

“Scriptural Themes From Fanny Crosby”

Various Scriptures

Rev. Ted Wood

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Transcriber’s Note: Ted begins with prayer.

Ted: I love the hymns. I’ve thought a lot about them. I just naturally memorize them. I was sharing that with somebody as we were walking in. And they were saying, “Oh, that’s wonderful!” Well, it’s not a virtue on my part; I just do it naturally because you remember a lot of stuff by singing it. And one of the things I’m grateful for, starting off in the Episcopal Church—although I’m not there anymore—is that we would sing a lot of the Psalms. So a lot of the Psalms I can remember because the tune comes with it.

I taught the last two times. Two times ago I taught about three hymns, one of them being “Be Thou My Vision”—8th-century Irish—“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”—16th-century German,—and “In Christ Alone,” which would be 21st century, Keith Getty and Stewart Townsend. And what I would do is tell a little about it. I would give a story about the hymns, the background and the composer.

Last time I taught we did hymns by Charles Wesley—the great Charles Wesley. He and his brother were founders of Methodism, and also Isaac Watts who was a Calvinistic Congregationalist. So Watts and Wesley would always go at each other’s throats, but they did produce great hymns. One was an Arminian which would be Wesley, and Watts was the Calvinist.

But today I’m going to talk to you about the gospel hymn writer Fanny Crosby. I’m taking you into the 19th century. And we have to talk about her because she composed 8,000 hymns. A number of those hymns are still being found. And many of them have never been put to music. So she was a hymn writing machine. And you may want to take notes on the side; I just gave you the words for them. A hundred million copies of her hymns have been published.

So she was an amazing woman. She was born in 1820 in a town about 65 miles north of New York City. She spent her whole life on the East Coast. And when she was born in 1820 James Monroe was the President of the United States. And America had 9.5 million people. Do you know approximately how many people live in America today?

Mike Davis: 330 million.

Ted: 330 million people. Can you imagine our country with only 9-1/2 million people? And when she died 95 years later—she died in 1915,—who was the President of the United States?

Zach Jarvis: Wasn’t it Roosevelt?

Ted: No, not Roosevelt.

Jim Hamilton: Woodrow Wilson.

Ted: Woodrow Wilson was President. And the United States population had grown ten times, from 9-1/2 million to 100 million people. And since 1915 it has grown three times that size.

In 1915 she was 95. And during her lifetime she had witnessed the Barbary Pirates War, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Boxer Rebellion, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, and the First World War. So she had seen an amazing time in American history.

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It was also an amazing time in American Protestantism and the Protestant faith. There were huge numbers of things going on. The Episcopalians were fighting over high church/low church. There was the whole Restoration Movement which was very important, because it was an attempt by a number of groups to restore Christianity to the first century. They felt that was possible to do. In fact Baptists today are basically restorationists.

But another great restoration movement was the Mormon Church, because they said that the gospel had been lost, and that Joseph Smith had found the golden plates and was able to restore it.

Don Maurer: Are you equating Protestantism and Mormonism?

Ted: No, I'm not. Excuse me; a very good point, Don. Thank you for correcting me. You can sit down now, okay? *(Laughter)* So there was Utopianism—the Shakers, the Rappites out in Harmony, the Onita community out in Iowa. These were all groups that sought to live a Utopian life.

There was millennialism—easy for you to say—millennialism. And that was a movement that said that Christ was coming back soon. Seventh-Day Adventists grew out of that, as did many Adventist movements. There was the situation in the mid-1840s where the founder and leader of the Adventist Movement said that Christ was coming back and even gave an actual date. Many of the members sold their goods and waited around in prayer meetings for the Lord to come back on that date. It was October 12, 1846. The Lord didn't show up, and they called that the Great Disappointment. And the guy got his pencil and he sharpened it, and he came up with a new date a year later. *(Laughter)* And it still didn't work out.

There was the whole Holiness Movement that in time actually morphed into the Pentecostal movement. They would say that there were three acts of grace. There was the act of regeneration where you were born again. That was followed by a life of sanctification, baptism in the Holy Spirit and then empowerment by the Spirit.

