

I Was There To Hear Your Borne Cry

Back in the pioneer days when people were spread out all over the frontier, instead of having one local church where everybody worshipped together there were what were called “preaching stations.”

The pastors who served them were called “circuit riders” and they would ride from one preaching station to another on Sundays conducting worship services.

Since there were no organs or choirs, the pastor would lead the congregation through hymns, singing them one line at a time

It was called “lining out” a hymn, and when they had finished, they would frequently preach on the hymn itself.

Today I’m going to invoke that tradition—or at least part of it—by preaching on the hymn we sang at the beginning of the service.

The hymn is “I Was There To Hear Your Borne Cry,” and it was composed by John Ylvisaker in 1951.

It’s a song about how God watches over His children from cradle to grave and it has a comforting and timely message for parents—especially at a time when so many of our children have drawn away from the church.

Time and time again I hear this story: “We raised our children up in the faith, we were in church very Sunday, we sent them to Sunday School, they went to confirmation class, they were confirmed, and now they have left it all behind.

They don’t go to church, they don’t talk about religion in their home, and the only time their children hear grace said at the dinner table is when they come to our house on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

We don’t know if they even have a faith and it’s breaking our hearts.

I’m sure you’ve heard this story; maybe you’ve had to tell it yourself.

Never in my lifetime has the church--and the faith it proclaims--been under such assault as it is now.

Often the first place our children experience this assault is when they go to college.

The vast majority of colleges and universities in this country are openly hostile to the Christian religion.

The Bible is either disregarded or openly mocked as a reliable source of knowledge for the Christian faith.

Harvard University just appointed an outspoken atheist as its chaplain.

When faculty members and students unite in deriding Christianity, it is a rare 18-year-old who can resist that message.

Someone once said that what people choose to believe has less to do with truth and logic and more to do with what the people around them believe.

It's called peer pressure and it's a powerful thing.

Even the visible church has joined in the assault.

One church four miles from here has a marquis which at various times has displayed messages like, "Hell is not real," and "Support young transgenders."

When Oprah Winfrey asked the pastor of a megachurch if he believed in gay marriage, his response was: "Of course I do. Society's already there and the church should get on board. The only argument that can be raised against it consists of letters that were written two thousand years ago--and that's not much of a defense."

Did you hear that? An ordained, popular Christian pastor characterizes the word of God as merely "letters written two thousand years ago."

It's a bleak picture and it makes it vitally important that we cling to God's promise that, "...He causes all things to work together for good for those who love him and have been called according to His purpose."

The simple and inspiring words of "I Was There To Hear Your Borneing Cry" can help us to do that.

Let's take a look at them, verse by verse, as they appear on the monitors.

I was there to hear your borneing cry, I'll be there when you are old; I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

Jacob and Kelsey: for you and Navy Marie, this is that day!

God is rejoicing over the baptism of little Navy!

Even more--He can see her life unfold.

God can see everything that lies in store for Navy, and your job as his parents will be to make sure that Navy can see God.

To see God in bedtime prayers and table grace and Bible stories.

To see God at church and in Sunday School.

To see God at work in your marriage as the two of you deal with life's problems.

God will be there--he will be present--but it will be up to you to point Him out to Navy.

I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well...

Surely there is nothing more pure, more true, more Godly than the faith of a child.

I have a friend who is a Baptist and we used to get into arguments about infant baptism.

The Baptists have always rejected the idea of baptizing infants.

For them, baptism is like a Jewish bar mitzvah: a rite of passage into spiritual adulthood when a young person confesses his faith to the congregation and becomes a member of the church.

My friend used to get frustrated with me and say, "How can you possibly believe that an infant who can't even think could have saving faith?"

I agreed that his question made a lot of sense, but then I reminded him that Jesus had held up a child as an example of perfect faith.

"Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Little children easily and readily believe: it is adults that teach them how to doubt.

The words in the song that follow are a punch in the gut:

In a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.

