



I MUST work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:4-5)

FOR the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. ² And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³ And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴ And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. ⁵ Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶ And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? ⁷ They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. (Matthew 20:1-7)

This hymn may be appropriately sung on any Sunday of the year; however, it is very directly related to the Sunday of Septuagesima coming up. The spirit of the hymn relates to the awakening morning, full of the vibrant beauty of God's Creation, and the awesome privilege to go forth to labor in those fields which He has given us.

The lyrics are the composition of Anketell Studdert-Kennedy in 1921, but the tune, *MORNING SONG*, by Elkanah Kelsay Dare is a century more ancient and was included in the first hymnal printed in the American South in 1816 as *CONSOLATION*, based on a hymn by Isaac Watts – *ONCE MORE MY SOUL, THE RISING DAY*.

Awake, Awake to Love and Work

Awake, awake to love and work!
The lark is in the sky;
The fields are wet with diamond dew;
The worlds awake to cry
Their blessings on the Lord of life,
As He goes meekly by.

Come, let thy voice be one with theirs,
Shout with their shout of praise;
See how the giant sun soars up,
Great lord of years and days!
So let the love of Jesus come
And set thy soul ablaze.

To give and give, and give again,
What God hath given thee;
To spend thyself nor count the cost;
To serve right gloriously
The God who gave all worlds that are,
And all that are to be.

1 Awake, awake to love and work! The lark is in the sky; The fields are wet with diamond dew; The worlds awake to cry Their blessings on the Lord of life, As He goes meekly by. The beauty of this stanza must be experienced to fully appreciate its depth of meaning. When I was five or six years old, I spent a summer at my grandmother's in the rural Blue Ridge Mountains. I remember how wondrously beautiful were the first rays of sunlight on the verdant fields, and the joy of walking barefoot through the diamond-studded, dew-adorned blades of grass. I knew nothing of the science of the prism, but I knew that there had to be some heavenly mystery in the sparkling colors created by the sun and the dew drops. The soft cooing of the Turtle Dove of morning contrasted sharply with the whistle of the Whipperwill of the previous evening twilight. There was always a gossamer mist which hovered over the pastureland, and birds were singing everywhere the chorus that God had placed in their tiny hearts. As a child even of tender years, the truth of all blessings descending from God did not escape my unrefined understanding. I have discovered that much of the 'spiritual refinement' being taught in many churches has lost the deeper mysteries that children can grasp with such ease.

2 Come, let thy voice be one with theirs, Shout with their shout of praise; See how the giant sun soars up, Great lord of years and days! So let the love of Jesus come And set thy soul ablaze. Have you considered the wondrous meaning of love imparted by our Creator Lord? It descends in radiant beams from the Sun, and is echoed in the multi-colored sparkles of dew. Think on this when the world seems so large and your soul seems so small: God knew you before He created that Sun or any of the sparkling stars of the night's purple canopy. Unlike those physical manifestations of His might and power, God gave you a soul with understanding and the ability to know beauty and love. A thousand suns are not the equal in value to a single soul in the Mind of God for He created these for our enjoyment and joy. The soul is like the dewdrop and God is like the Sun. He sends His bright life-giving rays of love forth, and our souls reflect the intricately-colored beauty of each ray, divided into a spectrum of seven, of love – an echo of love returned to the great Source of all Love.

3 To give and give, and give again, What God hath given thee; To spend thyself nor count the cost; To serve right gloriously The God who gave all worlds that are, And all that are to be. How can we ever give enough in satisfaction of our debt to the great Lord of Creation – our Lord Jesus Christ? The question is rhetorical since all things are His including our body and soul. He needs none of our crude gifts of sacrifice. Instead, He treasures the one thing that we do own and which He gave unconditionally – our HEARTS! If the Lord has our hearts, all other accessories of life will follow hard on.

What a magnificent gift God has given us in the grant of a living soul! When you look up at the wonders of the night sky with its thousand points of light, or the beauty of a golden sunrise, consider that these are as much your possession as they were of Caesar, of Charlemagne, of Washington, and all others who ever upon the earth has dwelt. The musical charms of the gurgling creek, or the wind-washed trees of the mountain slope, or the singing of birds just happy to be alive – these are all God’s gift to you which cannot be purchased with gold or silver.

There is another joy that men seldom admit – the joy of work and its grant of self-respect and independence. In the Gospel text for Sunday, our Lord demonstrates the importance of work and the response to those who participate in it without hesitation. Even in the Garden at Eden, Adam found it necessary to labor in dressing the trees and flora of that vast estate. It gave meaning to his day and joy in its accomplishment. The reward is not to the one who labors longest, but to all who respond to the need to work at whatever opportunity is presented. As Paul counsels: *“^{2Th} 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.”* 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (KJV) Also, hear the words of the Lord: *“^{Ge} 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”* (Genesis 3:19)

God labored six days out of seven to provide the beauty of nature we see about us every day. Should we not labor, at least, six days out of seven to maintain it in its pristine verdure?