So there were a lot of things going on. And Fanny Crosby was swimming in the midst of all of this. She lost her sight when she was an infant. They had tried to treat her eye infection and it caused her to go blind. But she was still able to see light and darkness, but she had no other sight beyond that.

By the age of ten she had memorized the four Gospels. Later she memorized the entire Pentateuch—the five books of Moses,—many of the Psalms, all of the Proverbs, the book of Ruth and the Song of Solomon.

Starting at the age of 24 she began to earn her living by writing poetry. And in time she was such a prolific poetry writer that she had several volumes published, and she was able to make a living.

In 1850 at the age of thirty she had a dramatic conversion experience at a Methodist revival. And she describes it like this: *“My soul was flooded with celestial light. For the first time I realized that I had been trying to hold the world in one hand and the Lord in the other.”* So therefore a lot of her hymns have to do with submission and surrender and giving yourself totally over to the Lord. In her hymn “Blessed Assurance” there's that line:

“Perfect submission; all is at rest.

I in my Savior am happy and blest.”

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So that was a big theme and the result of her own conversion experience. At the age of 38 she got married to a musician who was also blind, and they had one child. But that child died in infancy, which was fairly common in those days.

In 1864 near the end of the Civil War she found her calling to write gospel hymns. And she said this about gospel hymn writing: *“I think that life is short. Therefore I determine that many people will read a song who would not read a sermon.”* So she felt that songs and gospel tunes and hymns were more accessible to people than were the sermons.

A predominant theme in her hymns is death, heaven, the Second Coming, a personal relationship with God, and complete surrender. She was contracted by a sheet music publisher with the agreement that she would produce three hymns a week, for which she was paid two dollars a hymn. She actually became quite wealthy and she gave a lot of her money away. I promise you, it gets more interesting. *(Laughter)*

She became very popular. Presidents would visit her; pastors would visit her. And the pastor would say, “I’m preaching tomorrow at church. Can you work up a hymn for me?” So she would write hymns on the spot. She was an unbelievable woman in terms of her creativity. In addition to her 8,000-plus hymns she also wrote a thousand secular poems and many political and patriotic songs.

She gained the title “the queen of gospel hymn writers.” And I saw one author who was writing about her. He said this very well; he said this about gospel music and why it was so popular. By the way, this is a new genre; this is a new type of music in the 19th century. We don’t have this kind of music prior to that. He wrote that *“Gospel hymns have the distinction of being America’s greatest contribution to Christian music.”*

I like this line. *Gospel hymns have been a plow, digging up the hardened surface of paved minds.* I like that: paved minds. *“Their obviousness has been their strength; it is the music of the people. They have hard punching lyrics, and they are easy to sing.”*

Beginning in the mid-1860s Dwight L. Moody began conducting evangelistic crusades in the country. I listened to several of his sermons in preparing for this. Somebody has taken his sermons and he’s an excellent preacher himself. And it sounds like D. L. Moody preaching.

In 1870 Dwight L. Moody was joined by Ira Sankey, a very important name: Moody and Sankey. As part of Moody’s crusades, he was a gospel music musician. And together they formed a dynamic duo. They conducted revivals throughout the United States and Great Britain. In the 19th century, when he went to Britain, he had to take a boat to get there. It is estimated that in the 19th century Moody preached to a hundred million people.

Moody preached and Sankey sang and played the piano. Sankey featured many of Fanny Crosby’s gospel hymns in the crusades. And Sankey credited their success to Fanny Crosby’s music. He said, “One of the reasons we’re so successful in our campaigns is because of Fanny Crosby’s music.”

Fanny Crosby lived in New York City most of her adult life. You know, we think that gospel hymn writers were out of North Carolina or Alabama or someplace like that. She spent most of her life in New York City. She was a member of the Methodist Church back in the good old days when the Methodists were the good guys. But she also attended a Congregational church, the Presbyterian Church, and God forbid, the Episcopal Church.

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Crosby’s tombstone reads, “*She hath done what she could.*” That’s all it says on the tombstone. It’s kind of like Bruce Bickel; it’s a Bickelism. “Learning is for living, and living is for loving.” How does that go? Is that right? Remind me. Yes. Crosby was very interested in applying the Christian faith versus doing theology about it.

