



The Lord, My God, Be Praised

Text: Johannes Olearius (1611-1684)

Tune: Johann Crüger (1598-1662)

The best of the Church's hymns of praise are not hymns that simply praise God for being God. Hymns which do that are shallow and do not accomplish hymnody's purpose: teaching us the work of God for our salvation, His providence, and thanking Him for the Holy Spirit He sends to us to keep us in the faith. The best hymns of praise have Jesus Christ and His cross at the center.

This hymn of praise was originally published in 1671 by Johannes Olearius in his monumental hymnal, *Geistliche Singe-kunst* (Sacred Art of Singing). Olearius was born September 17, 1611 while his father was Pastor of St. Mary's Church in Halle, Germany. He entered the University of Wittenberg in 1629 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.



Johannes Olearius

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. *The Lutheran Hymnal* contains five of Olearius's hymns: "Lord, Open Thou My Heart to Hear," "The Lord, My God, Be Praised," "Comfort, Comfort, Ye My People," "O How Great is Thy Compassion," and "Jesus Christ, My Pride and Glory." His hymn texts were also used in some of Bach's cantatas, most notably Cantata 129, *Gelobet sei der Herr, mein Gott* ("The Lord, My God, Be Praised") which he wrote for Trinity Sunday 1726.

The tune to which this hymn is set, NUN DANKET ALLE GOTT, is a well-known and loved tune. It first appeared in the third edition of Johann Crüger's influential hymnal *Praxis Pietatis Melica* (Practice of Piety in Song), published in 1648. Though its composer is unknown, it was likely Crüger himself who wrote it. He wrote it to accompany Martin Rinckart's "Now Thank We All Our God." Text and tune were written to celebrate the Peace of Westphalia, December 10, 1648, which brought an end to the Thirty Year's War, a bitter war between Lutheran and Roman Catholic states across Europe.

This is one of Olearius's finest hymns. He wrote it as a hymn for Trinity Sunday, based on that day's Gospel, St. John 3:1-15. When he first published the hymn it was entitled, "Encouragement from the Gospel to thankful meditation on this great mystery."

Stanzas one through three each give praise for a different Person of the Holy Trinity. Stanza one addresses the Father's care for creation; stanza two the Son's sacrificial death for our sin; stanza three the Holy Spirit's ministry of comfort and support in this life. We thank the Triune God for His loving care for us that sustains us from day to day. The fourth and fifth stanzas bring together the first three in a united voice of praise. Stanza four teaches us that the heavenly host spend their days in praise of the Trinity. The fifth stanza joins our praise with theirs. The whole Church on earth joins with the company of heaven in singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" to our God, giving Him thanks for our salvation and the heavenly home to which we will be called to sing these praises forevermore.