

Hymn 137– *Come, ye Thankful People, Come* – 12 February 2019, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



A *NOTHER* parable put he forth unto them, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* (Matt 13:24-30)

I have chosen to comment on this hymn since it fits so perfectly the Gospel text for 5th Sunday after Epiphany. It is about not only sowing and reaping, but also about the gratitude that should be forthcoming from the people of God for seed-yielding harvest and the fruits of our labors on God's green earth.

This hymn comes from the 1940 Hymnal of the Protestant Episcopal Church. This hymn was written in rural England in the mid-nineteenth century, when the life of the village during the winter depended on the bounty of the autumn harvest. While the first stanza of this hymn rejoices over the harvest, the last three stanzas expound on the reminder this image gives of the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds in Matthew 13. The hymn concludes with a prayer that the final harvest at His Second Coming would happen soon. www.Hymnary.org.

There are seeds to be planted in the earth, and there are seeds to be planted in the Church. The good Seed of the Church are those who actually bear that gift of eternal life made possible by the grace and calling of our Lord Jesus Christ. The bad seed are those who may appear as the elect, but whose testimony and fruit (or lack thereof) bear out their hypocrisy.

The lyrics were written by Henry Alford in 1844, and the music, St. George's Windsor, was composed by George J. Elvey.

Come, ye Thankful People, Come

Come, ye thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home;
all is safely gathered in,
ere the winter storms begin.
God our Maker doth provide
for our wants to be supplied;
come to God's own temple, come,
raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field,
fruit as praise to God we yield;
wheat and tares together sown
are to joy or sorrow grown.
First the blade and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear;
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,
and shall take the harvest home;
from the field shall in that day
all offenses purge away,
give his angels charge at last
in the fire the tares to cast;
but the fruitful ears to store
in the garner evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come,
to thy final harvest home;
gather thou thy people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there, forever purified,
in thy presence to abide;
come, with all thine angels come,
raise the glorious harvest home.

Come, ye thankful people, come, raise the song of harvest home; all is safely gathered in, ere the winter storms begin. God our Maker doth provide for our wants to be supplied; come to God's own temple, come, raise the song of harvest home. There is no point in coming to the Lord without a thankful heart. Every aspect of life comes as a blessing of God. The air we breathe, the next heart-beat, the tender kiss of a little child – all of these are of God. We labor in faith that the earth will bring forth her reward according to the promise of God – and it does! We sow in sorrow and weariness, but reap in joy. Though the reaping is most often of greater physical exertion, it is of a greater joy because of the fulfilled promise.

We come, too, with a song in our hearts. Joyful moments of thanksgiving are always marked by the emotional urge to expound our joyfulness in song. The harvest, of arduous labors of the summer, are brought into the secure storage of the barns, and all is well. Our labors are rewarded – both in crops and souls. The wants referred to are

wants of the body and of the soul. We labor, perhaps for years, at the sowing of the seed of God's Word. We may see no harvest for a long spell as that seed germinates, unseen, beneath the sod of the soul. Then up comes the tender shoot, and after the fruitful bough, and finally, with increasing faith and hope – the Harvest of grain and fruit. *'God's own Temple'* is the heart of every faithful believer.

All the world is God's own field, fruit as praise to God we yield; wheat and tares together sown are to joy or sorrow grown. First the blade and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear; Lord of harvest, grant that we wholesome grain and pure may be. The world is the field in which we labor as Christians and ministers. *The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.* The Word of God is the *good seed*. There is, in the shadows of the heart, the ever-present usurper of God's green earth – Satan, who will sow confusion and lies among the good seed preached from the pulpit. Tragically, sometimes even those bad seed of Lucifer are preached today from the pulpits of America. The discreet separation of the bad seed – believers from those faithful believers of God remains in the realm of the Almighty to decide. He it is who will separate the grain from the chaff at the Last Day. In the meantime, we grow together – the good and the bad. The true grain of God's Word is always wholesome and pure. But the pure, when mixed together with the impure, does not make the impure to become pure; but rather the pure to become impure. *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.*

For the Lord our God shall come, and shall take the harvest home; from the field shall in that day all offenses purge away, give his angels charge at last in the fire the tares to cast; but the fruitful ears to store in the garner evermore. Only God can discern between a righteous and unrighteous heart. He is the Great Magnet of the Soul that recognizes, and attracts, only those metals of like composition. He will winnow the harvest in the winds of the Holy Spirit, separating the chaff that is blown away, from the wholesome grain that will remain on the threshing floor. He has given His angels charge for the disposition of souls at the Last Day. . . . *and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* I pray that all who read this devotion shall be spared the fervent heat of God's Judgment at last. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* (2 Peter 3:10)

Please pay particular heed to this passage following: *For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.* (1 Cor 3:9-15)

Even so, Lord, quickly come, to thy final harvest home; gather thou thy people in, free from sorrow, free from sin, there, forever purified, in thy presence to abide; come, with all thine angels come, raise the glorious harvest home. The final harvest of God is the Judgment and those who have received the unmerited grace of Christ. They are accounted righteous, not by their own works, but by that imputed righteousness of Christ. This stanza contains a reference to a glorious promise – the promise of being set free, finally and forever – from that old sinful free will with which we struggle in life, and given that perfect will of God as the map and compass of our hearts.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. (Rev 2:17) Please give more than casual thought to this verse in Revelations. Why a White Stone, and why a new name written thereon? The white stone was a symbol of being justified at the bar of justice in olden days. Each judge of the Hebrews were given a white and a black stone. At time of judgment, one white stone deposited in the basket gave the force of innocence to the accused. But why a new name that no one else would know but its recipient? Because there are a great many sins – perhaps repented of – but nevertheless sins, that are known by many. But a new name in heaven will be free of any bad repute. No one can remind you of past sins with that new name. With that new name and that White Stone, we may proclaim with the author of this hymn, and the Author of Revelations, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen..* (Rev 22:20-21)