So what I’ve got here is that I’ve got four hymns. Any thoughts up to this point? It’s kind of interesting, isn’t it? Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: I’m just flabbergasted. How in the world could you memorize all of that?

Ted: Well she came from a fairly large family. And I’ve got to tell you this: she was not a good-looking woman at all. She was less than a hundred pounds; she was just a wee thing. But she lived to be 95.

She was completely sold out. Dwight L. Moody had the same kind of sell-out conversion experience that we seldom see today. I just thought we needed to talk about her because she had quite an impact.

Don: And you said that she memorized those things before she was converted.

Ted: She memorized the four Gospels by the time she was ten.

Ron Baling: I read somewhere that Moody and—

Ted: Sankey. Ira Sankey.

Ron: I had heard that there was a man named Hal Hobson. Back in the ‘50s he was a song writer. He was invited by Billy Graham to do Billy Graham’s thing when Graham started locally. And they say that put Billy Graham on the national stage.

Ted: Right. Well George Beverly Shea goes along with Billy Graham; it’s a similar kind of thing. And John Guest has told the story about his own spiritual lineage. And you guys have got to remind me if I don’t get this right. But John has talked about the fact that Dwight L. Moody worked in a shoe store. And he had started to go to Sunday school. And the Sunday school teacher came and talked to Dwight L. Moody about the Lord. Dwight L. Moody was converted. And then he became zealous in his church and got very involved in preaching and teaching, and he ultimately became an evangelist.

And one of the fellows who came to Dwight L. Moody’s crusades got converted. And that fellow in turn brought Billy Graham to the Lord. And Billy Graham in turn brought John Guest to the Lord, because I think John went to Billy Graham’s first London crusade. So it’s like Dwight L. Moody is connected with John Guest. With Christ Church at Grove Farm it’s kind of interesting.

Ron: Yeah.

Ted: So it’s an interesting story. I mean, a lot of us don’t know about these characters—this great foment, this spiritual foment in the 19th century. And we’re all kind of inheritors of a lot of the benefits. And there were also some not so good things.

But anyway, I’ll see if I can do four—Oh, golly day! Four hymns! I’m not going to be able to do four hymns. But let’s try to do two of these hymns. And the first one is “To God Be the Glory.” You know that, right? And I’m just going to read the words. But I want to see if you can pull anything out. I’ve put some bullet points here: praise and worship, atonement, heaven and the age to come, invitation and evangelism. You can tell me what messages you’re getting out of this, because it’s important that the lyrics have meaning and they have impact, versus that it’s just a nice tune to sing. And a lot of people say, “Oh, I love that gospel hymn!” Well the words are terrible, but the tune is very

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singable. So we’ve got to really focus our eyes on what the content is. So look at the content of this, and you tell me what you get out of the content of these lyrics First verse:

*“To God be the glory;
Great things He has done.
So loved He the world
That He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory;
Great things He has done!”*

Those are great words, aren’t they? They punch; they’re hard-punching words and lyrics. Okay.

*“Oh perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
To every believer, the promise of God.
The vilest offender who truly believes
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.”*

Then the chorus. And finally:
*“Great things He has taught us,
Great things He has done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son.
But purer and higher and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.”*

Okay. From those lyrics you tell me what sticks out or what jumps out at you.

Don Rimbey: “And opened the life gate that all may go in?”

Ted: Yes. Okay, tell me about what that means to you.

Don: Is it talking about universalism?

Ted: No. I think she’s saying that they may go in if they wish. Remember that theology wasn’t a big deal for Fanny Crosby. She was more interested in the impact. So I don’t know if she was saying they can, will, won’t. Okay, thanks. Okay, what else? Anything else? Help me out, guys. What jumps out at you? When we sing it in a minute you’re all going to sing very lustily.

Ron: So many things in the New Testament talk about the idea that when God is doing something He’s doing it through Jesus, and there are two of those in here.

Ted: Yes, that’s right. Everything that God does He does through Jesus; right.

Zach: I think it’s amazing how in just a few sentences she kind of sums up things perfectly. You hear a lot of people and they’re kind of wordy. This is the opposite of that.

Ted: Yes, right. You’re exactly right.

Mike: It’s broken down into three verses, and each verse has its own message, but they’re in order.