It's a rare adolescent who hasn't felt the excitement that accompanies the temptation to do something he knows he shouldn't do.

For me it happened in my senior year of high school, the first time my parents allowed me to use the family car to take a girl out on a date.

Once I was out of our driveway I turned the radio to full blast to hear Buddy Holly singing "Peggy Sue"

I stopped to get gas at the filling station where I had worked the previous summer and as I was filling up the tank, I happened to look inside the station.

My eyes landed on a cigarette machine.

I can't properly describe the delight that swept through my mind as I realized that I could drop a quarter into that machine and get a pack of cigarettes.

The rest of the evening included a half pint of Jim Beam and a drive-in movie.

After that evening, I spent a good part of my senior year in high school finding out where demons dwell.

So I know what that verse means and I suspect that most of you do too

Tragically, the demons that attract kids nowadays are a lot more dangerous than Jim Beam and Lucky Strikes.

Not every kid follows that impulse—there are kids who never even have it, and if you were one or had a child who was one, count yourself blessed.

When you heard the wonder of the Word I was there to cheer you on; You were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong."

The wonder of the Word!

In my first career I was a literature teacher.

I truly loved the literary masterpieces of the English language: *The Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's plays, the Victorian novels, the poetry of William Butler Yeats.

For four years I spent day after day in academic libraries reading about these authors and writing papers about them.

I loved their writings but once I became a believer I discovered that compared with the wonder of God's Word, they were nothing at all.

"I was there to cheer you on" refers to God the Holy Spirit Who opens up our hearts and minds to the Scriptures and reveals the wisdom and majesty of God's Word.

And the greatest wonder of all is that those who read and believe the Scriptures ***belong to the Lord.***

He is theirs, but they are also His.

If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one, I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk till rising sun.

I don't know about you, but the description of God's work in a marriage of two believers as "making your verses rhyme from dusk to rising sun" really hits the nail on the head.

As everyone here knows, marriage contains both joys and sorrows.

Once when I was teaching a class on marriage I described the conflict that can arise between a husband and a wife as being like "two cats fighting in a bag."

The next morning--Monday morning--a woman who worked in our preschool told me that what I had said about marriage being like two cats in a bag had really depressed her.

I acknowledged that maybe that description was a little "over the top."

She said, "I'm not saying I disagree; I'm just saying that it depressed me."

And she was the wife of the president of the congregation!

Marriage can be challenging and the best source of help you can find to meet those challenges, Jacob and Kelsey, is the word of God.

Make Him a regular presence in your home through daily prayer and devotions and attention to His word and He will create empathy, understanding, healing and love in your minds and hearts.

In short, He will make your verses rhyme.

In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.

It's always dangerous to generalize, but my impression is that the majority of our life's concerns come during our "middle ages."

Those are the years—the decades, actually—when we are immersed in raising our children, carving out a career, trying to save money and laboring to make our marriages work.

In trying to find out who we really are and what we're doing and if we should be doing something else.

The sunshine of honeymoons, the excitement of making career plans, and the joy of witnessing our child's first steps fades away and gray drizzling clouds of obligation, duty, financial planning and dealing with teenagers sets in.

And the days grow shorter and winter lies ahead.

There's another hymn we sing that says it perfectly: "Just as I am tho tossed about, by many a conflict, many a doubt; fightings and fears, within, without, O Lamb of God I come I come."

Then, more than ever, God's promise becomes our lodestar: ***"I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun."***

What God begins, God always finishes.

And as the middle of our life ebbs and the cold waters of the River Jordan lie ahead, we are blessed by these words:

"When the evening gently closes in, and you shut your weary eyes, I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise."

These last words have intrigued and puzzled me ever since I first heard this song.

What is God's final surprise?

I'll leave that one to you.

The song ends as it began: "I was there to hear your borning cry; I'll be there when you are old. I rejoiced the day your were baptized to see your life unfold."

Today we thank God for bringing us Navy Marie Burkhart, for making her His own child in her baptism, and for promising to be with her all the days of her life.

Amen.

