

Lutheran Service Book 528

Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

Wednesday, November 23 at 7 PM

Thanksgiving Eve – 2016

Advent begins this Sunday, November 27

Advent Wednesdays: Service 11; Free Meal 12; Free Meal 6; Service 7

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: On this eve of our national day of thanksgiving, we focus on the hymn, **“Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing.”** Before we get to the words, let’s learn more about the writer:¹

Charles Wesley grew up *going through the motions* of being a Christian; **then God transformed his life!** One result was his **“victory over...his unfortunate drinking habit. [He said,] ‘I was amazed to find my old enemy, intemperance, so suddenly subdued, that I almost forgot I was ever in bondage to him.’”**

Charles **“began to spread the news of what had happened to him. ‘In the coach to London,’ he wrote, ‘I preached faith in Christ. A lady was extremely offended (and) threatened to beat me. I declared I deserved nothing but hell; so did she; and must confess it, before she could have a title to heaven. This was most intolerable to her.’”**

Charles **“found a fruitful arena for ministry at the infamous Newgate Prison and allowed himself to be locked up with condemned men on nights before their executions, that he might comfort and witness to them during their final hours.”**

Then, *approaching the one-year anniversary of his conversion*, Peter Böhler said to Charles, **“If I had a thousand tongues, I**

¹ Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 27 and http://www.hymnary.org/text/o_for_a_thousand_tongues_to_sing_my

would praise Christ with them all.” Those words inspired the first line of today’s hymn. The hymn originally had eighteen stanzas, *but only seven are included in Lutheran Service Book*. “The text speaks of the power of Christ to heal, to forgive sins, to comfort, and to make us new and clean.”

Stanza 1:

- **Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing, My great Redeemer’s praise, The glories of my God and King, The triumphs of His grace!**
- We, like Charles Wesley, were in our sins and unable to escape; but then, “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8 NAS). So He redeemed us, *He bought us with His own holy precious blood*. Therefore, let us also desire many more tongues to give Him our praise – to express our **thanksgiving!**

Stanza 2:

- **My gracious Master and my God, Assist me to proclaim, To spread through all the earth abroad, The honors of Thy name.**
- Jesus is not only our awesome Savior, but also our “gracious Master,” *thus our Lord*. Since He is the head of the body – *the Church* – to which we belong, let us always look to Him for direction and assistance to tell others what He has done! Then, let us go forth with **thanksgiving!**

Stanza 3:

- **Jesus! The name that charms our fears, That bids our sorrows cease; 'Tis music in the sinner's ears, 'Tis life and health and peace.**
- Snake charmers *appear* to control snakes, but Jesus *actually* controls our fears and removes our sorrows. Since we are saved through Jesus, †our fears are gone and †our sorrows have been turned to joy – so let us be filled with **thanksgiving!**

Stanza 4:

- **He breaks the pow'r of canceled sin; He sets the pris'ner free. His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood avails for me.**
- Unfortunately we have all experienced it – *the power and prison of sin*; †we have done wrong, †we know it, and †we are trapped. **But, no matter the significance or the longevity or the horror of our sin,** Jesus' blood has washed us clean – so let us live with **thanksgiving!**

Stanza 5:

- **Look unto Him, ye nations; own, Your God, ye fallen race. Look and be saved through faith alone, Be justified by grace.**
- With today's news, we readily know we live in a fallen world; the human race – *oblivious to what is coming* – is marching toward a horrible eternity. But there is very good news: **Christ has not yet returned, today is the day of salvation;** therefore, as the hymn words declared, so let us call others to be sorry for their

wrongs and be saved by grace through faith. Then, let us join with all believers in shouting our **thanksgiving!**

Stanza 6:

- **See all your sins on Jesus laid; The Lamb of God was slain. His soul was once an off'ring made, For ev'ry soul of man.**
- We have all done wrong countless times; therefore, we can feel guilty and wonder about our entrance into heaven – *but we shouldn't!* ✦ Jesus is the very Son of God, ✦ the Father laid our sins upon Jesus, and ✦ Jesus, *as God's sinless Lamb*, took away our sins! So let us – *in thought, word, and deed* – express our **thanksgiving!**

Stanza 7:

- **To God all glory, praise, and love, Be now and ever giv'n, By saints below and saints above, The Church in earth and heav'n.**
- When we were completely empty and condemned, *God saved us and filled us up*; therefore, let us ✦ credit Him, ✦ admire Him, and ✦ gladly do His will – knowing that all such things are good ways to show our **thanksgiving!**

Conclusion: Let us pray: Dear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, help us to meditate on *our badness* and *Your goodness*; then let us gladly live with thanksgiving!

And all God's people said: **Amen!**