

We Gather Together

1. We gath - er to - geth - er to ask the Lord's bless - ing;
 2. Be - side us to guide us, our God with us join - ing,
 3. We all do ex - tol thee, thou lead - er tri - um - phant,

he chas - tens and has - tens his will to make known;
 or - dain - ing, main - tain - ing his king - dom di - vine;
 and pray that thou still our de - fend - er wilt be.

the wick - ed op - press - ing now cease from dis - tress - ing;
 so from the be - gin - ning the fight we were win - ning;
 Let thy con - gre - ga - tion en - dure through tri - bu - la - tion:

sing prais - es to his name; he for - gets not his own,
 thou, Lord, wast at our side; all glo - ry be thine!
 thy name be ev - er praised! O Lord, make us free!

Netherlands folk hymn
 Tr. Theodore Baker, 1917
 Alt. 1990

KREMSER 12.11.12.11.
 Adrianus Valerius, *Nederlandsch Gedenckclank*, 1626
 Harm. Edward Kremser, 1877

In this place our hearts take courage, faithful God. Your goodness is all around us. In your presence our cares and trials are calmed. In this hour let us know the shelter of your loving embrace. Remind us of who we are and whose we are. As we gather in community may we care for one another as brothers and sisters. May the Spirit of Christ empower our discipleship and lead us in your way. Amen.

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, reign without end. Amen, amen.

Scripture

Psalm 27

Heather Tower

This psalm expresses the central impulse of biblical religion- trust in God. It contains both extended confessions of faith and resolute prayers for help. The two perspectives are intimately bound. Without trust one does not turn to God for help; when one turns to God for help trust is strengthened and deepened.

- ¹ The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- ² When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall.
- ³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.
- ⁴ One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.
- ⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.
- ⁶ Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.
- ⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!
- ⁸ “Come,” my heart says, “seek his face!” Your face, LORD, do I seek.
- ⁹ Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help.
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!
- ¹⁰ If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up.
- ¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.
- ¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

¹³ I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Luke 13:31-35

Rosemary Dawson

This passage, set while Jesus is journeying to the cross, contains both a warning and a lament. It opens with the threat of Herod, which embodies the power of Rome, and points to Jesus' death. In response Jesus highlights his life and mission, which holds the power of God's reign. He then turns his attention to Jerusalem's failed role and God's unrelenting desire for his people to 'return' – repent, be forgiven and find life in God's embrace.

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.' ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.'

³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Special Music "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder" James M. Black. Arr. Phillip Keveren

Sermon Sheltering Love

This week I had the task of taking my dog Tucker to the vet. It was not his favorite place to be. He was fine in the car – road trips are always great. But it was a bit of a battle to get him through the door and into the exam room. And once here was stuck there, this 65-pound pup suddenly wanted to be a lap dog. He was, I think, looking for some sheltering love. And I so wanted to be there for him; it's only natural. We know that feeling, don't we? We want to protect and care for those we love. And we know those other feelings too – 'no, I don't want to' and 'please keep me safe'.

Jesus understood all those feelings too. He saw it in those who sought him out and in those who resisted him. And he felt deeply that he wanted to 'be there' for all of them. That is always such a hard place to be; seeing folks who so needed God's sheltering love fighting it tooth and nail. You can hear the pain in Jesus' cry "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you murder the prophets and stone to death the messengers that are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your people around me like a hen gathering her own brood together under her wings, but you would never have it."

Jesus so wanted to offer God's children the blessing they needed. You might even say Jesus was 'hell-bent' on loving us 'no matter what'. Even as he is warned that Herod wants to kill him, it does not deter Jesus' intent. He looks his 'informants' in the eye and says "tell that fox, Herod, I have no time for him right now. I'm busy driving out demons and healing the sick, for today and tomorrow. And on the third day my mission will be completed." In other words, Jesus' life is given to embodying the fullest depth of God's love. He embraced lepers and tax-collectors, healed the suffering, restored

the outcast and welcomed the despised. He lived his call – bringing the good news of God’s healing, sheltering, redeeming, restoring love to all, even to those who would reject it. And it broke his heart.

Jesus knew how, so often, the city God chose as his own, the people of God, rejected those who were sent to them. The prophet’s role, their task, was for the express purpose of drawing them back into right relationship with God. But God’s people could not, would not hear it. They even went so far as to put them to death, in the name of God! Jesus knew that would be his fate too. Yet he pressed on – in love – in order that the wide embrace of God’s love would encompass even death – and bring new life, resurrection life, to all who sought the shelter of his grace.

Today, there are so many who need that love, from the people of Ukraine, to those in Florida and Texas, and even here in town and in our church. Many people are seeking it out, for protection, for justice, for hope, for life. And there are those who will not have it, rejecting its grace for themselves and denying it to others. It is a painful reality and a hard battle. And in one way or another we all are listeners to Jesus’ words, both their challenge and their mercy. It is up to us to recognize where we are, and what we truly need. Simply put, whether we are willing or not, we need God’s sheltering love. And we need that love, not just for our welfare, but for the world; so we can follow Christ in offering others the tangible expressions of God’s good news, to bring healing and hope, restoration and peace, and yes love, to those who also are in need.

God’s love is there for us always, when people gladly receive our support and when people foolishly, blindly turn away, and even hurt us and others. God’s sheltering love is our support and our guide.

Are we willing to be gathered under its feathery wings? Amen.

