



Prepare the Royal Highway

As the days of Fall grow colder we begin to prepare our homes for Christmas. Decorations are brought out from storage. Lights are strung on rooftops and through trees. This hymn helps us begin to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ at Christmastide. The title is a reference to Isaiah 40:3–4 where a voice is calling out in the wilderness to prepare “a highway for our God.”

The prophet Isaiah instructs us that at the arrival of the King “the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.” In the first stanza we sing, “Let every hill and valley a level road appear!” There are at least two powerful messages conveyed in this imagery. The Apostle Paul tells us that creation waits in eager expectation. Here we see that at the coming of Christ the mountains fall down and the valleys rise up. It is a reminder of how all creation prepares with us for Christmas. This speaks also of the great leveling that will typify the Reign of God. At the coming of Christ gross inequalities are wiped away.

In the second stanza we reflect on the great company of those who have waited for the Son of God to come to earth. He is the One “long promised by the prophets.” Great men and women had looked forward in hope. They desired to see the One in whom all their greatest longings would be fulfilled. As we consider the host of people who we join in joyful expectation we sense “our hope is ever growing.”

The final two stanzas speak in greater detail about this King and his Kingdom. Is this solely a nationalistic King of the Jews? It is true that he is the fulfillment of all God was doing through the Hebrews, still “all lands will bow before Him.” The whole earth greets this king in song. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah has grafted in all who partake of God’s grace. The fourth stanza clarifies this further. “Christ’s is no earthly kingdom.” Jesus did not come to get entrenched in the same feeble feuds that other rulers have been stuck in for millennia. His rule is full of freedom, justice and love that “comes from heaven above.”

During the season of Advent we wait with excitement for the Christ child. He is the embodiment of God’s word and the radiance of God’s glory. “Hosanna to the Lord, for He fulfill God’s word!”

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