

O Sons and Daughters of the King

Lutheran Service Book 470/471 | study by Paul Gregory Alms

Introduction

When a mom or dad speaks, children listen. That is the expectation. When there are times of danger or discipline, a parent raises his voice and warns or scolds his child. The tone and volume of the parent's voice tells his son or daughter to pay attention. What a parent says is important for a child to hear.

But it is not only in situations of discipline or danger that a parent might cry out to his family. It also happens in moments of great joy. A mom wants to share her joy and calls her children to come and join her in her happiness. That is

what is going on in the hymn "O Sons and Daughters of the King." The Church is calling out to her children to rejoice. We, the sons and daughters of the King, are addressed by the Church to rejoice at the wonderful events of Easter. All the Church is called to hear and share in the joy of Christ's resurrection.

- Have you ever thought of yourself as a son or daughter of the King? Who is that King? When do we become His children? How does that relate to Easter?

Exploring the Scriptures

The Scripture texts that form the basis for this hymn are the resurrection stories in Mark 16 and John 20. In fact, the hymn is a rather straightforward rendering of the stories in these Gospels, especially the portions in Mark 16:5–7 and John 20:19–29. It is almost like a sung Bible study. The hymn text presents the stories and their meaning simply and directly.

Stanza 1 introduces the hymn by addressing the worshipping congregation directly as "sons and daughters of the King." The concluding stanza returns to this address by inviting the congregation to raise hearts and voices to God. In between these first and last stanzas, the stories from Mark and John are told. Read Mark 16:5–7.

- Whom do the women see when they enter the tomb?
While there is said to be a "young man," it is clear he is an angel. What is his message?
- What does he say about Jesus?
- While Jesus is not in the tomb, where does the angel say the disciples will be able to find Him?

- How does Mark 14:28 help us to understand where Jesus will meet the disciples?
- Where does the risen Jesus promise to meet us today?

Read John 20:19–28. There are two Sundays mentioned here. The first is Easter Sunday itself. The next is a week later.

- The text says on that first night the disciples were afraid. What were the first words out of Jesus' mouth when He came to them in that room? How would that have comforted the disciples?
- How does Thomas react when the disciples tell him that Christ has risen? Are we ever like Thomas? How? Why?
- What does Jesus do to remove Thomas's doubts?
- What blessing does Jesus give to those who believe without seeing? Are we included in that blessing? How?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Although this hymn is attributed to Jean Tisserand (d. 1494), a popular French Franciscan preacher of the 17th century, it is doubtful that he was the author. The roots of the hymn text stretch back to the early 1500s, when a Latin poem was published under the title "A Joyous Chant for the Time of Easter." That poem was translated into French sometime in the 17th century and used in liturgical settings in France. It was used there on Easter evening in the Roman Catholic Mass.

The English text is from the pen of John Mason Neale (1818–66), a hymn writer and translator whose work is reflected in 22 of the hymns in *Lutheran Service Book*. Neale was an Anglican priest in England who wrote and translated many hymns. There are many English translations of this hymn, but his has become the standard English text.

- Notice how this hymn originated in 16th-century Latin, became popular in Catholic France, was translated by an Englishman and now is sung by American Lutherans

in the 21st century. What does this tell you about the Church's hymnody? Is it a strength or a weakness that our hymns have such varied origins?

Text

Stanzas 2 and 3 of the hymn focus on Mark 16:5–7. The two stanzas condense and tell the story of the women going to the tomb to look for Jesus. They encounter an angel who announces that Jesus has risen and that He will go and meet the disciples in Galilee. There is in this short story surprise and promise.

- How are the women surprised by the angel's announcement? What had they expected to find?
- What promise does the angel make?

Making the Connection

This hymn text is a strong recitation of the story of Christ's resurrection and His appearances to the women and to the disciples in the Upper Room. The challenge for us is to find ourselves in the story. After all, the hymn addresses us and calls us to sing and rejoice.

There are several points where we can "jump right in" and see ourselves in this hymn.

- "Galilee" (st. 3): Christ promises to meet His followers in Galilee. Where is our Galilee? Where does our risen Lord promise to meet us?

In Closing

We are sons and daughters of the King. Through Baptism into His death and resurrection, Christ has made us to be children of our heavenly Father. He comes among us and dispels our fear as He did that very first Easter morning. With His word of peace and His presence among us, we are enabled to confess Him as "Lord and God" as Thomas did. So, we can follow the hymn's directive and raise to God "laud and jubilee and praise" (st. 9)!

- Read aloud or sing together *LSB* 470 or 471.

Stanzas 4–8 recount the appearance of Jesus in the Upper Room as told in John 20. It is a literal and close telling of the story in poetic form.

- Read stanza 4 and try to imagine yourself in that Upper Room. What change in emotion might have occurred when Christ appeared and spoke?
- Why do you think Thomas doubted the apostles' proclamation? Was he wrong to want to see Jesus' wounds?

Notice how Jesus' wounds have become a source of rejoicing and faith. The terrible scene of crucifixion has now become, after the resurrection, the source of faith and joy for believers.

- How does Thomas react when he sees Jesus' hands and feet and side?
- What does he say about Jesus?

- "Fear" (st. 4): The apostles were afraid before Christ appeared. What fears do we have? How does our sin and this sinful world isolate us? When do we hear "Peace be with you" (st. 4) from Jesus? How is our worship experience similar to the Upper Room experience of the disciples?
- "They who have not seen" (st. 8): We are those who have not seen! How does God bring us to faith? How does the word of the apostles that Thomas doubted bring us to faith?

Prayer

Almighty God, grant that we who have celebrated the Lord's resurrection may by Your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter).