this mortal coil is a negative thing. I recently heard a pastor speaking in a funeral sermon about the 97 year old individual who had just died, and had now received the ***desire*** of their heart – for she had expressed it as her desire – and that she was now with the Lord!

That is exactly what we confess in the fifth verse; *Evil world, I leave thee, thou canst not deceive me, thine appeal is vain.* Embraced with true faith, we understand that this is indeed a fallen sinful world in which we live. It is vain to think this world is the most glorious thing. Sinfulness blinds us, so we beg God to not only forgive our infatuation with the things of this world, but to strengthen us to look forward to the glorious life that is ours beyond it – even further – to the joy that awaits us in resurrected bodies on the last day. It sounds like this, *Sin that once did blind me, get thee far behind me, come not forth again, past thy hour, o pride and pow’r; sinful life, they bonds I sever, leave thee now forever.*

Living our lives in Christ, gathering to have faith fed and nourished by Christ, we have a joy and peace that others cannot comprehend. No matter what assails us, Christ has already won the victory over it. Come the last day, as Christ rose from the dead, so shall we, to enjoy eternity in the perfected glory of a resurrection like His. It is why we can live each day today, in this mortal flesh, in perfect peace and joy.

Do you hear that life expressed in our closing verse? *Hence all fear and sadness, for the Lord of gladness, Jesus, enters in; those who love the Father, though the storms may gather, still have peace within. Yea, whate’er I hear must bear, Thou art still my purest pleasure, Jesus, priceless treasure!* So let it be in Jesus. Amen.