

Safe in the Arms of Jesus—November’s Hymn of the Month 2020

By

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Thanks to Ira Sankey’s book, **My Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns**, we have a very good account of how this hymn was written. The story goes like this. Mr. Doane came into a room in New York where Fanny Crosby was talking with Mr. Bradbury, the father of Sunday School music, and said to her, “Fanny, I have written a tune and I want you to write words for it.”

“Let me hear how the tune goes.” she replied. After Mr. Doane had played it over for her on a small organ, she at once exclaimed, “Why, that tune says ‘safe in the arms of Jesus’ and I will see what I can do about it.” She retired to an adjoining room where she spent half an hour alone. On returning, she quoted to Mr. Doane the words of this immortal hymn. It was first published in the book entitled, **Songs of Devotion. (My Life and the Story of the Gospel Hymns by Ira Sankey, page 263)**

Other accounts have Mr. Doane visiting Fanny’s apartment with only forty minutes before catching a train for Cincinnati, where he lived. He hummed a tune and within thirty minutes, Fanny had completed the hymn leaving him only ten minutes to catch that westbound. This all took place on April 30, 1868.

Safe in the Arms of Jesus went on to become one of Fanny’s most sung hymns. When asked about the inspiration for the song, she would reply, “I wrote it for the bereaved, especially for mothers who had lost children.” Did you know that Fanny was a mother herself? She was married to Alexander Van Alsteine, and the couple lived out on Long Island in a small cottage. Fanny gave birth to a baby while living on the Island. The child only lived for a week here on earth and was ushered home to Glory. To this day, we don’t if the baby were a girl or a boy. Fanny never recorded the answer to that question. All agree that this loss had a great effect on her, a sadness she carried for all her life. So devastating was this loss, it caused the couple to move back to the city. According to Bernard Ruffin, once back in New York, they took up separate residences.

I cannot help but think that **Safe in the Arms of Jesus** was written first and foremost to comfort the writer in her great loss. In the third verse, the words, “Jesus, my heart’s dear refuge,” express her heart’s cry; and knowing the story behind the hymn speaks volumes. Also, now you know why she was living in that flat on the poor side of New York when she wrote, **All the Way My Savior Leads Me**.

Gain and loss are a part of living here on planet earth. Life can be a disappointing experience—especially, if you don’t have that **Blessed Assurance** that Fanny wrote about. Yet life can also be a time of preparation for what is yet to come. For us who have placed our future in Jesus’ hands, we can truly say we are **Safe in the Arms of Jesus**. If you have never repented of your sins, asked God for forgiveness and invited Christ into your life, you need to do it today. Take Fanny’s words to heart, “Firm on the Rock of Ages, ever my trust will be.”

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There by His love o’ershaded,
Sweetly my should shall rest.
Hark! ‘tis the voice of angels

Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world's temptations;
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears;
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears!

Jesus, my heart's dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages
Ever my trust shall be.
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o'er;
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the golden shore.

Refrain:

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There by His love o'er-shaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest.