

Worship – July 2021

Hymns: The Stories of our Faith

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, you rule all the peoples of the earth. Inspire the minds of all women and men to whom you have committed the responsibility of government and leadership in the nations of the world. Give to them the vision of truth and justice, that by their counsel all nations and peoples may work together. Give to the people of our country zeal for justice and strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will. Forgive our shortcomings as a nation; purify our hearts to see and love the truth. We pray all these things through Jesus Christ. Amen.



Hymn of Praise – All Creatures of Our God and King (UMH 62 vs 1)

<https://youtu.be/Dp6Y-Tq57PM>

1. All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing, O praise ye! Alleluia! O brother sun with golden beam, O sister moon with silver gleam! O praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayers of Thanksgiving

What are you thankful for today? (Congregants offer expressions of gratitude. After each expression, the congregation responds with “Thank you God!”). In response to these prayers of Thanksgiving, let us sing the Doxology:

Doxology – Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

https://youtu.be/pxg358xJ6_w

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith – John 3:16 (KJV)

Let us affirm our faith by reading this familiar passage from the Gospel of John, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Hymn – God of the Ages (UHM 698 vs 1)

<https://youtu.be/CGNmJb9kyGI>

1. God of the ages, whose almighty hand leads forth in beauty all the starry band of shining worlds in splendor through the skies, our grateful songs before thy throne arise.

Scripture- John 8: 31-32 (CEB)

“Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, ‘You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teaching. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

Devotional¹

Our hymn of focus this month is “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” written by Samuel Francis Smith. Smith was born in Boston, Massachusetts on October 21, 1808. He attended the Boston Latin School from 1820-1825 and then graduated from Harvard in 1829. Next, he attended Andover Theological Seminary in 1831, and it was during his time in seminary that he wrote “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee.”

Smith’s friend, famed organist and composer Lowell Mason, had asked Smith if he could either translate some German music school books or write new text for the tunes in the books. Inspired by the German school children’s morning singing ritual, Smith decided to write a song for American school children to sing each morning. Smith picked his favorite tune from the music books, Muzio Clementi’s Symphony Number 3, and wrote “America” (or also known as “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee”) in thirty minutes. The song was first sung by a children’s choir at Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts on July 4, 1831

After completing seminary Smith was ordained at the Baptist Church at Waterville, Maine in 1834. He served several churches in the area from 1834-1842. Following his time serving local churches, he next went on to teach, serving as professor of modern languages at Waterville College. He also spent years serving in various editor positions for Christian and Baptist publications as well as continuing to write hymns, writing over 150 hymns during his lifetime. He passed away in 1895.

¹ Research for devotional came from these two sites: 1) Dr. Hawn. “History of Hymns: My Country, ‘Tis of Thee” *UMC Discipleship.org*, June 26, 2013. <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-my-country-tis-of-thee>. Accessed June 2021.

This hymn has been sung by many famous musicians and used in a variety of settings over the years. One of the most notable uses of this hymn came when Martin Luther King Jr. recited the first verse of the hymn in his famous “I have a Dream” speech on August 28, 1963. He shouted: “Let freedom ring!” from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC to over 200,000 civil right supporters.

Smith’s hymn continues to be a beloved song for Americans today, particularly as patriotic holidays are celebrated. As we celebrate 4th of July each year, it is common for us to think about freedom. Our Scripture verse today speaks of Spiritual Freedom: “Jesus said . . . ‘You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teaching. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,’” John 8:31-32 (CEB).

As Christians, Jesus is the truth that sets us free. As we come to know Christ and understand all Christ has done for us, we begin to experience an inner freedom. We come to understand that our sins are forgiven and that grace is available and extended to us all. We go from persons weighed down by past mistakes, shame, and guilt to persons who are deeply loved and accepted by an amazing Savior.

Lastly, we learned that Smith was inspired to write this song for American school children to sing at the start of each school day. This got me thinking of how important morning rituals can be. I recently read a meditation by grief specialist, Dr. Alan Wolfelt, who speaks of the importance of daily habits: “Our daily rituals can hold us up and sustain us during our time of grief.”²

² Wolfelt, Alan. *Grief One Day at a Time: 365 Meditations to Help you Heal After Loss*. Companion Press, 2016.

