

Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

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Author Henry Alford
Composer George J. Elvey

Matthew 13: 24-43

Psalm 100: 1-5

John 15: 1-8

Revelation 22: 1-21

Thoughts on the Text

The harvest is home! Come! Praise! Our winter supply is safely in!

To truly appreciate some of the hymns we must appreciate an agri-society. They understood life through the seasons and what each dictated for them to provide for their needs. So wouldn't they write their hymns and convey their faith using the language of their life, just as we do today?

For an urban society who simply shops for what we need and knows little of wheat to bread, or cotton to clothing, or cattle to steaks we have to work a bit to wrap our minds around the call to praise because the harvest is safe ere the winter storms begin. But the words of this hymn, penned by a churchman in mid-1800's England, were clear to those who read and sang them then and to many generations after.

The first stanza begins with thanksgiving - the harvest is home! It continues with the recognition that it is God, our Maker who brings the yield. And as we extrapolate "our Maker" we know that it is God who made the soil, it is God who provides the rain and the energy of the sun, it is God who puts within the seed the power to sprout and who determines what that seed will produce. Without God, our Maker, there would be no seed and no harvest. In light of this, we must gather, and together we must sing songs of praise.

The rest of the hymn speaks of us as God's field, and that just as there is a progression of growth from the seed to harvest, there is a work in our lives that continually brings us to mature and praise-filled living. It tells us that our Lord will come to gather in his own harvest and it pleads for God to come quickly and take His people home.

The hymn, from beginning to end, is one of praise. Praise for the seasons of plowing and planting and harvesting. Praise for the work God is doing in our lives. Praise for that glorious time yet to come when we are all HOME with the Lord.