



Lord Jesus, Think on Me

Text: Synesius of Cyrene (c. 370—c.430)

Tune: William Daman (1550-1593)

The hymnody of the Christian Church spans the ages. *The Lutheran Hymnal* contains nine hymns originally written in Greek (hymns 76, 101, 204, 205, 255, 320, 322, 555, and 628) which were some of the earliest hymns in the Church’s life, besides the Psalms. Typical Greek hymnody had several emphases, namely a focus on the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ. Also, Greek hymns focus on awe, adoration, and reverence. They are also strongly creedal, making a confession of who God is and what He does. With the exception of penitential hymns (such as “Lord Jesus, Think on Me”), Greek hymnody was largely free of first-person pronouns. This is only logical since the Greek hymn was largely a sung confession, and the confession is necessarily about God, not the one making the confession.

“Lord Jesus, Think on Me” was written by Synesius of Cyrene. He was born around 370 in Cyrene, North Africa (modern-day Libya). Cyrene was a Greek colony which was a flourishing center of wealth and education, and was home to several philosophers, artists, and poets. Synesius was born into a wealthy family and because of that he was afforded an outstanding education. He was also very



Synesius

wealthy and was widely known as a sportsman, philosopher, eloquent speaker, and a man of noble character. He was converted to Christianity in 403 when he married a Christian woman. He quickly became a learned theologian (although he did have some disagreements with Christian theology), and was made Bishop of Ptolemais by popular demand in 410. While serving as Bishop he became close friends with St. Augustine. Synesius wrote ten hymns,

of which “Lord Jesus, Think on Me” was the last, but only surviving hymn.

The hymn was translated by Allen W. Chatfield in his volume *Songs and Hymns of the Earliest Greek Christian Poets* in 1876. Interestingly Chatfield translated several liturgical writings from English into Greek, namely the Litany and *Te Deum Laudamus*. When speaking of his translation of “Lord Jesus, Think on Me,” Chatfield said: “In translating this ode, I gave my spirit more liberty. It may be considered as a paraphrase or amplification, rather than an exact translation of the of the original.” His original version also included two stanzas not printed in *The Lutheran Hymnal* or most other modern hymnals which include this hymn. The first missing stanza was the hymn’s original first stanza, and the second is included between what we have as stanzas six and seven. They read:



Lord Jesus, think on me;	Lord Jesus, think on me,
And this poor offering,	And grant me my desire,
Which I do humbly weave for Thee,	That I, with mind and limbs set free,
Accept, O Christ, my King.	May join the heavenly choir.

This hymn is a fitting prayer for the Christian in times of temptation. It rightly looks to Jesus Christ as the only source of forgiveness and perseverance in Satan’s temptation. It ends with the promise of heaven, where we will finally be free from the trials of life and forever be in the presence of Christ, singing His praise. The language is very vivid, and the Christian can easily picture the situation presented in each stanza. Situations such as the pain and misery of the battle’s strife (st. 3), going astray in darkness and perplexity (st. 4), and the flood of the tempest and rush of the enemy (st. 5) are all very vivid images. However, despite each vivid image of evil, there is an equally comforting picture of the eternal pleasures of Christ, namely being made pure (st. 1), tasting the promised rest (st. 2), the presence of Christ in His Word and Sacraments (st. 5), and finally being led by Christ to the heaven He has prepared for us where we will forever worship the Holy Trinity (st. 4, 6, 7).