Not all of us are walking through a time of grief, but each of us will have hard days. Daily rituals can center us when life is heavy and chaotic.

I find morning rituals which involve spending time with God to be the most helpful. I'm not much of a morning person, so I say a quick and simple hello to God which goes something like this: "God, Thank you for this day. Help me to do your will today. It's going to be a great day!" What a huge difference this short ritual has made in my life. It helps me feel ready for whatever might arise throughout the rest of the day.

And in seasons of life that are particularly hard, this daily ritual holds even greater significance. For this ritual is a reminder that no matter how chaotic or hard life might become, God presence is never wavering and God walks through each step of life with us.

Prayer: Thank You Lord for Your forgiveness and grace. Thank You Lord for the love You extend to all persons. And thank You for never leaving our side. Amen.

Question: What morning rituals are a help or comfort to you?

Hymn- *America (My Country, 'Tis of Thee* – UMH 697)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqiOBbRzEgI>

1. My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing; land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride, from every mountain side, let freedom ring!

Favorite Hymns

Hymn – *This is My Father’s World* (UMH 144 vs 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIRVqikQg9U>

1. This is my Father’s world, and to my listening ears all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres. This is my Father’s world: I rest me in the thought of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

Hymn – *Amazing Grace* (UMH 378 vs 1, 2 and 6)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogxLNlgKM8c>

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.
2. ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed.
6. When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we’d first begun.

Hymn – *America the Beautiful* (UMH 696 vs 1)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3SPjk1ktRQ>

1. O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain; for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain! America! America! God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Communion Liturgy

We have come to the time in our service to remember Holy Communion. From Matthew 26, I would remind you that at the Last Supper “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Communion Prayer

We are not able to physically take Communion today so please hear this prayer as a reminder of this important sacrament:

My Jesus, we believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. We love you above all things and long for you in our soul. Since we cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We adore Thee in the Sacrament of Thy love. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

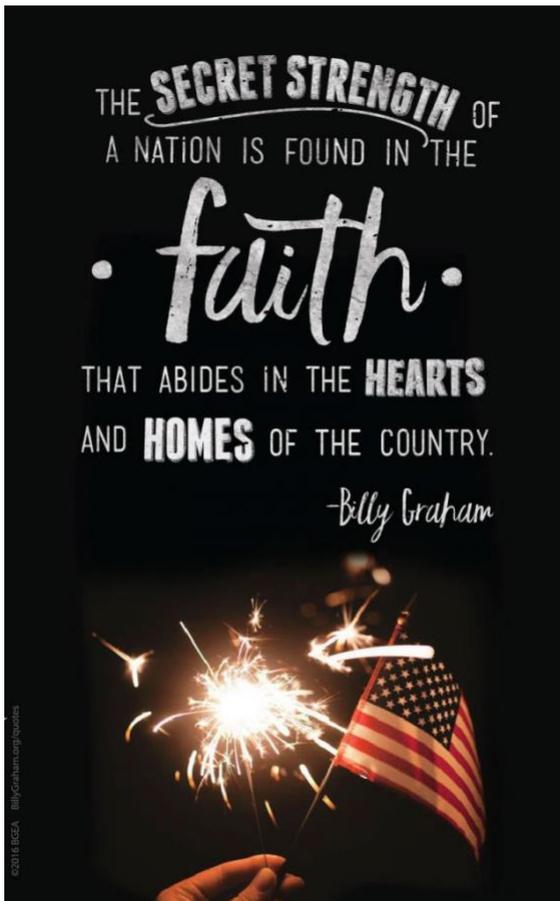
Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven; give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn – On Eagle’s Wings (UMH 143)

https://youtu.be/kzVL_Z2YL9g

And God will raise you up on eagle’s wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God’s hand.

Closing Thought from Billy Graham³



Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

³ <https://billygrahamlibrary.org/finding-abiding-faith-this-4th-of-july-and-free-downloads/>

