

Devotion on Hymns of the Church - Hymn 567 – *Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us* – 7
July 2020, Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord)



AND it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: 18 But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. (Exodus 13:17,18)

JESUS said unto him, *Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

(Matthew 8:22)

AND as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, *Follow me.* And he arose, and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)

This hymn is recommended to be sung at the Vespers Service (Evening Prayer). It would seem to me more suitable for Morning Prayer since we need to begin every day by following our Lord. The hymn was specifically written for the London Orphan Asylum. It was first published in 1821 by the author, James Edmeston to the tune of *LEWES*. In a certain sense, all men without Christ suffer less privilege than the orphan suffers for they do have a father who is the great deceiver and murderer from the beginning – Lucifer! The faithful Christian, too, has a Father in God – the Maker and Sustainer of all life.

Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us
#567 in 1940 Church Hymnal

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
o'er the world's tempestuous sea;
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
for we have no help but thee;
yet possessing every blessing,
if our God our Father be.

Savior, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
all our weakness thou dost know;
thou didst tread this earth before us;
thou didst feel its keenest woe;
yet unfearing, persevering,
to thy passion thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
fill our hearts with heavenly joy;
love with every passion blending
pleasure that can never cloy;
thus provided, pardoned, guided,
nothing can our peace destroy.

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea; guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but thee; yet possessing every blessing, if our God our Father be. The Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, would do well to take their motto, *FOLLOW ME*, very seriously and amend the meaning to *FOLLOW CHRIST*, for He is the ultimate victor of all battles. It matters not the rugged terrain of land or sea, the Lord leads well in all places, just as He led, fed, protected, and kept the Children of Israel in the most challenging of wilderness environs. Even along the wilderness of the Red Sea, there was more than rugged terrain and the Egyptian army to consider. One might not expect to find quick-sand in the desert, but the desert is fraught with such terrors. There is a river in Iran only 100 miles length. It is fed by the melting snows of the Zagross mountains to the west of Esfahan (a desert highland city at 5,000 ft where I lived for five years). It meanders across the desert to the east of the city. Its course is obvious from the air for it defines a green, lush belt of life all along its way. It gives life everywhere it goes and it dies in a strange lake of the desert called *Ghav Khuni* - the Blood of an Ox. To me, this is like Christ who gave life everywhere He went and died in our desert of sin for us. It is so-called because from the shore, the lake is blood red in color, though from the air, it appears as an emerald green body.

The lake is surrounded by the desert sands extending to the distant horizon; however, for some distance from the lake, there may be observed patches of darker soil that seem more appealing than the sands. These darker spots, like the wilderness of the Red Sea area, are traps of death – QUICK-SAND. Whoever wanders aimlessly onto these spots will disappear forever in the voracious wallowing sands. I once made the mistake of thinking such a patch of darker ground would be safe to land upon, but my student warned me of the disguised danger. Our Lord never makes such a mistake in his leading. He may lead us to the wilderness marshes but He does so with a purpose beyond our understanding. It may be to slow the advance of the enemy, or it may be to prepare our hearts for the next move across the dry bed of the sea.

Savior, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness thou dost know; thou didst tread this earth before us; thou didst feel its keenest woe; yet unfearing, persevering, to thy passion thou didst go. The breath of our Lord is LIFE! He first breathed that breath of life into our first parents eastward in Eden. As a result of Adam's Fall, we all inherit bodily death; but Christ offers a new birth of eternal life by breathing that new life into our souls by means of the Holy Ghost. There is no secret chamber of the heart that is not open to the penetrating eyes of the Lord – there are NO secrets! He took upon Himself the likeness of us all – a human body. He suffered more than we, but He did so that we might be redeemed. He was Man and God at the same time. He set His soul on that cruel and terrifying cross atop Calvary Mount, and never turned back or hesitated.

Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy; love with every passion blending pleasure that can never cloy; thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy. All blessings and every good thing of worth descend from God our Father. When we come to know Him as our Father through the agency of adoption,

it is much like the orphan child who has been fortunate to be adopted by the most wealthy and loving parents of the village – in fact, that is the object for which this hymn was composed. The divine peace that drowns every sorrow and foreboding is a flood of love which flows unseen by the world into the heart of the believer. As our Lord said to the Woman at Jacob's Well: *"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."* (John 4:13-14) The woman went away leaving her water jug, for she had found Water of greater beauty and promise than any that comes from a dark hole in the earth – that Living Water flows boundlessly from the very corridors of Heaven, and imbues the believer with an eternal life of joy.

Friend, have you met your appointment at the Well with the Lord yet?