

Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure

Lutheran Service Book 533 | study by Bruce E. Keseman

Introduction

As a group, try to think of a title for Jesus for each letter in the alphabet. For instance, for A, you might use “Atoning Sacrifice.” “Bread of Life” or “Branch of Jesse” would be examples for B. When you finish your list, go on to the next paragraph.

Amazingly, when Johann L. C. Allendorf (1693–1773) wrote “Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure,” he did just what you did, but in a hymn. He assigned each successive letter of the German alphabet to one stanza of the hymn. Then in each stanza, he included at least one title for Jesus

that began with the appropriate letter. For instance, his first stanza called Jesus “*A und O*” (Alpha and Omega), the second called Him “*Bürge*” (Security/Guarantor), and the third “*Krone*” (Crown). His stanza for W actually uses four different names for Christ: *Weg* (Way), *Wahrheit* (Truth), *Weisheit* (Wisdom) and *Weinstock* (Vine).

- Which is your favorite title for Jesus? Why?
- Which titles seem to describe best who Jesus is and what He does for you?

Exploring the Scriptures

Read today’s Old Testament Reading, Is. 66:10–14. God’s people are saddened when Isaiah prophesies that Jerusalem, their dear city, will be destroyed.

- Tell about an especially difficult event that you have experienced in your life.
- What does Isaiah invite the troubled people to do in verse 10? Why?

Now read today’s Gospel, Luke 10:1–20.

- What brings joy to the seventy-two in v. 17? What does Jesus suggest is even more joyous (vv. 18–20)?
- How does the fact that your name is written in heaven change the way you view the worst news in life?

As the hymn reminds us, the arrival of Jesus — by whatever title we may call Him! — gives us reason for *joy* at both the best and worst times of life.

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Ready for a little German? “Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure” originally included 23 stanzas with more than thirty alphabetized titles for Jesus!

Our English translation includes only four of those stanzas: for A (*A und O*, Alpha and Omega), for D (*Durchbrecher*, One Who Breaks Through), for E (*Erlöser*, Redeemer) and for K (*König der Ehren*, King of Glory). Even in Germany, they only sing a few of the stanzas today.

- If all 23 stanzas were translated into English, would you recommend including every stanza in the hymnal? Why or why not?
- What is lost by not including some stanzas? What are the benefits of including only the strongest stanzas?

Text

In German, the first line of the hymn is “*Jesus ist kommen, Grund ewiger Freude*,” that is, “Jesus has Come, the Foundation of Eternal Joy.” The translator, Oliver Rupprecht (1903–2000), lamented that sometimes English does not have words to express adequately the meaning

of the German text. In addition, translators struggle to maintain the meaning of the original while putting it into English poetry. For instance, Rupprecht might have preferred to use “joy” — a more literal translation — in the opening line instead of “pleasure.” However, doing so would have made it difficult to provide an accurate translation of the rest of the text, while keeping the correct meter and finding pleasing rhymes.

- Why might it be even more difficult to translate a hymn from another language than to write a new hymn in your own language?
- The word “pleasure” is intended to make you think about the confident joy that flows from knowing that “Jesus has come” to live, die, rise and redeem you. In what ways does that differ from the self-indulgent attitude involved in what our culture often calls “pleasure”?

For stanza 1, read Rev. 1:8, 21:5–6, and 22:12–13. Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

- What does “Alpha and omega” seem to imply about the person who bears that title?

- In Rev. 1:8 and 21:6, God the Father is called the Alpha and Omega. In Rev. 22:13, who calls Himself the Alpha and Omega? How might that show that Jesus is as eternal and divine as His Father?
- How are the two natures of Christ expressed in stanza 1?
- Why is it necessary for your salvation that Jesus be both God and human? For some insights, read the Small Catechism's explanation of the Second Article of the Creed (*LSB*, p. 322).

For stanza 2 and echoes in stanza 3, read Matt. 12:22–29, where the Pharisees claim that Jesus gets His power from Satan.

- How does Jesus show that their claim cannot be true?
- In verse 29, who (surprisingly!) is represented by the robber? By the strong man?
- Because “Jesus has come,” how has He “robbed” you from Satan? How is that wonderful “robbery” expressed in stanzas 2 and 3 of the hymn?

For stanza 3, read Is. 61:1–2, a prophecy that the Messiah will “proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”

- Where do you see this passage reflected in stanza 3?

Making the Connection

“Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure Eternal” expresses the joy that we have because Jesus has come into this world and into our lives. Read stanza 4.

- Why might it call this a “fast-fleeting hour”?
- How does God involve you in “capturing hearts with the heavenly story”?

In Closing

Every title used for Christ in the Bible and in this hymn, emphasizes some aspect of who He is or what He has done for us. Discuss the special emphasis in a few of the titles for Jesus that you listed at the beginning of this study.

If Jesus had never come, we would be condemned for our sins, secure in Satan's grasp and on our way to hell. But Jesus has come and brings pleasure eternal! He fills your life with joy — the joy of knowing that the Alpha and Omega who exists eternally has come for you; the joy of knowing that the one who breaks through has plundered Satan's house and set you free; the joy of knowing that death did not hold your Redeemer, so death cannot hold you; and the joy of knowing the King of glory shares with you His heavenly glory, so you can “Take the crown He has for you!” (st. 4).

- Consider the images of Jesus breaking into prison to set us free. How are we prisoners? How does Jesus break into our world? Into your life?

What a wonderful irony to call Jesus “the mighty Redeemer” (st. 3)! After all, it is through the weakness of the cross (1 Cor. 1:17–2:5) that our Lord powerfully crushes Satan (Gen. 3:15) and mightily redeems us, that is, buys us back, with His life as the price of redemption.

- Why was it necessary for Jesus to be “weak” in order to redeem you and end Satan's power to accuse you?
- What words in the hymn express Christ's power?

For stanza 4, read Ps. 24:7–10. Some scholars believe this psalm was sung when the ark of the covenant returned to the temple (2 Samuel 6). Since God promised to be where His ark was, its coming brought joy. The people could have sung, “The ark has come and brings pleasure eternal.” Instead, they express joy over the coming of the “the King of all glory.”

- The arrival of the ark, and therefore the arrival of the King of glory, took place about a thousand years before Jesus' birth. How then, by calling Jesus the “King of glory,” can the hymn imply that Jesus was there when the ark entered the temple?
- How is the King of glory described in Psalm 24? In what ways does Jesus fulfill this description?

- List some specific things we Christians can do to “ponder His love” (as st. 4 invites us to do).
- In what ways does the entire hymn suggest that our lives have changed because “Jesus has come”?

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 533.

Prayer

Almighty God, You have built Your Church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. Continue to send Your messengers to preserve Your people in true peace that, by the preaching of Your Word, Your Church may be kept free from all harm and danger; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (Collect for Proper 9C).