

Advent devotion – December 1, 2010
Christian Worship Supplement: 703 – My Soul in Stillness Waits

Refrain

*For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits,
truly my hope is in you.*

1. O Lord of Light, our only hope of glory,
Your radiance shines in all who look to you,
Come, light the hearts of all in dark and shadow.
Refrain
2. O Spring of Joy, rain down upon our spirits,
Our thirsty hearts are yearning for your Word,
Come, make us whole, be comfort to our
hearts. **Refrain**
3. O Root of Life, implant your seed within us,
And in your advent draw us all to you,
Our hope reborn in dying and in rising.
Refrain
4. O Key of Knowledge, guide us in our
pilgrimage,
We ever seek, yet unfulfilled remain,
Open to us the pathway of your peace.
Refrain

If you take a look at the church calendar for December in your newsletter you'll see that there's a lot going on at Faith Lutheran Church in Radcliff. Now... fill in your schedule, what a busy month! Travel, vacation, hopefully no snow days or unexpected visits to the doctor, parties, family get-togethers... it's going to be tough fitting it all in. Did you notice the difference between your busy schedule and this song we just sang? It's not like the first part of your day, is it? The mood is slow and contemplative. It forces us to slow down and consider the great birth of salvation that Advent anticipates.

This evening we will focus on the second stanza. Let's read it together: "**O Spring of Joy, rain down upon our spirits. Our thirsty hearts are yearning for your Word. Come, make us whole, be comfort to our hearts.**" We find the Scriptural base for this stanza in Isaiah 55:1-3. Read verses.

Savvy shoppers use coupons, register rewards, they earn gift cards and free gas points, but wouldn't it be a pleasant surprise to go to the grocery store, fill up your cart, and after all the food has been rung up at the register, the display reads \$0?

In Isaiah, the LORD sends out an invitation to buy milk and wine – symbols of abundance, enjoyment and nourishment, to come to the waters and to drink – with no cost. LORD through his prophet Isaiah extends this invitation to those who are thirsty and hungry – our hymn says, "**Our thirsty hearts are yearning for your Word.**"

Are you thirsty and hungry? No, I just had soup and sandwiches. The LORD is describing spiritual thirst and spiritual hunger. Is your soul thirsty and hungry? Perhaps it occurs during this time of year, as you observe the world rushing around you, your heart becomes troubled by the way the people of the world so thoughtlessly ignore the real reason we celebrate Christmas. They're so consumed in buying and receiving presents, and setting up decorations and hosting parties, but they are missing the best present they could ever receive (or give for that matter), the Christ child, and the salvation his birth brings.

Could this also be why our hearts are thirsty, because this is also true of you? That you're so busy with the season that you've failed to stop and ponder the greatest gift of Christmas? I know I'm so busy, preparing for these Midweek devotions, along with the Sunday sermons, Bible class, choir, catechism, children's service, women's advent by candlelight, the Christmas services, the outreach flyers, the building project, counseling, how will I get it all in? We're so busy, our schedules are so full, but our souls are not. We still have empty hearts, hungry for something that will fill the heart, looking for something to quench the thirst, and it's not found in all of the planning, decorating my house with so many lights that Clark Griswold would be jealous, satisfaction is not found in the Christmas movies I need to watch because it's "tradition". The LORD himself asks, **"Why spend money on what does not fill you up?"** I'm thirsty because I know I'm guilty of neglecting God's Word with my spouse, my family, myself. I'm hungry because I've tried to find other things to fill me up and they have taken priority over God's Word. I have not taken the time to slow down and reflect. I need to know I'm forgiven. I need to know God still loves me.

As we just sang in the hymn, **"Our thirsty hearts are yearning for your Word."** Thankfully, God comes to us through his Word, the Holy Bible, to quench our thirsty hearts. Through his Word we enter God's grocery store. Fill up your cart with God's promises as we walk down aisle 1. We take off the shelf Genesis 3:15, the first promise to send a Savior from the offspring of the woman who would crush the serpent's head and undo all the evil Satan brought into this world. As we continue down the aisle we see all the Old Testament promises of a Savior. As we round the corner and head down aisle 2 we look up and see "Promises Fulfilled." We take down off the shelf Luke chapter 2 – the story of the birth of Christ. We pick up John chapter 1 and put it in our cart, who tells us that God, who is spirit, came in the flesh, to live among us. We find on the shelves the words of Christ himself, **"Whoever drinks from the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."** (John 4:14) Towards the end of that aisle you will find Jesus' words, **"It is finished!"** God's grocery store is filled with his promises, free and fulfilling, reminding me that although I have been guilty of letting the business of the season rob me of my time with God, my sins have been paid in full by his death on the cross, my Savior lived the perfect life that God demands from me, therefore, I am righteous in his sight. These are the promises you can eat and drink, and they will quench your thirsty soul every time you hear them and read them and take them to heart.

The hymnwriter also says, **"Come, make us whole, be comfort to our hearts."** In God's grocery store he answers that plea. Through his Word and Sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper) he freely pours out the water of life into your soul, offers you forgiveness of all your sins, eternal life in heaven, and comfort for a guilty conscious. And it's amazing that when we arrive at the cash register, the display reads \$0. It's all free! Winning a "Free Groceries For a Year" sweepstakes would be nice, but how much more so that our redemption have been paid in full by Christ Jesus' life, death and resurrection!

No wonder the hymnwriter wrote, **"The Spring of Joy rains down upon our spirits."** Just as flowers and plants rejoice when rain soaks the parched earth, our souls are filled with joy as the water of life rains upon us. We cannot help but react. We will reprioritize our Christmas preparations, so that they focus on Christ, his manger, his cross, his empty tomb and his return on the clouds with his angels.

As you prepare for the coming of Christ, eat and drink daily from the Word of God. Come, you who thirst and hunger, buy without cost, and be filled with Christ's love. Amen.