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Ted: Yes, it is. Okay, the first would be what? The love of God for the world, that He gave His Son as an atonement, right?

Ron: Mm-hmm.

Mike: He provided redemption.

Ted: Right.

Mike: And then verse 2 is that as believers we step into that. *“To every believer the promise of God.”* We receive a pardon through that from it.

Ted: Okay.

Mike: And then verse 3 talks to us about what our life looks like after this. So it’s before, during and after.

Ted: Beautiful. *(Laughter)*

Mike: I kind of like that.

Ted: And she probably sat down and wrote that at one sitting. It’s an amazing amount of concentration in her mind to focus. Yes, Jim?

Jim Hamilton: It just occurs to me that there’s no mention of the Holy Spirit here.

Ted: No, that’s right. But I think there may be in other hymns. That doesn’t seem to be a big theme for her. A lot of the themes that she has in her hymns have to do with dying and going to heaven which we don’t talk a lot about, at least in terms of vivid descriptions of it. We don’t have as much of that today. Thanks, Jim. I don’t know what to say. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned. Why don’t we sing the hymn? Don, there are three verses for it, okay?

Transcriber’s Note: Don Maurer plays and the men sing.

Ted: You can almost imagine in the middle or at the end of a Dwight L. Moody crusade with Sankey playing, that with this kind of music you’d get a response? I don’t know why it grabs me. This tune and this song is a very powerful message. And as Mike has said, it emphasizes all the critical elements in the gospel.

Brave Man: You said that those were kind of new for that time. What did they do before then?

Ted: Well, they had hymns. I was actually singing one coming over to here: something from the early 19th century, something from the 17th century. Help me out, somebody. An Isaac Watts tune would be—

David Miller: Wesley.

Ted: Wesley; something that Wesley would write:

*“And can it be that I should gain
An int’rest in the Savior’s blood?”*

Brave Man: So they had hymns.

Ted: Oh, absolutely. They’d been singing hymns ever since—well, it speaks about it in Colossians.

Brave Man: Church traditions would also sing the Psalter.

Ted: The Psalter, right. Absolutely, singing the Psalms. Yes?

Brave Man: That’s the first time I’ve seen the difference between reading and singing.

Ted: Okay. Keep going. What do you mean?

Brave Man: Singing helps you remember things. And it sends a different message when you’re at the piano singing, versus just reading.

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Ted: Right. Excellent. That’s huge.

Brave Man: Yeah.

Mike: It increases your emotions.

Ted: It does. These tunes are really easy to sing.

David: Yeah. I think what you said earlier was not that she invented hymns. It’s just that the American hymns are a certain style that was appropriate.

Ted: Yes, it was. And it’s just because of the way America was. Can you imagine a country in 1820 with less than ten million people in it? I mean, America was a country full of possibility.

The story is told about Daniel Boone. He was so mentally disturbed that when he built his cabin, and he found out that somebody else was building a cabin within ten miles of his, he knew it was time to move. *(Laughter)* Politicians say, “I’m trying to bring people together.” Americans say, “If I don’t get along with you I’m just heading someplace else.” *(Laughter)* So it was a country of huge possibilities. The tunes kind of reflect that; optimism and this kind of thing. So it was a time we don’t know about today; we’ve gone into another time.

Ron: Ted, I had heard that prior to Isaac Watts, singing was singing the actual Scripture. He was sort of breaking through as far as paraphrasing or doing other things. And so—

Ted: That’s correct.

Ron: So the idea of that had already started. This was more of an upbeat genre, I would say.

Ted: Well, it was almost kind of like saying, “We don’t care what the tradition has been. We’re going to create a whole new thing,” because in the 18th century in the Church of England, they sang only Psalms. And when Wesley and Isaac Watts come along, and when others of that period came along, that was revolutionary. I mean, wait a second, brothers. You’re not actually singing the words of the Scripture; you’re paraphrasing it.

I’m sorry; my mind is going blank. I love those hymns from that period because I think they tend to be very theologically deep. But these tunes make you want to get out of your seat and run down the aisle. We kind of think that these are the old-fashioned hymns. But these are not really very old-fashioned; you’ve got to keep going backwards.

