



IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.⁴ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.⁵ Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:⁷ In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.⁸ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.⁹ Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;¹⁰ And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:¹¹ Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but **Christ is all, and in all.** (Colossians 3:1-11)

There is a bitter-sweet aura to the season of Lent. We are saddened at the prospect of Calvary as a place of torture and death of our Lord; but we are also, at the same time, joyfully eager to know that there is an open Garden Tomb beyond Calvary. Christ will suffer humiliation and death for us that we may not suffer eternal death when we have staked our claim on the fertile soil of His Mighty Heart. Of course, He has literally claimed us before the foundations of the world to be called and chosen.

This Lenten hymn is the composition of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux in the 12th century (around 1150 AD). Bernard was a mortal enemy to the antipapalist and would prefer to take them to heaven dead rather than alive by means of the Crusades of which he bore the responsibility in preaching; but that entity was primarily of the Islamic horde in those days which predated the Reformation. Bernard also preached the heresy of the Virgin Mary as Intercessor. The first tune in the 1940 Hymnal (#462) is *WINDSOR* (by Edward Caswell). There is a second amended version sung to the tune, *SAWLEY* (by James Walch): but I find both tunes unnaturally awkward in singing. I prefer a third tune which is overwhelmingly the favorite of most church hymnals, *ST. AGNES*, by JB Dykes (1863).

Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

JESUS, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the mind conceive,
A sweeter sound than Jesus' name
To sinners who believe.

O hope of every contrite heart!
O joy of all the meek!
To those who fall how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!

JESUS, the very thought of Thee With sweetness fills the breast; But sweeter far Thy face to see, And in Thy presence rest. If our Lord has made His abode in our hearts, surely there should be the sweetest of emotions emanating therefrom. For the Christian believer, thoughts of our Lord are not random or occasional. All that we do is based upon faith in Him, and all that we do must be in His Name, for we bear the name CHRISTIAN not in vain. Faith in Christ makes this life worth living, and we are enabled to endure trials and persecution under the umbrella of His Love. But consider the impending joy of how sweet that presence will be when we stand face-to-face with the One who bore our sins and purchased our pardon! His Bride in Song of Solomon proclaims, when queried by the guard: *What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us? My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.* (Song of Songs 5:9-13)

No voice can sing, no heart can frame, Nor can the mind conceive, A sweeter sound than Jesus' name To sinners who believe.. We could never hear that Name at all were it not for His calling our own names across the expanse of eternity. We were spiritually dead (just as Lazarus was physically dead) when the Lord called our name and we came forth and were set at liberty from the grave clothes that bound us. The joy of our home going is best described in the following: *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* (1 Corinthians 2:9) But even the unbelievers, who by their own chosen deafness and blindness refuse to believe, shall bow at that Name of our Lord Jesus Christ when the curtain of time is lowered.

O hope of every contrite heart! O joy of all the meek! To those who fall how kind Thou art! How good to those who seek! Our knowledge of sin comes from the Law of God, for sin is the transgression of the Law. The contrition felt, and repentance exercised, comes by way of the Holy Ghost drawing us to the Mercy Seat. Forgiveness is a Burden Bearer. It takes our burdens of sin and moves them to the broad shoulders of Christ who, in time past, bore them all on Calvary. Knowing ourselves to be sinners is the first hint of the Holy spirit in the heart of man. It is evidence of the Great Magnet of God drawing us to Him. We are called and chosen in knowing our sins and repenting of them by the power of God and not our own. Then comes the never-ending peace that

only the Elect heart can appreciate: *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:7)

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. (John 15:16)