

Psalm 22:25-31 (NIV)

²⁵ From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows.

²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied;
they who seek the LORD will praise him-
may your hearts live forever!

²⁷ All the ends of the earth
will remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
will bow down before him,

²⁸ for dominion belongs to the LORD
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ All the rich of the earth will feast and worship;
all who go down to the dust will kneel before him-
those who cannot keep themselves alive.

³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.

³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness
to a people yet unborn-
for he has done it.

1John 4:7-21 (NIV)

God's Love and Ours

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³ We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

¹⁷ In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Luke 15:11-24 (NIV)

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. '

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

I Greet Thee, Who My Sure Redeemer Art 624

1 I greet thee, who my sure Re-deem-er art,
 2 Thou art the King of mer-cy and of grace,
 3 Thou art the life, by which a-lone we live,
 4 Thou hast the true and per-fect gen-tle-ness;
 5 Our hope is in no oth-er save in thee;

my on-ly trust and Sav-ior of my heart,
 reign-ing om-ni-po-tent in ev-ery place:
 and all our sub-stance and our strength re-ceive;
 no harsh-ness hast thou and no bit-ter-ness.
 our faith is built up-on thy prom-ise free;

who pain didst un-der-go for my poor sake;
 so come, O King, and our whole be-ing sway;
 sus-tain us by thy faith and by thy power,
 O grant to us the grace we find in thee,
 Lord, give us peace, and make us calm and sure,

I pray thee from our hearts all cares to take.
 shine on us with the light of thy pure day.
 and give us strength in ev-ery try-ing hour.
 that we may dwell in per-fect u-ni-ty.
 that in thy strength we ev-er-more en-dure.

The original French text, sometimes attributed to John Calvin, seems to be a Protestant reworking of a Roman Catholic hymn, not a typical practice for him. Yet this text and tune (adapted from GENEVAN 124) clearly date from the early years of the Reformed tradition.

22 God of the Sparrow

1 God of the spar-row God of the whale God of the
 2 God of the earth-quake God of the storm God of the
 3 God of the rain-bow God of the cross God of the
 4 God of the hun-gry God of the sick God of the
 5 God of the neigh-bor God of the foe God of the
 6 God of the a-ges God near at hand God of the

swirl-ing stars How does the crea-ture say Awe
 trum-pet blast How does the crea-ture cry Woe
 emp-ty grave How does the crea-ture say Grace
 prod-i-gal How does the crea-ture say Care
 prun-ing hook How does the crea-ture say Love
 lov-ing heart How do your chil-dren say Joy

How does the crea-ture say Praise
 How does the crea-ture cry Save
 How does the crea-ture say Thanks
 How does the crea-ture say Life
 How does the crea-ture say Peace
 How do your chil-dren say Home

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

Though a lack of punctuation makes this text appear freeform and the flowing tune enhances a sense of movement, each stanza here is firmly anchored by a final weighty word (praise, save, thanks, life, peace, home), a sign of God's eternal presence in an ever-changing world.

Praise, My Soul, the God of Heaven 619 (Psalm 103)

1 Praise, my soul, the God of heav-en; glad of heart your
 2 Praise God for the grace and fa-vor shown our fore-bears
 3 Like a lov-ing par-ent car-ing, God knows well our
 4 An-gels, teach us ad-o-ra-tion; you be-hold God

car-ols raise; ran-somed, healed, re-stored, for-giv-en,
 in dis-tress; God is still the same for-ev-er,
 fee-ble frame, glad-ly all our bur-dens bear-ing,
 face to face. Sun and moon and all cre-a-tion,

who, like me, should sing God's praise? Al-le-lu-ia!
 slow to chide, and swift to bless, Al-le-lu-ia!
 still to count-less years the same. Al-le-lu-ia!
 dwell-ers all in time and space: Al-le-lu-ia!

Al-le-lu-ia! Praise the Mak-er all your days!
 Al-le-lu-ia! Sing our Mak-er's faith-ful-ness!
 Al-le-lu-ia! All with-in me, praise God's name!
 Al-le-lu-ia! Praise with us the God of grace!

This adaptation of an older paraphrase of Psalm 103 (see no. 620) is informed by an awareness that much of the received language of religious traditions enshrines social values that obscure the goodness of God, which far transcends all our labels and categories and hierarchies.