

Sunday, May 29, 2022 pm

SERMONS FROM SONGS
Nearer, Still Nearer
#125, Hymns for Worship

Tonight, I want to examine the message of another song we occasionally sing. This one is Nearer, Still Nearer. I present this song as it corresponds with our theme for 2022. And as always, because our songs are to be a means to teaching and admonishing one another (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). Therefore, they need to be true to His word in message. Furthermore, we are commanded to sing with the spirit and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15).

The song for tonight was written by Leila N. Morris (1862-1929), around 1898. Like so many of our song writers, she was prolific, credited with more than a 1000 lyrics, and most of the music that accompanied them. Later in her life, she became blind but kept writing hymns with the help of friends. In addition to the song we are examining tonight, she also authored, "Let Jesus Come Into Your heart", "Sweeter as the Years Go By" and "Sweet Will of God"

I. Vs. 1, Close to Thy Heart

- a. *Nearer, still nearer* – repeated throughout the song, this phrase becomes its theme.
 - i. In this description I am reminded that we are to draw near to God - **James 4:8, Hebrews 10:22**.
 - ii. But also, as this song is written, it is a reminder that this is an ongoing process, that should never end as long as we live. **2 Peter 3:18** calls for us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Of note, "grow" is a present tense verb. **Philippians 3:12**, Paul notes that he had not already attained or was perfected, so he presses on.
- b. *Close to Thy heart, draw me My Savior, so precious thou art* –
 - i. As we have been noting through this year, we ought to be drawing closer to God, and that means closer to His heart – or who He is. We know in literature and poetic language, the heart is at the center of who we are. Remember **Proverbs 4:23** – out of it spring the issues of life.
 - ii. Let it be the cross of Jesus that draws us to Him and God.
 - iii. Again, we view Him as precious – He certainly is of great value.
- c. *Fold me, o fold me, close to thy breast* –
 - i. Fold has many definitions. According to wordnik (a multi-dictionary website) definitions include: An enclosure that is fenced in; to envelop or clasp (enfold); to place together and intertwine; to embrace or clasp.
 - ii. The idea of this phrase is to bring us close to our Lord, AND to keep us there. In **Matthew 23:37** as Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, He used the illustration of a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Jesus was grieving because Jerusalem would NOT allow God to bring them close to Him.
 - iii. **Psalms 145:17-18**, *The Lord is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.*
- d. *Shelter me safe, in that haven of rest* – do I feel safe in His arms?
 - i. **Psalms 61:3-4**, *For You have been a shelter for me, A strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in Your tabernacle forever; I will trust in the shelter of Your wings. Selah*
 - ii. Often God is described as our fortress, refuge or shelter in the Psalms and throughout scripture (cf. Psalm 91:1-2)

II. Vs. 2, Nothing I bring

- a. *Nothing I bring, Naught as an offering to Jesus my King* – there is nothing we can offer that merits our salvation.
 - i. **1 Timothy 6:7** – be reminded that we brought nothing into this world and will carry nothing material out of it.
 - ii. But here, the ultimate point is - we CANNOT earn that or any spiritual blessing – **Ephesians 2:9, Titus 3:4-5** reminds us of God’s mercy appearing and that it was “not by works of righteousness which we have done...”
- b. *Only, my sinful, now contrite heart* –
 - i. We must come to Him with our whole and humbled heart – cf. **Mathew 5:3** – poor in spirit,
 - ii. Recall our recent study about repentance - **Psalm 51:16-17** – David’s repentance acknowledge this, *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – These, O God, You will not despise.*
 - iii. **Micah 6:6-8**, *With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?*
- c. *Grant me the cleansing Thy blood doth impart* – it is through His blood that our sins are cleansed – **Revelation 1:5**.
 - i. **Hebrews 9:14** notes that the blood of Christ, offered without spot to God, can cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
 - ii. **Acts 22:26** – our sins are washed away in baptism. We are made clean through that act of faithful obedience.

III. Vs. 3, Lord, to be Thine

- a. *Lord, to be Thine* –
 - i. To be near to God, I have to surrender to Him. I must never forget that I belong to Him.
 - ii. The very idea of being “in Christ” – **2 Corinthians 5:17**
 - iii. **Galatians 2:20** – it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.
- b. *Sin with its follies I gladly resign* –
 - i. To resign is to give up. I must give up the ways of sin. Will I do this gladly?
 - ii. **Philippians 3:7-8** – Paul walked away from everything for Him.
 - iii. **Romans 12:9** calls for us to abhor that which is evil; **1 Thessalonians 5:22** – abstain from every form of evil;
- c. *All of its pleasures, pomp and its pride* – we are continuing to address that which we “resign”
 - i. We must be humble as we come before Him – **1 Peter 5:5-6**
 - ii. Are we willing to surrender the sinful pleasures of this world? Moses was commended in **Hebrews 11:25** for waling away from “the passing pleasures of sin”
 - iii. **Titus 3:3** *For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another...*
 - iv. **1 John 2:15-17** – we are not to love the world or the things in the world...
- d. *Give me but Jesus, my Lord crucified* – ONLY Jesus.
 - i. **Philippians 3:8-10** – again, Paul notes what he gave up “that I may gain Christ.”
 - ii. **Galatians 6:14**, *“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

IV. Vs. 4, While life shall last

- a. *While life shall last* - As long as I live, I must remain faithful –
 - i. **Hebrews 10:38-39** – the just shall live by faith... if anyone draws back...

- ii. Revelation 2:10 – be faithful until death...
- iii. Revelation 14:13, *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "* "Yes," says the Spirit, *"that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*
- b. *Till safe in glory My anchor is cast –*
 - i. When we speak of an anchor, we are describing a mooring where our faith is centered. Everything we do needs to be centered around our hope of heaven after this life. So our hope needs to be set therein.
 - ii. Hebrews 6:19-20 speaks of our hope being an anchor. We live with a hope of heaven after this life. And that MUST be where our anchor is.
- c. *Thru endless ages ever to be, nearer my Savior, still nearer to Thee –*
 - i. If we are faithful till death, we will receive that crown of life – 2 Timothy 4:7-8.
 - ii. The question we often ask about the Christian life, "Is it worth it?" This verse reminds us of heaven. And you find in this phrase the eternity of heaven – Matthew 25:46 notes that the righteous will go to everlasting life. 1 Thessalonians 4:17 notes that when we are caught up in the air to be with the Lord, *"And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

And thus we see the message of another song we sing from time to time. When we are struggling in this life, this is a good song to sing. A call to not give up, to strive to draw even nearer to God rather than walking away, and ultimately the hope we have if we endure to the end. Let us resolve that day by day and year by year, we will stive to draw nearer and nearer to Him. What about you? Are you close to Him? Think about it!