



THE HYMNS THAT SHAPE US

WEEK 4 – *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

OPENING PRAYER

God of all creation, of the music that moves us and the hymns that shape us, thank you for the gift of worship. Thank you for the ways you have met us in spaces of praise and lament. We ask now that your Holy Spirit would be at work in our hearts as we continue to meditate on your goodness to us. For it is in the name of Jesus Christ, our coming King, we pray. Amen.

CHECK IN

Invite folks to check in with one of these two questions:

- 1) After singing “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” this past Sunday, were there things you noticed or experienced differently in worship?**
- 2) Was there one thing brought up in the interview with John that particularly resonated with you or confused you?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Take a look at the hymn page attached to this study guide. Read the words aloud.
Are there particular phrases that stick out to you? Comfort or confuse you?

¹ Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount I'm fixed upon it
mount of God's redeeming love.

² Here I raise my Ebenezer;
hither by thy help I've come;
and I hope, by thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
he, to rescue me from danger,
interposed his precious blood.

³ Oh, to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.

- 2) “Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by Thy help I’ve come.” In the video, John talks about what an important word “help” is here. To say God is our Helper is to say God is at work in our lives. He is not just working outside of us in the world, but He is working in us and through us.

Read 1 Samuel 7:7-13

⁷ When the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸ The people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁹ So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD; Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. ¹⁰ As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel; but the LORD thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

*¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it **Ebenezer**; for he said, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.” ¹³ So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel; the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.*

- **If you were to erect an Ebenezer in your life, “a stone of help,” that reminds you of a time God was faithful and helped you, what would it symbolize? In other words, can you describe a time you experienced God’s help and intervention in your life? A time when you recognized that God was not just at work “out there” but within you and through you?**

- 3) Read Psalm 40

*¹ I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.*

*² He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.*

*³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.*

*¹⁶ But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your salvation
say continually, “Great is the LORD!”*

*¹⁷ As for me, I am poor and needy,
but the Lord takes thought for me.*

*You are my help and my deliverer;
do not delay, O my God.*

- **Where do you see echoes of “Come Thou Fount” within this psalm?**
- **What other biblical allusion stand out to you from the rest of the hymn?**

- 4) In verse 3, we see the line “Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee”. This is an indirect allusion to Matthew 11:28-30

28 “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

John describes this verse as an invitation to submit to the kingship of Jesus. Though the word “fetter” sounds oppressive (like handcuffs or a ball and chain), to serve King Jesus is to be free. It is a counterintuitive, countercultural way of living with a buoyancy and grace-filled vision. Jesus is not coercive in this but rather invitational. Eugene Peterson’s *The Message* translation of the Bible gets at this in a new way:

28-30 “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” – Matt. 11:28-30

- **How do these verse from Matthew’s Gospel strike you today?**
- **What would it look like for your heart to be bound to Jesus like a fetter? What would you have less of and/or more of in your life if you were totally surrendered to Jesus’ kingship?**

- 5) John and Sarah talk about the accessibility of this hymn and its “jaunty” (there’s that word again!) tune. John says that one of the strengths of “Come Thou Fount” is that it can cross the boundary between corporate worship and daily living. It can be whistled in the hallway, sung a Capella around a campfire, or belted out by a choir in a cathedral. It is familial and yet weighty with many scriptural allusions and robust theological depth.

- **Is there a version of this hymn that you prefer? Do you like the folksy renditions or the more regal?**

- Sufjan Stevens
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b1bSIS6OWTs>
- Mormon Tabernacle choir
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPKpkrqBwNs>

6) In the final part of the interview, John talks about the gift it is to “learn to love how other people around you engage with these texts”. So even if the hymn may not “strike a chord” with you today, you are aware of the way it resonates with those with whom you are worshiping.

■ **Have you experienced this?**

■ **Are there stories you can connect and share with the group about what this particular hymn means to you?**

7) **Has your perception of “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” changed at all as you’ve learned more about it? What might be one “take away” for you this week as you anticipate singing this hymn in worship on Sunday?**

CLOSING PRAYER

Take time to offer prayer requests before closing together in prayer. If you would like, you can also read a portion of this week’s hymn or psalm as the closing prayer.

BAPTISM

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing 475

1 Come, thou Fount of ev-ery bless-ing; tune my heart to sing thy grace;
 2 Here I raise my Eb - e - ne - zer; hith-er by thy help I'm come;
 3 O to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con-strained to be!

streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud-est praise.
 and I hope, by thy good plea-sure, safe-ly to ar - rive at home.
 Let that grace now, like a fet - ter, bind my wan-dering heart to thee.

Teach me some me - lo-dious son - net, sung by flam-ing tongues a-bove;
 Je - sus sought me when a strang-er, wan-dering from the fold of God;
 Prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;

praise the mount! I'm fixed up - on it, mount of God's un-chang-ing love!
 he, to res - cue me from dan-ger, in - ter-posed his pre-cious blood.
 here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts a - bove.

Written for Pentecost by a British Baptist pastor, this text is full of biblical terms like "Ebenezer" (1 Samuel 7:12), Hebrew for "a stone of help" set up to give thanks for God's assistance. The tune name honors hymnal compiler Asahel Nettleton, who probably did not compose it.

TEXT: Robert Robinson, 1758, alt.
 MUSIC: Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second*, 1813

NETTLETON
 8.7.8.7.D