Anyway, I thought I’d pick one word before we go on to the next hymn. It’s one word from this tune: “To God Be the Glory.” And I took that word *glory*, and I wonder if you really know what that word *glory* means. We sing, “Rise and shine, and give God the glory, glory.” I would sing that at camp. But what does it really mean? What does God’s glory really mean? And what does it mean to give Him glory?

Do you all know the root? Every Hebrew word comes from a three-letter word; it’s called a root word. Every Hebrew word starts with three letters. And do you know what the root word is for glory in Hebrew? Do you know this? This is important. There are a few Hebrew words you should know, and this is one of them. Bob, do you know it? Do you know what the Hebrew word is. You didn’t specialize in Hebrew, right?

Bob: Does it mean “weighty?”

Ted: Yeah. It’s *kabod*. And it means “weighty” or “heavy.” So when we talk about “to God be the glory,” it’s not just “praise the Lord! I’m giving You glory, God!” That’s not

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what it means. “To God be the glory.” What would that mean? To God be the weight, or the substance, or the abundance. What does that mean?

In part, I think it means the opposite of what they talk about in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, the whole book of Ecclesiastes. And what is that, the whole book of Ecclesiastes, about?

John Gratner: Everything is passing away.

Ted: Yes. Everything is passing away because it is not heavy; it’s light. And that’s how it starts out: “*Vanity of vanities.*” And the word *vanity* in Hebrew means mist or vapor or breath, a mere breath.

*“Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
All things are full of weariness;
A man cannot utter it.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
Nor the ear filled with hearing.
There is no remembrance of former things,
Nor will there be any remembrance of latter things
Yet to be among those who come after.”*

You know, I think about this. I walk in a cemetery, at the Mount Royal cemetery. And it’s full of great old tombstones put up there in the 19th century: obelisks, statues of a woman. To my understanding it’s awful stuff.

But when people put that up—and they put the money into the obelisk—and they put the money into the mausoleum; it looks like a little temple with a stained glass window in it. And when they put things like “together forever,” and “always in our hearts,” all those things are nothing! They’re like a vanity. They all go away. They’re of no substance; they don’t have *kabod*; they don’t have glory in them. They have lightness and unimportance.

Jesus said that “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions,” in the glory of his possessions. “*And He told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man produced plentifully.’*” You know this one. “*And he thought to himself: ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops.’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my goods.’*”—the vanities, the nothingness. “*‘And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.’*” You have ample vapor laid up for many years. “*‘Relax; eat, drink and be merry.’*

“But the LORD said to him.” Remember what the Lord said to him?

John: You fool!

Ted: “*‘You fool! This night your soul will be required of you. And the things you have prepared’*”,--all of the emptiness, all of the vanity, all the vapor, all that you have prepared, “*‘whose will they be?’ So it is with the one who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich*”—is not glorious, is not heavy “*toward God.*” “*‘What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?’*” “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory*”—the weight, the heaviness, the substance “*of God.*”

Helmut Thielicke wrote a book. He was a German theologian and he came to America in the 1950s after the Second World War. And he did an analysis of American Christianity. And it was very great; it was a very significant book.

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I’m not a big reader. I look at lots of books with pictures in them; I like picture books; I don’t like word books. When somebody says, “Ted, do you want to read this?”, I say, “I’m not going to read it because it doesn’t have any pictures in it.”

John: That’s TV.

Ted: Yeah. (*Laughter*) I think I’m just a very visual person; I think visually. In my mind there are all kinds of images all the time; it’s to understand things.

But what he did was that he wrote the book. It’s called *Between Heaven and Earth*, and he described it. He talked about all the strengths of American Christianity and the weaknesses. But in one quote that I always remember him saying, he said, “*At the end of many people’s lives will be the postscript: ‘Brilliant performance, but missed the point.’*”

Michael Rush: Amen.

Ted: “Brilliant performance, but missed the point.” Brilliant performance; accumulating everything that didn’t count, but missed the point of getting glorious things—things of glory, things of weight and of substance. So I have to ask myself: Am I pursuing things that are lightweight, of no long-term consequence? Is that what I’m pursuing? Or things of weight, substance, consequence? Am I pursuing glorious things, things that have weight and will last for eternity? So that’s what I took from that hymn. Yes; go ahead.

