



Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly

Text: Christian Keimann (1607-1662)

Tune: Andreas Hammerschmidt (1611-1675)

Christmas gives us cause for rejoicing. Our God has come to us as a helpless Baby in a manger at Bethlehem. For a time He left behind the heavenly glory and refrained from using His full power as God. We pray that the joy Christ gives us is with us not just at Christmastime, but is with us into the New Year as well.

“Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly” was written by Christian Keimann. Keimann was born to Zacharias Keimann, a Lutheran Pastor in Pankratz, Bohemia. In 1627 Christian began studies at the University of Wittenberg, and by 1634 received his Master’s Degree. In that same year he received his first position as associate director of the Zittau Gymnasium (honors high school), and in 1638 was made its Rector. Keimann was a prominent teacher and author, especially of academic pieces. His hymn writing, though he only wrote thirteen hymns in his lifetime, were among the best of his day. They have a firm conviction of faith, they are churchly, and are an expression of sound Christian experience. Their poetic beauty is also great, and for these reasons almost all of his hymns saw wide use and acceptance throughout Lutheranism of his day.

The music attached to Keimann’s hymns is also part of the reason they saw such wide use. The music was always lively and well suited to the text. The excellent pairing happened because Keimann always collaborated with friend and composer, Andreas Hammerschmidt. Hammerschmidt was born in December 1611 in Brüx, Bohemia. His father, Hans, was a saddler in Bohemia. During his childhood, the family was forced to leave Bohemia. The strongly Lutheran family could not stay, as Bohemia became a Catholic region in the Thirty Years’ War. Little is known about

Hammerschmidt’s education because of the turmoil of the age. Legend and lore has suggested that he studied with several prominent organists and Kantors of the day, but most of them can be ruled out as his teacher because of their known travels, which very narrowly line up with Hammerschmidt’s travels. However, because of his great talent, he was close friends with several of them and surely learned techniques from them.



Andreas Hammerschmidt

Hammerschmidt did not hold many notable positions in his early career. However, in 1639 he became organist at the Johanniskirche (St. John’s Church) in Zittau. He served there for 36 years, until his death October 29, 1675. The Johanniskirche contained three organs, which allowed Hammerschmidt to compose music in a highly varied style and experiment with a newly popular type of church music in which different groups of singers and instrumentalists would sing from various locations in the church, producing a unique sound. The choral composition he wrote on “Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly” was one such composition. His other compositions were given high regard by other notable musicians of his day, but much of his music did not receive the attention it deserved until after his death.

“Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly” begins by declaring the reason for our joy: God has honored our race by dwelling among us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus left behind the glory of heaven and refrained from exercising His full power as God while He was in his State of Humiliation. This weakness and poverty He suffers for our good, for His purpose is to redeem us by His Blood (st. 2). The refrain reminds us that by Christ’s enduring sadness, He has done away with ours, along with sorrow and repining. But His greatest gift to us is our salvation, which gives us true peace. In return, we pray that we would cleave to Him at all times (st. 3). The final stanza is a prayer that Christ, until He calls us to Himself, would continue to hear our prayers and grant us His grace. This all is ours because of Christ’s Incarnation, which we celebrate at Christmastime and always.