



## Oh, Enter, Lord, Thy Temple

**Text: Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676)**

**Tune: Johann Crüger (1598-1662)**

When the Gospel Readings point us to how Christians ought to act, readings like anything from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), it is appropriate for us to respond in song with hymns about the Holy Spirit and His work. It is only because of His gracious indwelling and leading that we can do anything pleasing to God. When we sing hymns like “Oh, Enter, Lord, Thy Temple” which teach us about the person and work of the Third Person of the Trinity, we are shown what He does for us and are given opportunity to thank Him for holding Christ before our eyes and sustaining us in the faith to life everlasting.

One hymn that does just that is given to us by Paul Gerhardt, one of the greatest Lutheran hymnwriters. The description of his life is best seen in the inscription under a painting of him in the last church he served in Lübben, Germany. Under that painting is the phrase, *Theologus in cribro Satanae versatus*, “the theologian tested in Satan’s sieve.”



Gerhardt’s childhood was marked by death and strife, namely the death of his father during Paul’s childhood, and the brutal Thirty Years’ War that enveloped Europe. On January 2, 1628 Gerhardt entered theological studies at the University of Wittenberg, where he remained until April 1642. He then became a private tutor in Berlin, where his gift of poetry was nurtured. Johann Crüger took note of Gerhard’s gift for hymnwriting and included most of his available hymns in his hymnal *Praxis Pietatis Melica*, first published in 1647. In 1655 Gerhard married Anna Maria Berthold. Their first daughter died in infancy, and the family suffered from extreme poverty. In 1657 he became assistant Pastor at St. Nicholas Church in Berlin. However, here he became caught in the theological battles of the time.

The elector of Berlin, Friedrich Wilhelm the Great, thought Gerhardt sided with the Calvinists, when he was, in fact, a strong Lutheran. When he would not be a part of the false unity between the Lutherans and Calvinists, he was removed from office and not allowed to preach anywhere. Gerhardt referred to this as his “Berlin Martyrdom.” While this battle was raging, Gerhardt and his wife had five more children, but three of them did not live past their first few days. At the end of his “Berlin Martyrdom,” another son died, and Anna Maria was seriously ill. He eventually returned to his congregation in the spring of 1668. However, at Easter of that same year, his wife died. Gerhard’s only surviving family was a six year old son. In 1669 Gerhardt was Called to serve as Pastor in Lübben, where he remained until his death.

In total Gerhardt wrote 133 hymns (21 of them are in *The Lutheran Hymnal*). Often we think of Gerhardt’s hymns as “Cross and Comfort” hymns, hymns that speak to the trials we endure in this life and the comfort God gives us. However, Gerhardt’s hymns are no stranger to the days and seasons of the Church Year. Two of the greatest Christmas hymns, “Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is” and “All My Heart This Night Rejoices” were written by Gerhardt. “Oh, Enter, Lord, Thy Temple” was Gerhardt’s hymn for Pentecost 1653. He wrote it as a 16-stanza hymn, though four of them fell out of use shortly after it was written because they spoke directly to contemporary issues. What we sing today is stanzas 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 16 of the original.

In this hymn we pray that the Holy Spirit would enter us, that we would be His temple (1 Cor. 3:16). He entered us at our Baptism (“Who gavest me, the earthborn, a second birth more blest;” st. 1). He is also given a second connection to Baptism, being called “the true anointing Oil” (st. 3). When one is Baptized they are sometimes anointed with oil, a reminder of the Holy Spirit’s work to protect them, just like He has “protect[ed] His own anointed, His prophets, priests, and kings.” With this indwelling of the Spirit, we are taught to pray, and He also prays for us (st. 4). In good Gerhardt style, he does mention the Spirit’s work in our comfort, teaching us that the Holy Spirit “hath shed His sweetness o’er me and opened heaven before me and bid my heart rejoice!” (st. 5). And ultimately, because He has shown heaven to us, He will lead us there. He gives Christians the ability to die “with calm and fearless spirit and after death inherit eternal life on high” (st. 7). Only because of the Holy Spirit we are able to live as Christians in life and in death.