**The Story & Theology of Particular Hymns**

Lesson 5 – Catherine Winkworth (Translator) – “Now Thank We All Our God” (#98) & “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (#53)

**Biography**

* 1829 – 1878
* Born in London
* Was a lifelong member of the Church of England
* English poetess
* She possessed great intellectual and social gifts and was deeply interested in the higher education of woman
* Had an exceptional ability in translation
* Focused heavily on translating hymns from German
* She wrote: *Lyrica Germanica* (2 volumes), *The Chorale Book for England*, and *Christian Singers of Germany*
* She writes this in the *Lyrica*: “ This selection contains many of those best known and loved in Germany; but in a work of this size it is impossible to include all that have become classical in that home of Christian poetry. In reading them it must be remembered that they are hymns, not sacred poems…. But the singing of hymns forms a much larger and more important part of public worship in the German Reformed Churches than in our own services. It is the mode by which the whole congregation is enabled to bear its part in the worship of God, answering in this respect to the chanting of our own liturgy.”
* She describes her purpose for the *Chorale Book*: “The *Lyra Germanica* was intended chiefly for use as a work of private devotion; the *Chorale Book for England* is intended primarily for use in united worship in the church and family, and in meetings for the practice of church music. This aim has throughout governed the choice of the hymns and tunes, and the form given to them; many beautiful hymns contained in the *Lyra Germanica* have thus been excluded, because their length or their purely reflective character rendered them ill-adapted for congregational singing, while a large number of new translations--about one-third of the whole--have been introduced, either for the sake of their tunes, or to supply necessary requirements of our services. These have been selected from various sources, chiefly from some very early German hymn-books, from the collections of Tucher and Wackernagel, from the new Bavarian hymnbook of the Lutheran Church, and from the Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch, Stuttgart, 1855, published by the Church Conference held in Eisenach in 1853.”
* "Her translations contained in these volumes are invariably faithful and, for the most part, both terse and delicate; and an admirable art is applied to the management of complex and difficult versification."
* "Miss Winkworth, although not the earliest of modern translators of German into English, is certainly the foremost in rank and popularity."
* Died unexpectedly of heart disease at 49

**Occasion for “Now Thank We All Our God”**

* Written by Martin Rinkart, a Lutheran minister in Eilenberg Germany, in 1636.
* Martin ministered in Eilenberg during the 30 Year’s War and during a severe occurrence of the plague in 1637. At one point, he was the only minister left in the entire town to care for the sick and dying and conducted as many as 50 funerals a day.
* At one point, the town was overrun by the Swedish army and they demanded a large tribute from the already impoverished people. Rinkart interceded with the commander to no avail and it is reported that Rinkart said, “Come, my children, we can find no mercy with man; let us take refuge with God.” They all got down on their knees and prayed and sand this song. This so moved the Swedish commander that he drastically reduced the demanded tribute.
* This hymn is second only to “A Mighty Fortress” in popularity and usage in Germany.

**Theology of “Now Thank We All Our God”**

* Verse 1: A general expression of gratitude (thanksgiving) to God for “his countless gifts of love” from the time of birth (“from our mother’s arms”) to the present.
* Verse 2: A petition for God’s continued care and keeping. Some of Rinkart’s own hardships come through in this verse – “guide us when perplexed, and free us from all ills”
* Verse 3: A grand doxology of praise to the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

**Occasion for “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”**

* Written by Joachim Neander (1650-1680) who has been called “the greatest of all German-Calvinist Reformed hymn writers”
* He pastored a Reformed church in Dusseldorf, Germany, and wrote approximately 60 hymns and many more tunes.
* All of his hymns are triumphant expressions of praise.
* Neander wrote this hymn in 1680 as he was battling tuberculosis.

**Theology of “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”**

* A paraphrase of Psalm 103:1-6.
* This hymn praises God for many things- salvation (verse 1), sovereignty (verse 2), provides and sustains (verse 2), gives us success (verse 3), daily gives us mercy and goodness (verse 3), created us (verse 4), comforted us (verse 4). It also calls God’s people to join in to sing His praises (verses 1 & 5).

**Other Translated Hymns**

* “Whate’er My God Ordains Is Right” (#108)
* 19 hymns she translated are included in the *Trinity Hymnal*