**The Story & Theology of Particular Hymns**

Lesson 1 – Henry Lyte: “Abide With Me” (#402) & “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken” (#707)

**Biography**

* 1793-1847
* Born in Scotland
* Educated at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland
* A life-long Anglican pastor
* Struggled with asthma and tuberculosis his entire life
* He was well-known as a poet, musician, and minister
* Coined the phrase, “It is better to wear out than to rust out”
* Pastored a poor parish in Devonshire, England for the last 23 years of his life
* Last sermon was on Sept. 4, 1847
* Forced to seek warmer climate (Italy) as his health declined
* He died in Nice, France, while on his way to Italy on November 20, 1847

**Occasion for “Abide With Me”**

* Lyte wrote this hymn shortly before his last sermon
* His inspiration was Christ’s appearance to the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35

**Theology of “Abide With Me”**

* While near death’s door, the Christian asks for God to be with him.
* Verse 1: Christ helps those who are helpless. We can’t stop death but Christ can be with us as we approach it.
* Verse 2: Christ does not change. Everything else around us changes as we approach death. Joys darken and we see reality for what it really is.
* Verse 3: Christ is who we truly need. Nothing and nobody else can thwart Satan and none can guide us like Christ.
* Verse 4: Death is powerless in the person and work of Jesus
* Verse 5: At death, the earth will pass and the brightness of heaven will be before us
* While near death’s door, the Christian focuses on God’s character: helper, unchanging, powerful, victorious, presence

**Occasion for “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken”**

* In 1815, Lyte was asked to visit a fellow clergyman who was terminally ill.
* This visit revealed the fact that neither of these ministers really had a personal faith in Christ or a genuine conversion experience.
* They began to search the Scriptures together and both were converted.
* Lyte says of this: “He died happy under the belief that though he had deeply erred, there was One whose death and sufferings would atone for his delinquencies, and be accepted for all that he had incurred; I was greatly affected by the whole matter, and brought to look at life and its issue with a different eye than before; and I began to study my Bible, and preach in another manner than I had previously done.”
* This hymn was written around 1824 to commemorate this conversion experience.

**Theology of “Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken”**

* The Christian finds refuge in Christ alone in learning to accept and use suffering in a spiritual manner.
* Salvation is free, but discipleship is costly. Bearing the cross involves a willingness to look beyond our own affairs and to share the load of others in order that they too may have a personal relationship with the Savior.
* Verse 1: Denying one’s desires and ambitions (“leaving everything”) to follow Jesus.
* Verse 2: We can’t trust people because they can lie and deceive and even betray but all we need is Jesus. He is faithful and His smile upon us can enliven us in the most difficult of circumstances.
* Verse 3: Relational hardships and persecution should drive us to Christ and with Him we can find joy and love.
* Verse 4: “joy to find in every station something still to do or bear”; there’s still work to do and crosses to be borne no matter where we are in life.
* Verse 5: One help in times of hardship and persecution is to contemplate what awaits us—glory in eternity. Glad anticipation for God’s hereafter really makes these earthly trials inconsequential.