

May 21, 2020
IMAGINE WITH US...

Having experienced the Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618-1648) and the plague (1637), no one could imagine a hymn of thankfulness and hope written by a Lutheran pastor named Martin Rinkart (1586-1649). Left as the only living minister in the village of Eilenberg, Germany in the midst of pestilence and destruction and famine, there were times when he, alone, conducted 40-50 funerals a day. In this context Rinkart writes.

In the first stanza the words express gratitude for the love from God he experienced in his early years that "blessed us on our our way with countless gifts of love." Remembering the love that comforted us in our own lifetime we can understand that knowing we are loved sets us on a path that leads to joy. The second stanza is a prayer that is his only reference to the threats that surround and seems to ask for help from God's bounteous love that can stay their minds and hearts and "guide us when perplexed." The words make clear that when we can't figure it out, we need your help Lord and Rinkart comes with a request "free us from all ills in this world and the next." The third stanza is a song of praise to "The one eternal God whom earth and heaven adore ...now and ever more." In the midst of distress, we can be encouraged because whatever is happening is temporary. The goodness of God's presence will endure.

This hymn reflects upon the idea from Psalm 147 that proclaims that in times of despair it is life giving to remember with song that
"The Lord is gracious – and a song of praise is fitting.
It heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.

In this period of history as we face the threat from a novel virus that is dismantling life as we have known it and is devastating lives, we have witnessed people singing from their balconies, on the steps of the cathedral, in their home studios. Singing allows us to connect with our emotions and extends meaning beyond words. In so doing, it not only connects us with our deeper selves but also with each other. We come together individually and collectively to uniquely connect with the Lord.

I invite you to read the words below and sing with the music written by Johann Cruger (1598-1662). May we grasp the meaning that what is happening at this time is not ultimate. May this prayer be ours as we imagine joining together to sing this hymn called Now Thank We All Our God.

As we miss being together this week for our time of Word and Worship our EPM team encourages you to take an opportunity to sing from the depths of your soul either alone or with those nearest. Blessings.

Your brother in Christ,