

Advent devotion – December 15, 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

The key to a good sermon is a healthy daily devotional life, a faithful exegesis of the text, and a pastor who knows his people. The key to a successful mission is well thought out order, well rested Soldiers, and squared away platoon leader. Ask someone who has lived into their 90s, “What’s the key to a long life?” They will tell you, “Laugh, stay active, keep your mind active, and eat healthy.”

That’s good advice, especially since our hymnwriter describes this life as a **pilgrimage** in which **“we ever seek yet unfulfilled remain.”** I think that the advice for long life is beneficial. But we need something more, because as human beings we seek to fulfill needs, needs of the body, but we seem to never have good enough health or feel that we could be eating healthier or exercising more. We have needs of emotion and mind. We may never admit it, but there are needs to be wanted or needed, or to feel special or to have companionship, but we oftentimes feel unfulfilled. Then the danger is that we look for fulfillment in unhealthy places.

I think this could also be true in our quest for more knowledge, especially as Christians. We hear the encouragement of the Apostle Peter to “grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”, and so we make a point to make time with God’s Word. But how often does it happen that we grow frustrated because other things seem to take precedent over our time with Scripture, or we study and pray on what we’ve read and it doesn’t seem to sink in and so we abandon our habit and seek to fulfill our search for knowledge in other places; droning in front of the television or computer screen, hear say from other people, or our own minds.

“Guide us in our pilgrimage, We ever seek, yet unfulfilled remain.” We wander around this earth, knowing that with each day we take another step in our pilgrimage to our eternal home, yet, we grow impatient and unfulfilled. Well, there’s good news, because the hymnwriter addresses Jesus as the **“Key of Knowledge,”** and we ask him, **“Open to us the pathway of your peace.”** Knowing Christ and who he is and what he has done for us is the key to peace, the peace we need for our bodies and souls. Knowing Christ is what guides on our earthly pilgrimage and keeps us focused on our path to heaven. He is the key.

The word *key* is found in several passages of Scripture. In Revelation 3.7, Jesus is called **the key of David**, In Isaiah 22.22, the LORD says, **“I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David.”** This is a reference to Levites who were entrusted to guard the gates around the tabernacle. They had a key for opening the door in the morning and locking it at night. This unique name points to Christ, the descendant of King David, as the key to heaven. Ultimately he is the one who unlocks or locks the gate to Paradise. Unlike the guards who work for the federal depository located on Fort Knox,

Jesus doesn't keep the entrance to heaven a secret. He tells us to whom he locks the door and for whom he unlocks the door, which has more wealth and more riches than all the gold in the world combined.

The door to heaven is closed to those who are branded with the status of "sinner." No matter how much knocking and pleading, or offering of good works, the door will not be opened, because our status as sinner must be changed. The good news is that Christ came to change our status. His vicarious atonement provided for that status change. Vicarious atonement means that Jesus acted as our substitute, performing The sacrifice in place of you and me. Atonement means that because Jesus took the sacrifice of death on himself, he made us one with God. Because of Christ Jesus' sacrifice God declared all people innocent; he justified them. This status was bestowed upon you at your baptism. Sprinkled with water and the Word, Christ's vicarious life and death and resurrection were given to you. By faith, Christ has taken his key and unlocked the gate to heaven for you.

Scripture tells us that The Key of David is also the one who holds the key to death and Hades (Rev 1.18). I personally don't anyone who's been given the key to a city before, but I do know that typically a mayor will give an oversized key to people who have done something special. There is no actual gate that this key would be used for, it's simply a symbolic gesture of thanks for their service. The key to death and Hades must be given to someone who did something pretty special. That person is Jesus. If he is the possessor of that key, he must have power over death and hell. Jesus did something special to have those keys. First of all, He defeated hell, by suffering its agonies and torments on the cross. He allowed death to defeat him, then rose again, to prove death could not contain him. Because Christ possesses these keys, he reminds us that death and hell will not overcome us, who by faith are declared innocent in God's sight. We only need to focus our eyes heavenward, to the New Jerusalem, the new city, which Christ is preparing for us, the gates to which he has unlocked for you.

This unlocking key to the door to heaven is used every Sunday, when God announces to you through your pastor, "I forgive you all your sins." God speaks reassuring words to you that heaven has been opened when he says through his called servant, "Take this and eat it and drink it. It is given for you for the forgiveness of your sins." Yes, my friends, heaven has been opened to you.

"Open to us the pathway of your peace." Yes, I have peace now, knowing that all is well with my soul. Christ will most certainly take care of everything else that I need for my body. Truly, Christ Jesus is the Key of Knowledge. Knowing Jesus Christ and what he has done for us is the key to true knowledge and true peace. While we wander here below we will sing, **"For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you."** I pray that the Key of Knowledge will bless your Advent preparations as you wait for his coming. Amen.

Isaiah 11:2 the Holy Spirit empowered the Messiah with the gift of knowledge, empower him with wisdom to undertake wise purposes and the power to carry them out.

Isaiah 33:6 the LORD gives us the treasure of knowledge

Proverbs 1:7 the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Isaiah 22:20-25 ultimately this prophecy would be fulfilled with the Messiah, Eliakim would eventually fall from power as do all rulers and kings.

Matthew 16:19,

Rev 1:18 I hold the keys of death and Hades

Luke 11:52 – woe to you experts in the law because you have taken away the key to knowledge

- The very men who should have opened the people's minds concerning the law obscured their understanding by faulty interpretation and an erroneous system of theology, they kept themselves and the people in ignorance of the way of salvation, shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces (Matt 23.13)

1Chron 9:27 – men appointed by Samuel and later by David from the tribe of Levi to stand guard around the clock to guard the entrances to the tabernacle, before the temple was built

Rev 3:7 – the key of David, the descendant of King David is the one who ultimately holds the authority to control the entrance to the kingdom of heaven

Peace – Is 9:6 he will be called Prince of Peace; Luke 2.14 glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men, on whom his favor rests