

My Soul, Now Praise Your Maker

Lutheran Service Book 820 | study by Paul J. Cain

Introduction

Confess together the First Article of the Apostles' Creed (*LSB*, 322).

"My Soul, Now Praise Your Maker" is a hymn of praise and adoration for what the Lord has done in creation, but not only for what He has done in creation.

- Why is a "First Article only" confession of faith an insufficient confession for Christians from a biblical standpoint? What is missing?

Exploring the Scriptures

There are four main Bible texts for us to consider that are listed at the bottom of the page for *LSB* 820.

Read Is. 40:6–8.

- What is distressing about these verses? Is the prophet only speaking about grass and flowers?
- What is comforting about verse 8?
- Have you ever seen the letters "VDMA"? They are the initial letters of the Latin motto that translates, "The Word of the Lord Endures Forever" (*Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum*). Why is that an appropriate motto for Lutherans, and especially for Lutheran laypeople?

Exploring the Hymn

Background

Intended as a paraphrase of Psalm 103, "My Soul" has a royal history. Martin Chemnitz knew that this hymn was commissioned by Albrecht the Elder, Duke of Prussia, a supporter of the Lutheran Reformation and of Luther himself. Psalm 103 was the Duke's favorite psalm. This hymn was a favorite of Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus. A hymn of consolation, it was sung in thanksgiving for the conclusion of the Thirty Years' War by Christians in Osnabrück, Westphalia. Author Johann Grammann (1487–1541) was known at the time for his preaching and pastoral care, as well as church visitation and the establishment of Lutheran schools. Today his hymn of praise, one of the earliest Lutheran hymns, lives on in *Lutheran Service Book*.

- In what ways does this hymn sound like a sermon?
- What parts of the hymn reflect soul care from a faithful and compassionate pastor?

Pray

O God, the strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that by Your power we may be defended against all adversity; 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 Epiphany 7).

Read Is. 57:15–16.

- How is the Law proclaimed here? The Gospel?
- Contrast the dwelling places of the Lord and humanity. Why is the incarnation of Christ so comforting to us?

Read Ps. 119:89–90.

- What do we learn about the reliability of the Lord and His Word in these verses?

This hymn has become a somewhat unlikely favorite hymn at my congregation's school for chapel at the grammar school level, and was even used for Vacation Bible School.

- How and where does the hymn encourage sound catechesis at home, church and school to pass on the faith to the next generation?
- What words and phrases in the hymn encourage evangelism and mission work? Which words and phrases provide good models for use in mission work and evangelism?

Text

Stanza 1 presents Ps. 103:1–6. Read those verses and compare them to the stanza.

- What words in stanza 1 reflect the individual nature of the praises offered in Ps. 103:1–5?

Stanza 2 is based on Ps. 103:7–12. Read those verses and compare them to the stanza.

- In Ps. 103:6–14, the whole community praises the Lord. How is this subtly reflected at the end of stanza 2? Skip ahead for the moment to stanza 3. Note specific language that shows the Lord’s care for the flock of Christians He gathers to Himself.
- Consider the influence of the following on stanza 2: Is. 30:18; Is. 48:9; 2 Peter 3:9; Lam. 3:22; Ps. 34:18; and Ps. 51:17.

Stanza 3 is a metrical paraphrase of Ps. 103:13–16. Read those verses and compare them to the stanza.

- God is eternal. Human life is frail. How are these truths shared poetically in stanza 3? In Is. 40:6–8?

Making the Connection

Most Christians agree that salvation was won by Christ on the cross (that is, if they are still willing to confess the veracity of the Scriptures, the divinity of Christ and the truth of His incarnation and resurrection). Where Christians so often differ is where the benefit of that salvation is delivered to Christians.

- “His grace remains forever” (st. 4). How would you

- How are Mal. 3:17; 1 John 3:1; Rom. 8:15; Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Job 10:9; 14:1–2; 34:14–15; Ps. 90:3–6; 102:11; Eccl. 3:20; and James 1:10 alluded to in stanza 3?

Stanza 4 gives us Ps. 103:17–22. Read those verses and compare them to the stanza.

- All of creation is to honor the Lord, as Ps. 103:20–22 encourages by “Bless the LORD.” Where are these thoughts of praise and adoration expressed in stanza 4?
- Read 1 Peter 1:25 and Is. 59:21. Why are these verses so important to stanza 4?

explain to a non-Christian where and how the grace of God is delivered to you here and now? Would your answer differ if you were giving the same kind of explanation to a Christian who was not a Lutheran? Why or why not?

- “His love beyond all measure” (st. 2). How would you use phrases from the hymn to counter the response, “It sounds too good to be true”?

In Closing

Confess together the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed (*LSB*, 322–23).

- Sing or read aloud together *LSB* 820, “My Soul, Now Praise Your Maker.”

Prayer

O God, from whom all good proceeds, grant to us, Your humble servants, Your holy inspiration, that we may set our minds on the things that are right and, by Your merciful guiding, accomplish them; 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 18A).