



## We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died

**Text:** Thomas Kelly (1769-1854)

**Tune:** *Nürnbergisches Gesangbuch*, 1676

As the season of Lent continues on to the events of Holy Week, the Crucifixion of Our Lord comes increasingly into view. As we endure trials in this earthly life, we keep Jesus' cross in focus, knowing that there we see how much God loves us and cares for us. All our strength comes from Christ and His sacrifice for us. The Crucifixion gives us joy because we know that Easter comes after, where our exit from this dying world waits.



Thomas Kelly

This joy comes in a sung confession written by Thomas Kelly. Kelly was born July 13, 1769 at Kellyville, Athy, Queen's County, Ireland, son of a Judge of the Irish Court of Common Pleas. His college education was received at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated with highest honors. He expected to become a lawyer, and went to London for that purpose. However, while he was in London studying for the Bar, he had to study Old Testament law, which required him to learn Hebrew. While studying Hebrew and coming to know Scripture, he developed an awareness of his sin, which distressed him greatly. His desire to flee from sin led him to an ascetic life, a life which refrains from anything that might be considered pleasurable. This asceticism threatened his life because of how rigorously he practiced it. He eventually was ordained in 1792 and returned to Dublin as a preacher. However, his preaching was so contentious that Archbishop Fowler banned him and his companion preacher, Rowland Hill, from preaching in Dublin. Undeterred, he began preaching in two unauthorized

churches in Dublin. Eventually he broke off from the Church of Ireland and built his own churches, where he preached. He married a daughter of the Tighe family, a family revered for their Christian piety, around the year 1800. Kelly continued preaching until he suffered a stroke while preaching at the age of 85. He died because of this on May 14, 1854.

In his life, Kelley wrote 765 hymns, and *the Lutheran Hymnal* contains eight of them. His first published collection came in 1802, *Psalms and Hymns by Various Authors*. This book contained 33 of his hymns. Next, in 1804, he published *Hymns on Various Passages of Scripture*, a volume which he edited and expanded in 1806, 1809, 1826, and 1836. Finally, in 1815 he released *Hymns Not Before Published*. Because Kelly also had much musical talent, he composed tunes for several of his hymns, published in 1815. In his last printing of *Hymns on Various Passages of Scripture*, he said in a foreword: "It will be perceived by those who read these hymns, that though there is an interval between the first and the last of near sixty years, both speak of the same great truth, and in the same way. In the course of that long period, the author has seen much and heard much. ... What pacifies the conscience then, does so now. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'"

The foundation of Jesus Christ and the hope that comes from Him alone is the topic of "We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died." In his first stanza, he captures well St. Paul's writing to the Corinthians, that the Cross is the world's stumbling block, but the joy and hope of the Christians. The Cross is our joy because there we see the love of God, which forgives all our sins (st. 2). Stanzas 3-5 sing of the daily benefits which come from Jesus' Crucifixion. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus cheers us and removes bitterness, because we realize that the earth's sadness is only temporary (st. 3). When we know that our true home awaits, we are made brave and ready for the fights that come in this world, whether they bring us to the grave or not (st. 4). But overarching all that is the joy that the Crucifixion of Jesus is not only our comfort here, but is the "angels' theme in heaven above," a theme which we, too, will sing by God's great grace and mercy (st. 5).