



Lord, Open Thou My Heart to Hear

Text: Johannes Olearius (1611-1684)

Tune: Unknown, *Geistliche Leider zu Wittenberg*, 1543

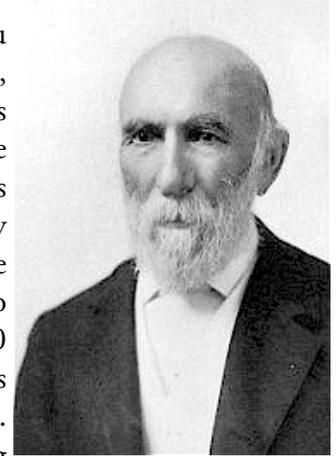
This hymn is one of many that falls into the category of prayer. It serves as a fitting prayer that the Holy Spirit would work through the Word of God so we would rightly hear and apply it.

The hymn was written in 1671 by Johannes Gottfried Olearius. Olearius was born in 1611 while his father was Pastor of St. Mary's Church in Halle, Germany. He entered the University of Wittenberg in 1529 where he eventually received a Master of Arts degree (1632) and later a Doctor of Divinity degree (1643). In 1643 he was appointed Court Preacher and Chaplain at Halle by Duke August of Sachsen-Weissenfels. He was later appointed to several positions in Weissenfels, positions he held until his death in 1684.



Olearius was a prolific writer, writing a Bible commentary, several devotional works, and also countless hymns. He was the compiler of one of the most influential 17th century hymnals, *Geistliche Singe-Kunst*, first published in 1671 in Leipzig. This hymnal contained 1,217 hymns, 302 of them written by Olearius. His hymns were very useful, since many filled gaps in existing hymnody, largely providing hymns for seasons and feasts of the Church Year which had few hymns or none at all. Many of his hymns were two or three stanzas long, simple in their construction, and captured succinctly the importance of the topic at hand. Many of his hymns spread rapidly and were included in most hymnals at the time. ☒ *e Lutheran Hymnal* contains seven

of Olearius's hymns: "Lord, Open Thou My Heart to Hear," "The Lord, My God, Be Praised," "Come, Thou Precious Ransom, Come," "Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People," "When All the World Was Cursed," "O How Great is Thy Compassion," and "Jesus Christ, My Pride and Glory." His hymn texts were also used in two Bach cantatas, Cantata 30 (using "When All the World was Cursed"), written for the Nativity of St. John the Baptizer, and Cantata 129 (using "Now Thank We All Our God), written for the Feast of the Holy Trinity.



Matthias Loy

This hymn first appeared in English in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal* in 1880, published by the Ohio Synod. It was translated by Matthias Loy (1828-1915), who was a leader of the Ohio Synod. The Ohio Synod started as a part of the Synodical Conference (forerunner of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod), but Loy disagreed with C.F.W. Walther on predestination, saying that some cause in man led to his salvation. The Ohio Synod joined with the Norwegian Lutherans as well as the Buffalo and Ohio Synods to form the "Old American Lutheran Church," which eventually became the American Lutheran Church, which was a founding member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

While "Lord, Open Thou My Heart to Hear" is now a suitable hymn for the opening of the service or before the sermon, it was originally written as a hymn of response to the sermon. The first stanza is a prayer to the Lord that He would open our heart to willingly receive His Word and that He would come to us through the same. It also begs God to keep us in this Word and to remain God's child. The second stanza extols the gifts God's Word gives, namely that it moves the heart, gives health and healing, and gives joy, peace, and happiness. The hymn concludes with a doxological stanza, praising the Holy Trinity for His salvation and keeping us in the true faith.