

All Saints Church, Boyne Hill Maidenhead
Sounds of Worship

Easter 6

The unity of the relationship between God, Jesus and his followers is made strong and cohesive by obedience to, and through the love of, Jesus himself. By this means we can be open to the spirit of God and his heavenly love in our lives.

This gospel theme can be expressed in a number of ways in words and music by focussing on the various facets of the relationship between love and obedience to Jesus and ultimately our relationship with God.

The first hymn is "Christ is the one who calls" AM 487. This hymn describes how our relationship with Jesus can be built. Starting with Jesus, calling us, seeking us, dying for us, his resurrection and sending us out in his name. The words were written by Timothy Dudley, probably best known for "Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord" but who is a very prolific hymn writer and many of them are widely used. As you will see from the words below, the hymn has a structure based on the way in which only the final word of the first line of each verse varies. This sort of technique makes the hymn's theme clear, cohesive and memorable.

Dudley Smith claims to write his hymns without a tune in mind, in this case, there are a number of options for a tune but it works extremely well with "Love Unknown", which is normally used for "My song is love unknown" AM 147 which I discussed in the Sounds of Worship for Palm Sunday. "Love Unknown" is an excellent tune and it is good to have the opportunity to use it on occasions other than Passiontide.

Text: Timothy Dudley Smith (1926-) Tune: "Love Unknown"; John Ireland (1879-1962)

1. Christ is the one who calls,
the one who loved and came,
to whom by right it falls
to bear the highest name:
and still today
our hearts are stirred
to hear his word
and walk his way.
2. Christ is the one who seeks,
to whom our souls are known.
The word of love he speaks
can wake a heart of stone;
for at that sound
the blind can see,
the slave is free,
the lost are found.
3. Christ is the one who died,
forsaken and betrayed;
who, mocked and crucified,
the price of pardon paid.
Our dying Lord,
what grief and loss,
what bitter cross,
our souls restored!

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4. Christ is the one who rose
in glory from the grave,
to share his life with those
whom once he died to save.
He drew death's sting
and broke its chains,
who lives and reigns,
our risen King.
5. Christ is the one who sends,
his story to declare;
who calls his servants friends
and gives them news to share.
His truth proclaim
in all the earth,
his matchless worth
and saving Name.



Figure 1 "Christ is the one that calls" AM 487

In the past the choir has sung the Anthem "If you Love Me" by Thomas Tallis (c1505-1585). The words of the anthem are taken directly from the gospel reading:

If ye love me
Keep my commandments
And I will pray the father
And he shall give you another comforter
That he may bide with you forever.

Tallis lived through the very turbulent times of the 16th century which included the creation of the Church of England in 1534 the inauguration of Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer in 1548, attempts by Mary Tudor to reverse the protestant direction of the church and then with the reign of Elizabeth I a more hard-line enforcement of the protestant faith. Tallis himself was an unreformed Roman Catholic all his life but was such a highly regarded musician coupled with "keeping his head down" and adapting his music to the prevailing times that he maintained a thriving career as a professional musician throughout. Indeed, he was one of the first composers to write anthems in English of which "If ye love me" is one of his most beautiful. It was composed during the reign of Edward VI (reigned 1547-53). At this time, Tallis was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and hence this piece would have been written specifically for use in services attended by the King. This was a period when religious controversies were raging and being on the wrong side could have very serious consequences, it is not too far-fetched to think that Tallis may have chosen the text to send a political message. Obedience to King Edward was a good idea as well as obedience to Jesus.



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The final hymn is “Great is thy faithfulness” AM 650 which tells of the enduring strength of God in providing for all our needs and the creation of the natural world around us. There is no particular rhyming scheme to this hymn and the language uses the archaic pronouns of Thou, Thee and Thy. Such choice of language not only makes the hymn sound “religious” but also the vowel sounds of these words become significant when sung. For example, compare “Great is thy faithfulness” with “Great is your faithfulness” by saying them out loud. The high and light vowel sound of “thy” creates the bright confident character of the hymn, whereas “your” is a more closed vowel sound which subtly changes the character of hymn.

Today, it is rare for a hymn writer to use such language but in this case meaning and sound are important considerations. The author of this hymn, Thomas Chisolm, was an American Methodist Minister wrote over 1,200 sacred poems during his lifetime. He wrote “Great is thy faithfulness” in 1923 which he submitted to William Runyan who set it to the tune “Faithfulness”.

William Runyan was an organist and ordained Methodist Minister, based in Chicago when he wrote the tune “Faithfulness” in 1923.

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not,

*As Thou hast been thou forever will be.
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

2. Summer and winter, and spring-time and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Text: Thomas O Chisholm (1866-1960) Tune: “Faithfulness”; William M Runyan (1870-1957)

