



I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Text: Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

Tune: Amanda Husberg (b. 1940-2021)

“I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” is an example of “I done right.” In modern church music the pronoun I often makes people leery. “I” often launches into something the author/singer is doing for God, some work attempting to earn His favor. However, in this Hymn “I” am always the *recipient* of a revelation of God’s grace and promise. This is a perfect meditation for Christians struggling with doubt and despair in a life that is so frequently dark and afflicted by troubles.

The text’s author, Horatius Bonar, was born in 1808 in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was Ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry there in 1837. In 1843 he became a member of the Free Church of Scotland, which was born when the Disruption of 1843 fractured the Scottish Church over the practice of rich landowners selecting their own Pastors. During this time, Bonar became well-known for his authorship of the “Kelso Tracts,” a series of tracts he wrote for the teaching of his congregation. However, the tracts proved more popular than Bonar anticipated because of their comforting, devotional nature. Bonar also authored numerous hymns. “I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say was written around 1846 and was printed in a collection by Bonar entitled *Hymns Original and Selected*.



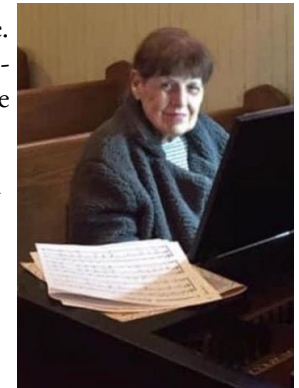
Bonar

Bonar is also the author of other hymns in *Lutheran Service Book*, including “Glory Be to God the Father,” “Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ,” “Not What These Hands Have Done,” “I Lay My Sins on Jesus,” and, “Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face.”

“I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say” has appeared in the three most recent hymnals of our Synod, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, *Lutheran Worship*, and *Lutheran*

Service Book, but each time with a different tune. In *LSB* it has been paired with a new tune, SARAH-ELIZABETH, which is the name of the niece of the composer, Amanda Husberg.

With nearly three hundred hymn tunes published internationally, Amanda Husberg has had a long composing career. *Lutheran Service Book* contains another tune composed by Husberg, LOVE’S LIGHT, which is wedded to the texts of “Heavenly Hosts in Ceaseless Worship” and “Swiftly Pass the Clouds of Glory.” Born in Chicago in 1940, she holds a BS in education from Concordia University, Nebraska and an MS from Hunter College in early childhood education. While at Concordia, she studied the organ with Jan Bender, fueling her love for music.



Husberg

Amanda taught elementary school for two years and then moved to St. John the Evangelist Lutheran Church in Brooklyn, NY, to serve as their director of music. Amanda received the Servant of Christ Award from the Atlantic District of the LCMS in 2000 for her musical contributions to the church and is now a member of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada. Of her composing she says, “I write for congregational singing, believing that we do sing with one voice, young and old, people of all walks of life, new singers and experienced singers. Together we sing praise to the One who accepts all our praise, no matter how beautiful it is, or how humble it may be.”

“I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say is based on John 1:16, “Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace,” but the hymn is loaded with many more allusions to Scripture. Each stanza begins with a statement and is followed by the promises of Jesus that are rooted in Matthew 11:28, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Rest implies more than sleep, including the peace of the soul that has found forgiveness in Christ.

The “thirst” in stanza 2 references Jesus with the woman at the well in John 4:13-15. He promises her living water that quenches not physical thirst but the thirst for eternal life.

The darkness of the final stanza is, of course, the night of sin and death which is conquered by Christ alone, the light of the world, our lamp and sun. All our nights give way to the eternal morning of Jesus, the light that will never set.