



## I Am Jesus' Little Lamb

**Text:** Henriette Louise von Hayn (1724-1782)

**Tune:** *Brüder Choral-Buch*, Herrnhut, 1784

As we consider Our Lord Jesus Christ as our Shepherd, many comforting images come to mind. We can all think of the picture of Our Lord holding a sheep close to His chest, smiling and taking care of it. In addition to the comforting image of Jesus on the cross, dying to take away the sin of the world, this image of the Shepherd is comforting. Jesus has promised: "I Am the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own...I lay down My life for the sheep" (Jn. 10:11-16). So, the image of Christ on the cross and as a Shepherd really are one in the same. Christ lays down His life for the sheep to keep them in His safety eternally.



Henriette Louise von Hayn

This comforting hymn was given to us by Henriette Louise von Hayn. Henriette was born May 22, 1724 in Idstein, Germany, the daughter of a faithful Lutheran family. During her childhood she often felt a desire to go to the Lord in prayer and often took long walks to spend time alone in prayer. During her teenage years she discovered the sermons of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who founded the Moravian church. Moravians are an offshoot of Lutheranism, but emphasize pietistic practice. Their emphasis is on unity, fervent devotion, and right behavior, while diminishing the importance of the Sacraments and corporate worship. In 1744, Henriette decided she needed to run away from home and join the flourishing Moravian community nearby. She felt prompted to do this by Matthew 10:37, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Though they initially were against this and stopped her, they eventually let her move on a six month trial

basis, figuring she would soon return home. She never did. In her memoirs she wrote, "I left a pair of loving parents, but here it was as though I found a hundred fathers and mothers all at once." Soon after she became a full member of the society she began teaching at the Girls' School, and in 1648 became a deaconess. By 1650 she was in charge of all the women in the community. She died in Herrnhut on August 27, 1782.



The emblem of the Moravian church and their motto, "Our Lamb has conquered, let us follow Him."

Though Henriette was always interested in music, she did not take her first official music post until 1766, when she became the director of the Herrnhut Women's Chorus. The next year, 1676, fourteen of her poems became hymns in the Moravian Hymnal. By 1778 that number had expanded to forty-four, including her most famous hymn, written on Psalm 23, "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb." She wrote it as a birthday present for her friend and fellow choir worker, Christina Petersen. It was sung for the first time August 1, 1772. In 1789 it was first translated into English, for the English Moravian hymnal. It was translated by Frederick William Foster as "Jesus Makes my Heart Rejoice." However, the translation we know, by William Flemming Stevenson, is more popular among English hymnals.

In her hymn, Henriette beautifully connects the imagery of John 10, where Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd, and Psalm 23. Though Jesus has many sheep, He calls each one by name. We have the comfort that He knows all our needs and well provides for them (st. 1). This protection and love is extended to us no matter where life may lead us. When we thirst, He satisfies us physically and spiritually. He provides for all our needs of body, but especially of soul, giving us His Word and His Sacraments to quench our thirst and strengthen us for whatever we may encounter in life (st. 2). But all that He gives us in this life pales in comparison to the joy that awaits. Our happiness will be complete in heaven when, "by His angel host attended, He shall fold me to His breast, safe within His arms to rest" (st. 3). What comfort our Good Shepherd gives us, for this life and the next!