

The King of Glory Comes



In the study of hymnology we discover that when the chorus comes before the stanzas, it is referred to as a “burden.” In a sense, the stanzas that follow must bear the burden, must carry the weight, of what is said/sung before them. In this case, the burden is that of opening up to and rejoicing in the coming of the King of Glory. The best known hymn in this format is “Go, Tell it On the Mountain.”

So what is the first stanza in this hymn that must bear the burden of opening up to and rejoicing in the coming of the King of Glory? The answer: the fact that Jesus is God with us. Can we open ourselves to that truth and receive it? Can we rejoice in it? We are to relate to Jesus in a manner that acknowledges that he is, indeed, God. That can certainly feel like a burden when we are tempted to use the gospel for our own ends.

The burden then moves to the shoulders of stanza two. Stanza two is about the business of curing the illnesses of all the people. The burden: we are Christians, “little Christs.” His work is our work. We are to open ourselves to the King’s business being done in us and through us and we are to rejoice in it. That’s quite a burden if we think that only some of the people deserve to be cured of their illnesses.

The burden now shifts to stanza three. Here Jesus takes upon himself the sins of the nations, that is to say, everyone’s sins. The burden is that we, as Christ-followers, are to be open to the coming of the King of Glory, who will see, first-hand, how we feel about everyone being forgiven by him. Our questions of “but what about___?” must be replaced by voices lifted in rejoicing. There’s a burden for you.

The fourth and last stanza now adjusts the burden to its shoulders. This last stanza replaces our worldview and our agendas with “His heavenly vision.” The burden: to open ourselves to seeing the world and life and Jesus sees and then rejoicing in that vision.

There aren’t very many hymns whose chorus or refrain is a burden. There’s probably good reason for that. But, when one slips into our hymnal and then our worship, we must put our shoulders to the task.

Terry W. York

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