

# Fairest Lord Jesus



In this hymn, the word in question makes its first appearance in the title followed by a parade of appearances throughout the hymn: “fair.” In what ways do we use this word? “Fair game.” “Fair ball.” “Fair judge.” “Fair weather.” “Mirror, mirror on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?” Or, in the words of my Texan father: “it was fair to middlin.” Perhaps the colloquial use of “fair” doesn’t quite get at the way that the text carries the word.

“Fairest Lord Jesus”...what does it mean? This is surely a worthy question as we begin and end our hymn by noting that Jesus is both God and man: someone to cherish, honor, given the top place in our lives. Sandwiched in the middle, Jesus is compared to the wonder of meadows, woodlands, bursting spring, radiant sun, moon, glistening stars...and Jesus comes out “fairer than them all”. He comes out “ruler of nature” and “Lord of all nations”—which pretty much covers it! In the end, the song bursts into celebration of the fairest Jesus: Beautiful! Above all nations! God and man! Praise! Glory! On and on—forever!

But, when Christ was among us, was his radiance noticed? Jesus is connected to the Suffering Servant found in Isaiah: “He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.” Isaiah 53:2 (NASB) His beauty did not come necessarily in his physical appearance, but in his ability to make the “woeful heart sing”—it was *especially* the woeful hearts that noticed and experienced the “radiance” of Jesus. Even now, we place our faith in him who is unseen, walking by faith and not by sight and leaning toward the day when we will behold his face “as radiant as the sun” (Revelation 1:16). Our Jesus’ “fairness” is known by *that* kind of faith, and seen most clearly in those woeful hearts who are beginning to hum a new tune.

It’s a tune that perceives the world differently, beholding beauty and seeing in it the hands of the One who was, in the words of John, “in the beginning with God,” and through whom “all things came into being...and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being”. It is the tune that is hummed in the breeze rustling the branches, swirling around stars that twinkle faithfully in the silent night sky, and bursting forth with the rising sun in each new day. It is the tune that is hummed in the midst of a crowd of people fantastically different and fantastically the same. It is hummed in the background of great need, of great sorrow, of sickness—anywhere “woeful hearts” can be found.

“Fairest”...most beautiful...most pure...most loving...most just...most. Let your woeful heart start to hum as you live your days, as you know Christ more deeply, as your eyes behold the world and the people around you and until you burst out singing along, knowing that in all these things you may catch a glimpse of the Lord Jesus.

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