

C.S. Lewis apparently did not care for hymns. Something about bad poetry set to equally bad music.

His preference was for services without them.

I like hymns. They are the only public singing I ever do.

And there are lines in hymns that entered my memory as a boy and... have stayed:

*Like the stars of the morning,  
His bright crown adorning,  
They shall shine in their beauty,  
Bright gems for his crown.*

\*\*\*

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes...*

\*\*\*

*All glory, laud, and honour  
To thee, Redeemer, King*

\*\*\*

*Let every creature rise and bring  
Peculiar honours to our King;  
Angels descend with songs again,  
And earth repeat the loud Amen.*

\*\*\*

*Alleluia! sing to Jesus!  
His the sceptre, his the throne;*

\*\*\*

*There is a green hill far away,  
Outside a city wall*

\*\*\*

Often it is an exotic phrase that intrigued the ten-year-old I was: *peculiar honours*.

Or a scene: a *green hill far away* or those lilies in the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Or the puzzling thought of being, a rather untidy little boy, one of the jewels in Our Lord's crown.

Or a weird phrasing: *His the sceptre, his the throne*.

Or the monumental, the sublime: *Immortal, invisible, God only wise and All glory, laud and honour*.

There are several dozen hymns that have buried lines in my memory.

I have a favourite hymn. And since this is my last meditation, I am going to copy it out.

It was the great “sending hymn” for Evensong, when I was a boy...and as far as I can tell, sixty years later, it still is.

I have heard it sung in little country churches, big city ones, cathedrals and... the very last time, just before the pandemic, at an Evensong in St Mark’s Anglican Church in Florence, Italy, with a puzzled but diligently singing guest congregation of Italians assembled on an ecumenical occasion.

I think this hymn probably says, in twenty short lines, what I believed at ten about the Church. And what I still believe.

*The day thou gavest, Lord, is ended,  
The darkness falls at thy behest;  
To thee our morning hymns ascended,  
Thy praise shall sanctify our rest.*

*We thank thee that thy Church unsleeping,  
While earth rolls onward into light,  
Through all the world her watch is keeping,  
And rests not now by day or night.*

*As o’er each continent and island  
The dawn leads to another day,  
The voice of prayer is never silent,  
Nor dies the strain of praise away.*

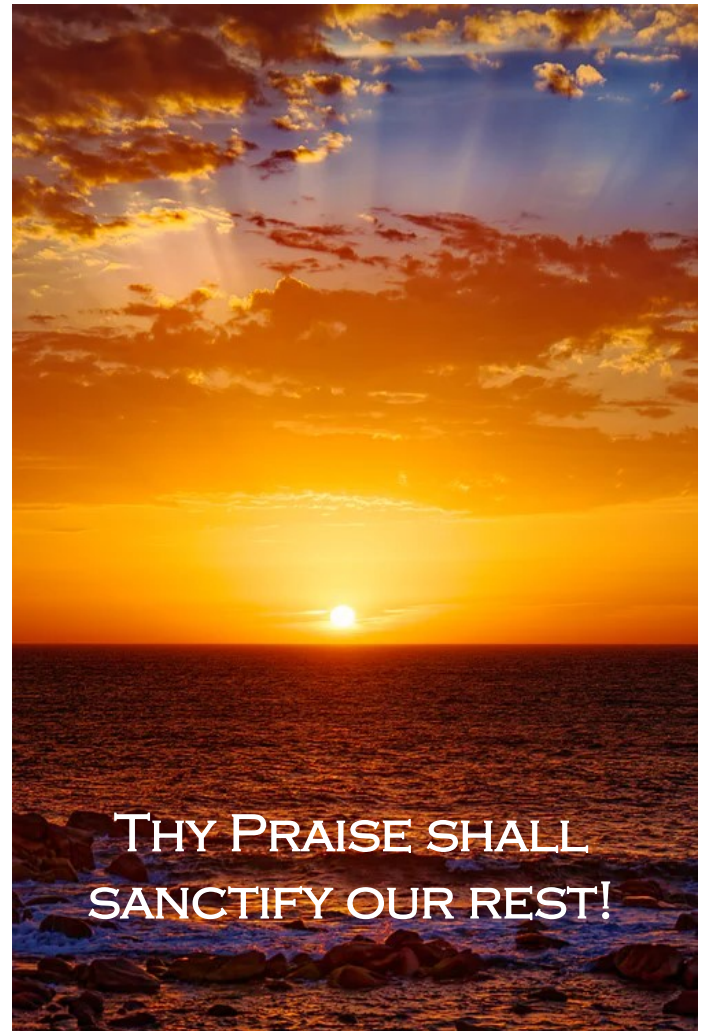
*The sun that bids us rest is waking  
Our brethren ‘neath the western sky,  
And hour by hour fresh lips are making  
Thy wondrous doings heard on high.*

*So be it, Lord; thy throne shall never  
Like earth’s proud empires, pass away;  
Thy kingdom stands, and grows forever,  
Till all thy creatures own thy sway.*

Text: John Ellerton B.1826

Thanks be to God for hymns...and for the Church.

Lorne Ellaschuk



Picture by Andreas Brown Unsplash.com