***Hymn**

O Love That Will Not Let Me Go

NCH 485

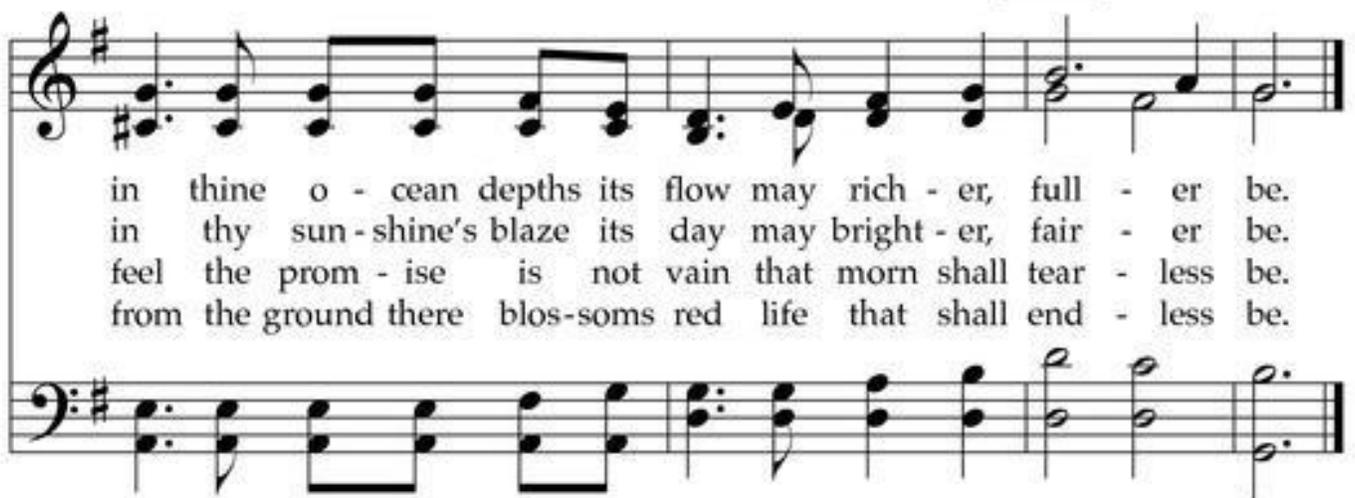
O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go 833



1 O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my
2 O Light that fol-lowest all my way, I yield my
3 O Joy that seek - est me through pain, I can - not
4 O Cross that lift - est up my head, I dare not



wea - ry soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that
flick - ering torch to thee; my heart re - stores its bor - rowed ray, that
close my heart to thee; I trace the rain - bow through the rain, and
ask to fly from thee; I lay in dust life's glo - ry dead, and



in thine o - cean depths its flow may rich - er, full - er be.
in thy sun - shine's blaze its day may bright - er, fair - er be.
feel the prom - ise is not vain that morn shall tear - less be.
from the ground there blos - soms red life that shall end - less be.

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Gracious God, we praise you and thank you for your faithful, embracing love. We thank you that you continually reach out to us in grace, and care for us in our needs. We thank you for Jesus Christ, who came to reveal your heart to us and for your Spirit who guides us in the way of love. And so we come today seeking all we need to live out the fullness of your good will.

We pray for your church and for this congregation. May we always recognize the invitation to rest in your open arms, and may this be a place where your love known and shared, with one another and with all our neighbors. We pray as well for all are entrusted with the care of this world. Grant our leaders the strength and courage they need to follow your call to love, justice and peace, so that all the world may know the fullness of your blessings. We pray especially for all who are suffering today. Grant your healing to the ill, your comfort to the mourning, and your aid to the needy. We lift up before you the needs of ... and we thank you for your goodness to...

We praise you, Wondrous God, for the depth of your love for us, through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Choral Response

Remember Me

Offering

God love is unfathomable in its depth and persistence. We have received an abundance of his riches and the fullness of his caring presence. God would have us share his blessing with all who are in need, and encourage the faith of all who are hungry for salvation. Let us dedicate our gifts in faith.

O God, we thank you for your faithful care and unfailing mercy to us. We present our offerings as expressions of our praise, and as tokens of our commitment to you. Use our gifts and our lives to gather earth's children in your loving embrace, that all may dwell in safety and know your abundant goodness. Amen.

Doxology

(choose the one that is best for your faith)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below,
praise him above ye heavenly hosts, praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God for all that Love has done; Creator, Christ and Spirit One. Amen

*Hymn

Go, My Children, with My Blessing

NCH 82

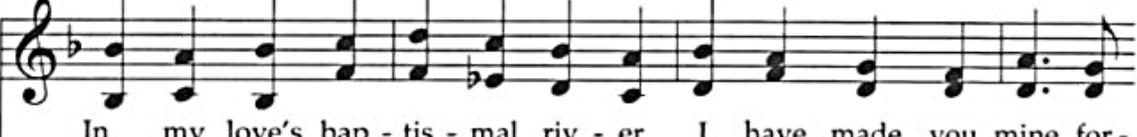
Go, My Children, with My Blessing 547



1 "Go, my chil-dren, with my bless-ing, nev-er a-lone.
2 "Go, my chil-dren, sins for-giv-en, at peace and pure.
3 "Go, my chil-dren, fed and nour-ished, clos-er to me.



Wak-ing, sleep-ing, I am with you, you are my own.
Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure.
Grow in love and love by serv-ing, joy-ful and free.



In my love's bap-tis-mal riv-er I have made you mine for-
Here you heard my dear Son's sto-ry; here you touched him, saw his
Here my Spir-it's pow-er filled you; here my ten-der com-fort



ev-er. Go, my chil-dren, with my bless-ing, you are my own."
glo-ry. Go, my chil-dren, sins for-giv-en, at peace and pure."
stilled you. Go, my chil-dren, fed and nour-ished, joy-ful and free."

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

***Benediction**

*** Benediction**

Go now into the world

And may the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ.
2 Thessalonians 3:5

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

“I Surrender All”

Winfield S. Weedon. Arr. By Gail Smith.

music provided by Chris Harris and Lynne Walker