David: There is a popular radio and TV evangelist who says that because it says in Genesis that man was made in God’s image, “*God said, ‘Let us make man in our own image’*”, he said that proves that God looks like a man. But I think the deeper meaning of that would be that man is created for God’s glory. And he didn’t recognize himself as naked because he was clothed with God’s glory.

Ted: Mm-hmm. Well you know, the great value to us—to those of us who have been born again—the great value to us is that when Christ comes to live in us, and we in Him, we get the glory of God. Ted Wood has no weight or substance or consequence to me. I have no weight or substance or consequence except for Christ in me, “*the hope of glory.*” That is the only ultimate value and weight that I have as a human being. All the other things that I’ve accomplished, all the ways I identify myself—all this identity stuff today—is of no consequence; it’s a vapor; it passes away. And the monuments on the tombstones, they are passing away. Yes, Jim?

Jim Hamilton: So glory is the presence of God.

Ted: Yes, it is. Actually it is the presence of God. But the presence of God always brings substance and weight and consequence; that is the thing. Everybody is going around saying, “How do I make a difference in life?” Well, be filled with the glory of God. What other consequence do you want? That’s the greatest one of all. And we have to remind ourselves because we get distracted even as believers, to think that the vapors and the mere breaths and the nothingness, the vanities of this world, are of any consequence whatsoever.

It’s a pretty good way to think because you don’t get upset about a lot of stuff, you know? I have a client now; I want to wring his neck! It’s a vapor; it will go away.

Okay, let’s see if we can fit another one in here: “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross.”

“Jesus, keep me near the cross,

There a precious fountain.

Free to all, a healing stream

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*Flows from Calvary’s mountain.
In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever,
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.
Near the cross a trembling soul,
Love and mercy found me.
There the Bright and Morning Star
Shed His beam around me.
Near the cross, O Lamb of God,
Bring its scenes before me.
Help me walk from day to day
With its shadow o’er me.
Near the cross I’ll watch and wait,
Hoping, trusting ever,
Till I reach the golden strand
Just beyond the river.”*

Any thoughts about that quickly?

Don Maurer: There’s the universal offer of the gospel.

Ted: It is.

Don: “Free to all, a healing stream.”

Ted: Right.

Ron: The chorus, indeed the whole thing, vacillates. Not that it vacillates, but it has the idea that you are still a sinner, and you are reminded of that. Yet you are looking forward then to your glorification.

Ted: Yeah.

Ron: And if you don’t have that, then that’s not an indication that you really care about being righteous.

Ted: Yes.

Ron: Being righteous rather than unrighteous. You recognize that you’re a sinner. But you’re looking forward to—

Ted: She talks a lot about that in her hymns very much, yes. Jim, did you have something?

Jim Britsch: She goes from “a trembling soul” to reaching the golden stream “just beyond the river.”

Ted: Yeah. We wouldn’t talk that way. I mean, I wouldn’t expect that Craig Gyeergyo would talk about “Till I reach the golden strand just beyond the river.” I mean, this is kind of 19th-century language. It’s very vivid and it talks in this way. We wouldn’t necessarily talk that way today. It’s very much looking forward to when you die; you go to be in a better place. Why don’t we sing that? Go ahead, please.

Gary Craig: I was going to say that she uses the analogy of dying and crossing the river.

Ted: Right, sure; the Jordan River, into the Promised Land.

Gary: Yes. That even goes back to ancient times, crossing the river.

Ted: That’s correct: the River Styx. Thank you.

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Mike: In verse 2 I see that God sought me; He sought after me.

Ted: Yeah.

Mike: It wasn't about me looking; it was about God's grace and love and mercy.

Ted: Yeah. “A trembling soul, love and mercy found me.” That's great. Yes, John?

John: Shouldn't we spend more time being willful about crossing the river?

Ted: Well you know, in preparing this I thought about that, because I said that is a theme we don't find very much in preaching today.

John: Yeah.

Ted: Did you want to say anything more about that, John?

