

Devotion on Hymns of the Church - Hymn 431 - *In Heavenly Love Abiding* – 19 April 2016, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. (Josh 1:9)

If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love. (John 15:10)

Today's hymn serves as a reminder those who abide in Christ also abide in love and security. The lyrics are composed by Anna Waring in 1850. Anna was born in Wales in 1823 and was baptized into the Church of England (Anglican) in 1842. She was an accomplished student of the Hebrew language and bore a special burden for prisoners behind bars. The 1940 hymnal suggest *NYLAND*, a Finnish folk melody, for the tune; however, there are two other tunes that seem more fitted, in my view, to the hymn's sentiments - *SEASONS* by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and *ANGEL'S STORY* by Arthur H. Mann (1881).

The principle point of the hymn is the benefit of heavenly love. Love is divine and is produced and imported to our hearts from Heaven itself. Even that love of a heathen mother for her little child is a divine love that God, whom she knows not, secreted in her mother's tender heart just as He has done for the mothers of even the animal kingdom for the perpetuation of the race and creatures.

In Heavenly Love Abiding

In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me,
my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me,
and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me,
no want shall turn me back;
my Shepherd is beside me,
and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom ever waketh,
his sight is never dim,
he knows the way he taketh,
and I will walk with him.

Green pastures are before me,
which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me,
where darkest clouds have been;
my hope I cannot measure,
my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure,
and he will walk with me.

1 In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear; and safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here: the storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid; but God is round about me, and can I be dismayed? To abide in love does not mean to sojourn or vacation - it means that we make our living there. The unchanging nature of Christ (Hebrews 13:8) assures us of a constant love and security. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* (John 15:4)

Remember how we, as children, felt secure when mother came to say goodnight by our beds and then turned the lights out? If mother turned the lights out, all must be well for mother loved us, right? Our dream sleep is nothing more than a shadow of the glorious night of the sleep of death from which we shall awake, when the lights have been turned out by our loving Lord for a brief time, and we shall awake to an unending day of brilliant Light. The love of God secures that Day for us.

2 Wherever he may guide me, no want shall turn me back; my Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack: his wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never dim, he knows the way he taketh, and I will walk with him. If we have a shepherd at all, that Shepherd is the Lord. All others are beast and mortals such as we are. The wolves of the wilderness often pose as the shepherd and devour the sheep. The Shepherd always leads the way. Today, we see often that the sheep of the church attempt to lead the Shepherd in ways that are not true and wholesome. We sometimes desire to do it our way and not His. If so, we have become goats instead of sheep. We know our *desires* readily; but we sometimes do not know our *wants*.

We often, erroneously, use the two terms interchangeably; but a want is a need and not a wish. Our wants are those values that are needful for the soul even when the soul may not be aware. The sheep do not know to avoid the lair of the wolves, They may wish to venture there; but the Shepherd knows the dangers of the wilderness and cares for our wants. He is forever alert and awake. The sheep that are most prized by Him are those who remain near and prize Him most. In the covert of His fold, He tells us, *4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.* (John 14:4)

3 Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen; bright skies will soon be o'er me, where darkest clouds have been; my hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free; my Saviour has my treasure, and he will walk with me. Those pastures are before us because we have followed the Shepherd. *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.* (Psalms 23:2) The sheep feel absolute security in the green pastures of the Shepherd because they lay down there. It is difficult for a lamb to rise up from the lying position for they have no knees; so they lie down willingly knowing that the Shepherd will be their protector. Our full hope is in Christ: *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.* (1 Peter 1:3) The long home to which we go at God's own timing is long, not because we are long dead, but because it is a divine eternity with Him after the twinkling of an eye when the shadows lengthen.

That treasure that is on safe deposit with our Lord Jesus Christ are those treasures that we have laid up in Heaven. *19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* (Matt 6:19-21)

The Lord walks with us every step of our journey (often when we are unaware of His presence). Just as He walked with the two on the Road to Emmaus while they questioned the meaning of His Passion. He walked ALL of the WAY to their home, and even remained for the breaking of Bread. On days of our hurt and discouragement, He is right beside. Our problems loom as dark and threatening storm clouds whose burdens are beyond bearing; but He is with us (He bears our burdens) and we find that near our journey's end, the clouds of dismay part, and the splendor and brilliance of the morning sunrise bursts through. Do you treasure your heart? Then turn it over on deposit to Christ our Lord. He will not lose it, and He will fill it to the brim with joys unspeakable.