

Is It Well With Our Souls

Scripture: Psalm 46:1 - 3 & Hebrews 10:23

March 23rd, 2025

Today, our opening hymn was 'It Is Well With My Soul'. It is a majestic hymn. I would like us to hear it one more time by being sung by Emily Swett and accompanied by Aimee Gusky. Ladies!

By the last verse in this majestic hymn of faith, our voices and accompanying music should swell high with enthusiasm. We should be singing confidently and courageously. We should be boldly proclaiming through our faith in Christ a hope and an assurance beyond anything the five senses can sustain. Surely, whoever wrote down these timeless words was sitting on top of the world.

'And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight; the clouds be rolled back as a scroll; the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, even so, it is well with my soul!'

Wow, I am sitting on top of the world - or was the writer sitting on top of the world?

The writer of this hymn is Horatio Spafford. Two years before he wrote this majestic hymn, his four year old son died of scarlet fever. Horatio had lost some very expensive real estate holdings in Chicago during the 'Great Fire'. His four young daughters then perished when the ship they were on collided with another ship on its way to England. Anna, Horatio's wife, who was with the girls, somehow survived the collision. So Horatio boarded the next ship out of New York to join his wife, who was severely injured. At one point on that voyage, the ship's captain called Horatio to the bridge of the ship and told Horatio that this is the area where the collision occurred. He told Horatio that the water was three miles deep. Horatio then returned to his cabin and wrote this majestic hymn. Its tune is 'Ville du Havre', which is the name of the ship his wife and daughters were traveling on.

I really think you cannot say that Horatio was on top of the world. In fact, Horatio was deep in sorrow - three miles down!

Horatio Spafford knew something about sorrows like sea billows roll. In the face of unimaginable personal tragedy and loss, Horatio could still proclaim - It is well, it is well with my soul.

Have you ever been where Horatio Spafford was? Have you suffered a loss like Horatio did? Horatio went from a family of six to just him and his wife, who was terribly injured in less than two years. Horatio went from being a man of means to a man whose life seems a lot like Job.

Have you thought that reading the Book of Job could be an inspiring story?

The Psalmist could affirm that when the world falls apart, God is with us.

*When the mountains crumble into the center of the sea, God is with us.

*When the waters roar and rage, God is with us.

*When the mountains shake because of the surging waves, God is with us.

God is with us!

For Horatio, life's most painful and difficult circumstances could not change the fact that God was with him. For us, life's most trying times and difficult situations cannot change the fact that God is with us.

God changes everything. God is our refuge and our strength. God is a help who is always near in times of great trouble.

Julian of Norwich, a writer in the 14th century, wrote - All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.

How do you arrive at such a faith? How do you develop the kind of faith that trusts God completely, no matter what? Horatio knew such a faith. Julian knew such a faith. Do you?

Most of us will get to such a faith, at least in part, because of the personal faith stories others tell us. Horatio Spafford's story is such a personal story.

And along the way, we will make some personal stories of faith that we will share with others to help them develop this kind of faith.

Your personal faith stories can help and challenge those you are trying to encourage. So hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, because the one who made the promises is reliable.

God is reliable!

'And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight; the clouds be rolled back as a scroll; the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend, even so, it is well with my soul!'