John: I'm sure I can. (*Laughter*) That's what this is all about, right? Jesus came and surprised the powers of darkness with the cross, such that death was defeated so that he could say, “I'm going away to prepare a place for you. *If it were not so I would have told you.* But I'm coming again.” We're going to go across the river because our citizenship isn't here.

Ted: Right, yes.

John: Because all of this is a shadow of what's to come from the substance and weight of the eternal God who said, “I'm making all this to show My glory on behalf of My people.” So that's where we're going. That's actually pretty exciting!

Ted: Yeah. It is, right.

David: One thought is that we should preach more on the resurrection, because all the sermons in the book of Acts were on the Resurrection.

Ted: Yes, that's correct.

David: And one thought is that we should preach more on the blood and the cross because that's the foundation of our faith and what God did for us, what Jesus did in shedding His blood.

Ted: I don't think Crosby talks a lot about the resurrection. It's more like this: dying and going to heaven and where you're going. I listened to a sermon by Dwight L. Moody. Like I said, I've listened to several, and I listened to one of them. I didn't think these were going to grab me. But I could tell why this guy was a powerful preacher. The sermon was titled: “What Must I Do to Be Saved?” That was the name of the sermon. It was about 25 minutes long. And it was preached on January 1, 1877.

In that sermon he had just received news. I looked this up; I looked up the history of this. I don't know where they were coming from, but another evangelist and his wife were coming from the East Coast on a train to arrive at Dwight L. Moody's crusade in Chicago. The Moody Institute and the Moody Bible School are in Chicago.

He was coming. And on his way there he went through Ashtabula. And there was a trestle bridge there, and the trestle collapsed while the train was crossing it. And of the 170 people on the train, half of them were killed, including the evangelist and his wife. And they never found his body. It went into a river and they never found it. It was big news in 1877.

Now you can see what Moody would do with that. He took that story that he had just heard about—he just heard this news—and he injected it into the sermon. What must you do to be saved? His name was P. T.—not P. T. Barnum, but P. T. something; I wish I could remember the guy's name. But he said, “I know where he is. Do you know where you are? You could be just like him. He died on that train, he and his wife. And they were

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only thinking about attending the crusade. And they never made it’ they never had another chance? Are you going to let that chance go by?” I was floored when I heard that message!

And so talking about the importance of bringing the message, if you don’t know the Lord and you die, it’s just not that you’re going to go to heaven and it’s going to be great. It’s that if you die without the Lord, the first verse I ever memorized as a Christian was *“He who has the Son has life; He who has not the Son does not have life.”* Period! And that ought to sober us up considerably.

With that in mind, with that happy thought in mind, Don, why don’t we sing the hymn: “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross?” I think there are four verses. *(The men sing.)*

Ted: John 19:25: *“Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that time on His disciple took her into his home.”*

Matthew 27:39: *“Those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, ‘You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ So also the chief priests, the scribes and the elders mocked Him, saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel. Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God. Let God deliver Him now if He desires Him, for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”*

And I think I’ve thought about this in “Near the Cross.” And essentially these very words are found in the NIV in John’s Gospel: that at the cross Jesus’ mother is received by John. But also at the cross there was terrible rejection and mocking and humiliation.

So when you get near the cross two things happen. There’s tremendous blessing and all that means to be near the cross, or “in the cross” as she says. But there is also a great pain, because the cross in the process brings derision, humiliation and condemnation to us. And it also puts the flesh to death. So it’s great to be near the cross, but there are two sides in it. There’s a huge blessing. Mary gets a new son, one who will care for her. But there is also great pain and difficulty. Yes?

David: “In the cross be my glory,” my weight.

Ted: My weight. Yes, that’s my weight: the cross. And here it is, here’s the strange thing. *“I will all the more boast of my weakness, for when I am weak, then I am strong.”* 2 Corinthians. Unless you’ve been born again and have a supernatural knowledge and wisdom, you will not understand what that means, because that is absolutely contrary to what the world says, because the world says, “When I am strong I am strong.”

And Jesus says no. “When you are weak, then you are strong.” And therefore you all the more boast of what? Your strengths which are ephemeral, vaporous, like a breath? What?

Brave Man: His strength is what we need.

Ted: It’s His strength, His glory, His weight that makes all the difference. That’s it for today, guys. Go in peace. And *“grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* *(Applause)*