

Proper 17/Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Series C)

“Son of God, Eternal Savior” (*Lutheran Service Book*, #842)

From the beginning of His ministry, although the authority and divinity of Christ had been quite clear to some, it was at the same time been questioned and mocked by others. This of course stands true to this day. In this regard, it is interesting to note the Gospel stories where even the evil spirits and demons recognize Christ’s authority and divinity. Such is the case for the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (Mark 1:21-28). In this reading, Jesus exorcises an evil spirit from a man. When confronted by Christ, the evil spirit cries out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” This proclamation makes “Son of God, Eternal Savior” a great choice for this Sunday’s Hymn of the Day.

In no uncertain terms, Stanza 1 firmly proclaims the authority and divinity of Christ by recalling Bible passages such as John 1:1-14 and 1 Peter 1:20-21.

Son of God, eternal Savior,  
Source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh, whose birth among us  
Hallows all our human race,

The next two lines remind us that Christ is our Intercessor who pleads for us (Romans 8:34 and 1 John 2:1). The final two lines of this stanza remind us of the compassion of Christ praying that it may become a part of our lives as well.

Stanza 2 recognizes that when Christ exercised His authority, He did it in service to others. It furthermore states that nothing that we have is ours anyway, but rather all that we have has been given to us by God (Psalm 24:1).

Stanza 3 is a prayer for authority of Christ to dwell in our lives and mold us to His will.

Stanza 4 begins by repeating the first four lines of Stanza 1 thereby restating the authority and divinity of Christ. It concludes by mirroring the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” To that end it is good to recall what Martin Luther says about this petition in his *Small Catechism*:

“The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also. How is this done? When God breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow the name of God nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith unto our end. This is His gracious and good will.”

Since first published in 1894, “Son of God, Eternal Savior” has been sung to various tunes including EBENEZER, which many will know as the tune for “Thy Strong Word,” a text by the sainted Martin Franzmann. In recent years the text has been paired with the tune IN BABILONE which, at least for me, seems to be a better fit.

Originally a five stanza poem by the Rev. Somerset Corry Lowry (1855-1932), the original Stanza 2 has not been included in recent hymnals. Nonetheless, it provides another heartfelt prayer for a servant’s heart.

Bind us all as one together  
In Thy Church’s sacred fold,  
Weak and healthy, poor and wealthy,  
Sad and joyful, young and old.  
Is there want, or pain, or sorrow?  
Make us all the burden share.  
Are there spirits crushed and broken?  
Teach us, Lord, to soothe their care.

Martin Dicke, Cantor  
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Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh, whose birth among us hallows all our human race,  
You our Head, who, throned in glory, for your own will ever plead:  
Fill us with your love and pity, heal our wrongs, and help our need.

As you, Lord, have lived for others, so may we for others live.  
Freely have your gifts been granted; freely may your servants give.  
Yours the gold and yours the silver, yours the wealth of land and sea;  
We but stewards of your bounty held in solemn trust will be.

Come, O Christ, and reign among us, King of love and Prince of Peace;  
Hush the storm of strife and passion, bid its cruel discords cease.  
By your patient years of toiling, by your silent hours of pain,  
Quench our fevered thirst of pleasure, stem our selfish greed of gain.

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,  
Word made flesh whose birth among us hallows all our human race.  
By your praying, by your willing that your people should be one,  
Grant, O grant our hope's fruition: Here on earth your will be done.

Text: Rev. Somerset Corry Lowry (1855-1932)

Tune: IN BABILONE

(Both text and tune are in the public domain.)

[This devotion was prepared for the website of the Center for Church Music. It may be downloaded and copied for local use.]