



I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. (John 1:23)

This is a Latin Hymn of Advent written by Charles Coffin (1736) and translated by John Chandler in 1837. The recommended tune in the Hymnal is *Winchester New* (William H. Monk, 1837) but, as usual, I have a favorite alternate tune – *Puer Nobis Nascitur* (Michael Praetorius, 1609) and harmonized by George R. Woodward (1910).

After 400 years of pervasive silence from Heaven (from Malachi to Matthew), John the Baptist, the promised forerunner appeared to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was first made mention of in the prophecy of Moses: *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. (Deut 18:15-18)*

There is an interesting parallel to the Rock at Horeb and the Lord Jesus Christ. As you will recall from Exodus, the Children of Israel complained at Rephidim for lack of water. God commanded Moses to go up Mount Horeb and smite the stone there. *Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Ex 17:6)* It was here at Horeb, which stands just before Sinai, that God granted mercy to the people of life-giving water. It was also at Horeb God appeared unto Moses in the Burning Bush with the appointment to go down into Egypt and lead His people out of bondage. Both Sinai and Horeb are referred to as the Mountain of the Lord – one (Sinai) represents LAW, the other, Mercy. Mercy has been fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor 10:1-4)* God always places mercy above the law just as the Mercy Seat is above the Ark of the Covenant behind the Temple Veil.

On Jordan's Bank, the Baptist's Cry

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Come, then, and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings from the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every breast from sin;
Make straight the way for God within;
Prepare we in our hearts a home,
Where such a mighty guest may come.

For Thou art our salvation, Lord,
Our refuge, and our great reward.
Without Thy grace our souls must fade
And wither like a flower decayed.

Stretch forth Thine hand, to heal our sore,
And make us rise and fall no more;
Once more upon Thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine.

To Him who left the throne of Heaven
To save mankind, all praise be given;
Like praise be to the Father done,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One.

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry Announces that the Lord is nigh; Come, then, and hearken, for he brings Glad tidings from the King of kings! To many in Israel, the message John bore was not at all glad tidings. The Jewish rulers had everything just the way they wanted it. They were the undisputed authorities in matters spiritual, and the keepers of the Temple treasury. Their vision and love were seared by their own greed and covetousness. But the people themselves were drawn to John by a different net – their hearts had longed to hear this message from long ago, and now, John seemed to bring it to them in terms that ordinary men could grasp. John was the emissary and vicegerent for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Then cleansed be every breast from sin; Make straight the way for God within; Prepare we in our hearts a home, Where such a mighty guest may come. Unfortunately, many have dull ears to hear, and dim vision to see. But those to whom the quickening voice comes and is comprehended – those He cleanses from all sin. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Romans 10:17) There is a straight line from the lips of God to the heart of the called of the Lord. The hearts of the people of God are the home in which the Holy Ghost resides. He will allow no clutter of sin or uncleanness in His presence.

For Thou art our salvation, Lord, Our refuge, and our great reward. Without Thy grace our souls must fade And wither like a flower decayed. There is only one hope of salvation, and that is in the Lord Jesus Christ. *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* (Acts 4:12) He is as surely our Ark of Salvation as was the Ark of Noah to the people who then were. We are nothing more than dust without the Lord. We are dead before we ever come to know Him, but His Holy Spirit makes us alive through the means of GRACE! *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall*

stand for ever. (Isaiah 40:7-8) That Word has never changed despite the feeble attempts of wicked profiteers who sell corrupt new versions of it.

Stretch forth Thine hand, to heal our sore, And make us rise and fall no more; Once more upon Thy people shine, And fill the world with love divine. We have a greater hurt than a mere sore! We have the leprosy of sin indwelling our veins that must be cured by the Redeemer of our Souls. Once we rise in Christ, we can never fall. The shining face of the Lord upon His people is reflected in the Family Evening Prayer of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer:

THE Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up his countenance upon us, and give us peace, this night and evermore. *Amen*

To Him who left the throne of Heaven To save mankind, all praise be given; Like praise be to the Father done, And Holy Spirit, Three in One. Before the Foundation of the World was laid, our Lord was ordained to save the people of God as the Lamb, sacrificed, without blemish. *18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.* (1 Peter 1:18-21) At every worship service in our Anglican church, we sing the Gloria Patri: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and every shall be; world without end. Amen, Amen.* This keeps us on a straight biblical path with doctrinal purity. Behold, as John says, He cometh!