

Hymns of the Church (He Leadeth Me) – 19 August 2014, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (Psalms 23:1-3)

For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. (Psalms 31:3)

Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. (Isaiah 48:17)

This beautiful and devotional hymn was written in 1861 by John Henry Gilmore at the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia following a devotional study of the 23rd Psalm. During the study, Gilmore scribble the poem down on a piece of paper. His wife, without his knowledge, sent the hymn to a Baptist publication. Some years later he visited a church in Rochester, N.Y. where he picked up a new hymnbook and discovered his hymn therein. William Bradbury had found the poem in the Baptist publication and set it to music. Soon, it was known throughout the Christian world.

On autumn nights, as we are sleeping, the bears of the forest are nestling into their caves in the north to hibernate over the cold months ahead; the geese are winging south, and the squirrels are stocking their nests with the winter's rations. They do this at the leading of the One who is their Maker. The One who cares for the sparrow is the One who cares so very much for you. He leads the beasts of nature in their ways, and He leads you and me if we hear and follow His Voice. Do not be deceived; we are all led by some hand, either of God or some other. If that Hand is God, we shall be on the Narrow Way to His abode; but if of the other, then we shall be on the Broad and Crowded Way that leads to destruction. If you need to know the way, search the Scriptures for they speak of Christ, and Christ is the Truth, the Way, and the Life. Our Lord has led the Way to the Cross and to Life Everlasting. He goes with us into whatever place He calls us. As God said unto Jacob at Beersheba concerning his going down into Egypt: *"I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."* (Gen 46:4)

He Leadeth Me! O Blessed Thought

He leadeth me, O blessèd thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Refrain:

He leadeth me, he leadeth me,
by his own hand he leadeth me;
his faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me.

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
by waters still, over troubled sea,
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me. Refrain

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
nor ever murmur nor repine;
content, whatever lot I see,
since 'tis my God that leadeth me. Refrain

And when my task on earth is done,
when by thy grace the victory's won,
e'en death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me. Refrain

When our idle minds are drawn into imaginations of wickedness and temptations to sin, consider whose hand you are grasping to take you into that wicked place. It is the Prince of this World. Cast it off as a poisonous viper, for its sting is death. Grasp, instead, the same All-Powerful Hand that Peter so desperately reached up to as he sank in the waters of Galilee. *“He leadeth me, O blessed thought! O words with heavenly comfort fraught! Whate'er I do, where'er I be still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.”* In sunshine and shadow, the Lord is our Shepherd to guide and lead us into abundant fields of righteousness and unsurpassed joys. The comfort and assurance we gather from the hearing and reading of His Word is a strong Anchor as well as a Tow-Line of mercy. It will draw us to where we ought to go, and it will Anchor us there so that we drift not away from that place of security in Christ.

“Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom, sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom, by waters still, over troubled sea, still 'tis his hand that leadeth me.” What beauty of expression, and true! That deepest gloom is the Valley of the shadow of Death through which He leads and is ever present. Eden's bowers yet bloom among the thorns of this world for the Christian. Consider the joy of a baby baptized, or a young person whose confirmation is real and true to God – or the moment your eyes were opened and you first believed! The life of a Christian is fraught with the same troubles of those without God. They travel wonderful seas of serenity, punctuated by storms and billows that seem to sink our vessel. They face challenges of finance and occupations. The great difference is the fact that Christ will go with us “down into Egypt,” down into the place of dying, down into the tomb, and then up into the resurrection of life. He is with us throughout. We are never alone!

“Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, nor ever murmur nor repine; content, whatever lot I see, since 'tis my God that leadeth me.” Yes, we would like to never murmur or repine, but I am afraid that we do at times of doubt, murmur and repine. We wonder why, when we try so hard to be obedient children, our Father allows tragedies and misfortunes to befall us. No Son was more obedient than our Lord Jesus Christ, yet He suffered every humiliation and degradation – not because He was bad –

but because He was Good and committed to our salvation. If we are grasping the Hand of Jesus in our walk along His Way, we shall encounter humiliation, renunciation, persecution, and, maybe, even violent death. That is where the steps of Christ led during His earthly ministry. Walking hand-in-hand with Him, we, too, must take up our crosses daily and follow Him. (Luke 9:23) It is also true, however, that grasping His Hand; we follow Him in the resurrection unto life eternal. We must always remember, no matter the storm or darkness of the night, the morning calm will bring the joy of Heaven.

“And when my task on earth is done, when by thy grace the victory’s won, e’en death’s cold wave I will not flee, since God through Jordan leadeth me.” There are souls departing every moment for the dark domain of the tomb. Like the rich man who hoarded his wealth against the beggar, Lazarus, many will be buried eternally in the earth and suffer the fires of Hell. Others will suffer no darkness whatsoever but shall close their eyes at the touch of the comforting Angel of Death, and awaken, as did Lazarus, in the company of Angels bearing Him up to the bosom of Abraham. (see Luke 16:19-31) *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* (1 Cor 15:51-52) The cold wave of death is just a passing discomfort. Our Lord will lead us THROUGH JORDAN WATERS on dry land. Beyond those turbulent and turbid waters stand many of our beloved friends and family beckoning us on.

There is another dear old hymn that paints the picture of this final crossing of Jordan Banks: “Over There.” I include two verses in conclusion:

O think of the home over there,
By the side of the river of light,
Where the saints, all immortal and fair,
Are robed in their garments of light.
Over there, over there,
O think of the home over there,
Over there, over there,
O think of the home over there.

O think of the friends over there,
Who before us the journey have trod,
Of the songs that they breathe on the air,
In their home in the palace of God.
Over there, over there,
O think of the friends over there,
Over there, over there,
O think of the friends over there.