

## ***We Need A Savior, We Need A King***

**Intro:** This evening we are going to look at some very old songs. Some of the songs, you probably know. One or two might be favorites. [the professor who graded songs] Rather than long stories behind a song or two, I want to introduce each song briefly and let the words then join with your newfound knowledge of their background to bring the message home.

### **I. I Need Thee Every Hour**

- A.** Her name was Annie Hawks and she was depressed. She was a 37 year old housewife in Brooklyn. Money was tight. Times were hard. The country was less than eight years out of its Civil War and the economy was shattered.
- B.** In the midst of her dark days, she turned to God and wrote a prayer – a poem. Her Baptist pastor put the words to music. It would have stayed an obscure song except that two years later Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey discovered the song and it became famous.
- C.** As we sing this song – think of that 37 year old housewife in a damp, dark Brooklyn apartment, pouring out her heart to God. Years later she would tell of the faith she had when young and how that sustained her when her world went dark. She said, “God often allows us to learn in the sunshine what we will need to lean on in the darkness.”

### **II. O God Our Help In Ages Past**

- A.** Isaac Watts is one of the best known composers of popular church hymns. We still sing many of them today, 360 years after they were written. But this song is special.
- B.** The year was 1714. Queen Anne lay dying and she had no heir. Who would be the new monarch? Just like Annie Hawks, the people of England were looking for a king, a savior. The country was teetering on the edge of Civil War as factions began forming armies to push forward their candidate for king.
- C.** Isaac had been carried as a child to see his father in prison; a father imprisoned because he had the wrong religion. Queen Anne had freed those who worshipped outside the established church. With her death... would Isaac be sent to jail, or to the gallows?
- D.** He called out for God to come – for Christmas to be realized in the life of the English people – with this song. It is high church and not very well known here. [the tune in our book is more a chant than a song]
- E.** Listen to this song and hear the same plea from the high church tradition of Isaac Watts that poured out of Annie Hawks at her tiny kitchen table. We need a savior. We need a king.

### **III. Come Thou Almighty King**

- A. We play the song “Hail to the Chief” when the President enters a room. It is traditional to have a special song to welcome the King or Head of State. England had no official anthem for the longest time but eventually accepted “God Save Our Gracious King” (the same tune used later in the US for “My Country Tis of Thee).
- B. Charles Wesley was disturbed by the worshipful way the song sang of the attributes of an earthly king. He was a Methodist – a scorned and persecuted people in that day. They were known for their absolute loyalty to Jesus as King, above all others.
- C. Anonymously, he wrote and published this song. Its tune is very close to God Save Our Gracious King as he wanted to play off that national sentiment and redirect it towards heaven.
- D. As we sing this song, let’s redirect our hearts away from the wonders of stores, lights, trees, candles, wreaths, and presents... and towards the God and Father of All who sent us His Son, born of a virgin, laid in a manger, announced by angels.

#### **IV. The Old Rugged Cross**

- A. A Michigan preacher once felt uncomfortable with the gilded, highly decorated churches in which he served. Especially troubling was the way the cross had been transformed into something pretty and fancy.
- B. The year was 1913. The place was Albion, Michigan. George Bennard was preaching a series of revivals for the Methodist Episcopal Church in and around Pokagon, Michigan when he first sang it in public.
- C. We sing it tonight to remember that the coming of our King was not without cost. That cost was horrible, but we cherish it, for by the cross Christ’s love was poured out for us and our redemption was won. [Philippians 2]

#### **V. Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone**

- A. Thomas Shepherd was a minister of the Church of England in 1693. The weight of conviction was heavy on him. He knew that he needed to break free and teach the truth as delivered in Scripture, but to do so would mean financial ruination and social ostracism. The cost of being true to scripture would also be legal – he might lose his freedom when the State Church came down on him with the full weight of the law and sword.
- B. Reading the story of Peter and his crucifixion made up Shepherd’s mind. He left the established church and went to a barn in Nottingham. The song he wrote and sang, was this one.

#### **VI. Hark The Herald Angels Sing**

**A.** A last song by Charles Wesley. Remember that God has heard our plea. A savior has been born, and we have been given a king.  
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