



Lent Midweek Service Participant Booklet

Sing your favorite gospel songs and
learn the stories behind them!

Wednesday, March 18th



Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling

#608

Lyrics/Tune – Will Thompson, 1880

Thompson was an American songwriter and businessman from Ohio who wrote many gospel songs but is remembered most for this gentle invitation hymn.

The song was written during a time when revival meetings and evangelistic services were common throughout the United States. These gatherings often included a time at the end of the service called an “invitation,” or “altar call” when people were encouraged to come forward in repentance and faith. Thompson intentionally wrote “Softly and Tenderly” to be sung during these moments, with lyrics that portray Jesus lovingly calling sinners to come home.

Unlike many revival songs that emphasized fear or judgment, Thompson’s hymn stood out because of its tone of compassion and patience. The words describe Christ waiting and watching for people who have wandered away, emphasizing mercy rather than condemnation. The refrain, “Come home, come home, ye who are weary come home”, captures the heart of the message.

Over the years, the song became a standard altar-call hymn in churches and revivals and has been recorded by many gospel and country artists. Its gentle melody and message of grace continue to remind listeners that Christ patiently calls people to return to Him.



Song Themes

Gentle call of Christ	Jesus lovingly invites all to come to him.
Invitation to come home	God welcomes all who return after wandering.
Urgency of responding	The hymn encourages us not to delay answering Christ's call.
Grace for the weary	Jesus offers rest and forgiveness to those who are burdened.
The watchful love of Jesus	Christ patiently waits and watches for us all to come to him.

Biblical Connections

Matthew 11:28 Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling

“Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”

Luke 15:20 Calling for you and for me

“But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion.”

Revelation 3:20 See, on the portals He's waiting and watching

“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking.”

Isaiah 55:6 Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading?

“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.”

1 John 1:9 Come home, ye you ware weary, come home

“If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins.”



I Love to Tell the Story

#661

Lyrics – Katherine Hankey, 1866

Tune – William G. Fischer, 1869

“I Love to Tell the Story” is a cherished hymn that celebrates the joy of sharing the message of Jesus. The words were written in 1866 by Katherine Hankey, and was another of the nineteenth-century hymns born of malady like that of Charlotte Elliot and “Just As I Am.” Hanky, the daughter of a wealthy English banker, had a deep love for Bible study and teaching. During a long period of illness and recovery, Hankey spent much of her time reflecting on the life of Christ. Out of this time came a lengthy poem of more than one hundred verses entitled *The Old, Old Story*, which told the story of Jesus and His love.

From this larger work, two hymns were created. One portion became “Tell Me the Old, Old Story,” and another section was set to music as “I Love to Tell the Story.” The hymn expresses a simple but heartfelt desire to share the gospel again and again, not only with others but as a reminder to the singer’s own heart.

The tune was composed by William G. Fischer who not only wrote the tune but also added the refrain.

The hymn became especially popular in the late 19th century during revival movements, where storytelling and personal testimony were central to worship. Its message continues to resonate because it captures the timeless joy of sharing the good news of Christ’s love, a story that never grows old to those who believe.



Song Themes

Joy in sharing the gospel	A heartfelt desire to tell others about Jesus.
The power of a timeless story	The message of Christ never grows old or loses meaning.
Personal faith and testimony	Sharing the story as part of one's own spiritual journey.
Love for God's word	A deep appreciation for the truth found in scripture.
Trust that the story brings comfort and new life to others.	Reminds believers that God watches over every path, near or far.

Biblical Connections

Hebrews 11:1 I love to tell the story of unseen things above

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

1 John 4:9 Of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and His love

“God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.”

Acts 4:20 I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true

“For we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

John 6:35 It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do

“Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’”



Just As I Am, without One Plea

#592

Lyrics - Charlotte Elliott, 1835

Tune - William B. Bradbury, 1849

“Just As I Am” by American poet, Charlotte Elliott, has become one of the most beloved and widely recognized hymns in Christian history. Though healthy early in life, around the age of 33, she began suffering from fatigue, exhaustion and suffered from what we would today call chronic fatigue syndrome. The condition left her an invalid, often restricting her to her bed or home. A bright and vital woman, she began to understand the deep need for reassurance and comfort that we all face.

During this time, two events occurred that would change her life and the lives of Christians around the world. First, she received a visit from a pastor friend, Dr. Cesar Malan. He told her that she could come to God just as she was, without trying to fix or change herself to be anyway but as she was. Second, while living with her brother, Henry Venn Elliott, an evangelical Anglican vicar, there was a local fundraising event. Because of her ongoing illnesses, she was unable to help and felt useless and frustrated. Awake all night before the fundraiser, the words of Malan came back to her, and she turned frustration to inspiration, writing the hymn. The first printing was in *The Invalid's Hymn Book** with many others to follow. Once put to music by William Bradbury in 1849, it became one of the most well-known hymns of the Christian experience.

In the 20th century, Billy Graham played a major role in bringing “Just As I Am” to worldwide recognition by making it not only **THE** signature invitation hymn at his evangelistic crusades but also the title of his autobiography.



Song Themes

Come now	An invitation to come to Christ without waiting.
Acceptance as we are	We approach Jesus in our weakness and need.
Christ's sacrifice	Salvation rests on His atoning blood.
Struggle and inner conflict	Bring all doubts, fears, and inner battles honestly before God.
Assurance of welcome	Christ receives all who come in faith.

Biblical Connections

John 6:37 – Come as you are

“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 – Grace, not perfection

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Matthew 11:28 – Burden and rest

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

2 Corinthians 12:9 – “They are weak, but He is strong”

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’”

2 Corinthians 5:17 – New life in Christ

“If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation.”



Gospel Characteristics

- Simple, clear lyrics deliver a spiritual message focusing on faith, hope, salvation, and praise.
- Rhythmic drive features steady beats encouraging clapping and toe tapping.
- Verses often have a chorus with repeated words making joining in and memorizing easier.
- Usually in a major key.
- Strong vocals with clear four-part harmony.
- Songs encourage collectiveness, community worship, and shared experience.
- Often has repeated words in the refrain which makes learning and joining in easier.