



Lent Midweek Service Participant Booklet

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

Wednesday, March 25th



Jesus Loves Me!

#595

Lyrics – Anna Bartlet Warner and Susan Warner - 1860

Tune – William B. Bradbury - 1862

The words of *Jesus Loves Me* first appeared not as a hymn but as a poem within her sister Susan Warner's novel *Say and Seal*. In the story, the poem is spoken to comfort a young child who is gravely ill, offering reassurance of Jesus' love and the promise of salvation.

Two years later, composer William Batchelder Bradbury set the poem to music and added the now familiar refrain, "Yes, Jesus loves me." Bradbury was a composer and publisher of Sunday school educational music, and he recognized the power of simple language paired with a strong melody. His musical setting, along with the additional refrain, helped transform the poem into a hymn that could easily be learned and sung by children and adults alike.

Though often associated with children, *Jesus Loves Me* expresses the foundations of the Christian faith, emphasizes Christ's sacrificial love, the authority of Scripture, ("for the Bible tells me so"), and the idea that human weakness is met by Christ's strength.

Over time, *Jesus Loves Me* has become one of the most widely known and cherished hymns in the Christian tradition. Sung in churches, homes, hospitals, and schools around the world, it continues to remind believers that the simplest confession of faith can carry the deepest truth: Jesus' love is sure, personal, unchanging, and enduring. A song with strong gospel characteristics including repeated words in the refrain, short verse lines and a steady rhythm, Bradbury saw that *Jesus Loves Me* was ideal for setting to music and communal singing.



Song Themes

Unconditional love	Jesus loves us fully and faithfully.
Childlike faith	Simple trust in Christ's care.
Strength in weakness	He is strong when we are weak.
We belong to Christ	We are His and always held by Him.
Biblical assurance	God's love is confirmed in scripture.

Biblical Connections

Romans 5:8 – “Jesus loves me, this I know”

“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

2 Timothy 3:16 – “For the Bible tells me so”

“All scripture is given my inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instructions in righteousness.”

Matthew 19:14 – “Little ones to Him belong”

“But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

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.’”

Matthew 28:20b – “Close beside me all the way”

“And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”



***When Peace Like a River
It is Well with My Soul***

#785

Lyrics – Horatio G. Spafford - 1876

Tune – Philip P. Bliss - 1876

“It Is Well with My Soul,” often recognized by its opening words “When peace like a river,” has one of the most moving and personal stories behind it in all of hymn history. The lyrics were written in 1873 by Horatio Spafford, a successful lawyer and devoted Christian who lived in Chicago. Spafford experienced a series of heartbreaking tragedies that deeply tested his faith.

First, his young son died of illness. Not long after, the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed much of his property and caused serious financial loss. Hoping for rest and renewal, Spafford planned a family trip to Europe. Delayed by business, he sent his wife and four daughters ahead by ship. During the journey, the vessel collided with another ship and sank. His wife survived, but all four daughters were lost.

After receiving a telegram from his grieving wife that read, “Saved alone,” Spafford immediately set sail to join her. As his ship passed near the place where his daughters had drowned, he was overcome with sorrow. Yet in that moment of deep grief, he found a sense of peace in his faith. It was then that he began writing the words that would become the hymn.

He later sent the lyrics to his friend Philip Bliss, who composed the music to accompany them. Together, their work created *It Is Well with My Soul*, a powerful testimony of trust in God even in life’s darkest moments. The hymn continues to comfort people around the world with its message of peace, hope, and faith through suffering.



Song Themes

Peace in the midst of sorrow	True peace is possible even during deep loss and suffering.
Trust in God's comfort	Confidence that God is there through every trial.
Victory through Christ	Sin and despair are overcome through Jesus' saving work.
Endurance through trials	Faith remains steady despite grief, hardship and uncertainty.
Hope of Christ's return	A longing for the day when faith becomes sight and all is made whole.

Biblical Connections

Philippians 4:7 when peace like a river attendeth my way

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Psalms 34:19 when sorrows like sea billows roll

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all.”

Romans 8:28 Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well with my soul

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Revelation 21:4 Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.”



In the Garden

See insert

Lyrics and Tune – C. Austin Miles, 1912

“In the Garden” was written in 1912 by American hymn writer and composer C. Austin Miles. Born in 1868 in New Jersey. Miles worked as a pharmacist before fully turning his attention to gospel music. Though he had little formal musical training, he became a prolific hymn writer and eventually served as an editor and contributor for the Hall-Mack publishing company in Philadelphia.

The inspiration for “In the Garden” came as Miles reflected on the resurrection story in the Gospel of John, particularly Mary Magdalene’s encounter with the risen Christ in the garden (John 20:1–18). According to Miles, one day in March 1912 he read the passage and began imagining the scene so vividly that he felt as though he were present in the garden with Mary. In his own account, he described the setting becoming real to him, the dew, the quiet morning, and the voice of Jesus speaking her name. From that meditation came the tender lyrics: “And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own.”

Miles wrote both the words and the music for the hymn. The melody is simple and lyrical, designed to support the intimate and personal tone of the text. First published in 1912, the hymn quickly gained popularity in revival meetings and churches across America. Though sometimes criticized for its deeply personal and sentimental style, “In the Garden” has remained beloved for over a century as a hymn celebrating the closeness of the risen Christ with the believer.



Song Themes

Unlikely hymn writer	Miles left pharmacy to be come a gospel writer and publisher.
Inspired by the resurrection story	The hymn reflects Mary meeting the risen Jesus in the Gospel of John 20.
A vivid spiritual vision	Miles said the garden story felt real as he imagined it.
Words and music together	In 1912, Miles write both the lyrics and melody.
Hymn of personal faith	“In the Garden” celebrates personal fellowship with Christ.

Biblical Connections

John 20: 16 – “He speaks and the sound of His voice”

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbi!””

John 10:28 – “The voice I hear falling on my ear...”

“My sheep hear my voice. I know then, and they know me.”

Genesis 3:8 – “And He walks with me, and He talks with me...”

“They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze.”

John 15:11 – “And the joy we share as we tarry there...”

“I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.”

Romans 8:16 – “He tells me that I am His own.”

“It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”



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.