

Beautiful Is The Earth

Tune: CRUSADER'S HYMN

Text: Bernhardt Severin Ingemann, 1851

Translation: Mark Hulsether & Carolyn Wedin

Guitar - Drop D tuning

<https://marksbloggingexperiment.com/2021/08/07/deglig-er-jorden-beautiful-is-the-earth/>

C Am Dm G C C Am F G C

This earth is beau - ti - ful. Strong and pure the skies a - bove,
Hard times will sure - ly come. Waves of time the roll o - ver us.
An - gels once taught this song. Shep - herds learned it in the night.

C F C G7 C G7 C G

Filled with the songs of our pil - grim choir.
Like our it the eld - ers, we too must pass.
Still it sounds from soul to soul.

C F C A7 Dm Dm A7 Dm G7 C

Through gen - er - a - tions, Ris - ing fall - ing em - pires, We
Al - ways we a hear the sound, Ring - ing to true through all our strife, To
Peace to a brok - en world, Joy to all our bro - ken hearts, The

E Am C7 F C G7 C guitar cue

move with song toward par a - dise.
train our ears God and pro - guide our path.
grace of God pro - claimed for all.

E Am C7 F C G7 C

In 2023, one of my favorite opera singers, Lise Davidsen, released a recording titled “Christmas from Norway.” As I listened, I heard a very familiar tune that is not typically associated with Christmas. The hymn “Dejlig er Jorden” was sung in Danish. While I had no idea of the text’s meaning, I recognized the tune very well. However, I could not identify it since it didn’t fit the category of Christmas music. Streaming services often provide limited information, and the composer/lyricist was simply noted as “traditional.” So, I turned off the music and sang the tune using “la” until I recalled the lyrics in my mind: “Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature...”

The hymn we know as “Fairest Lord Jesus” first appeared in 1677 in a German collection of hymns and tunes. It remained relatively obscure until 1842, when it was paired with a German folk tune known today as SCHONSTER HERR JESU. This combination of text and tune propelled it into the realm of international hymnody.

So, what was Lise Davidsen singing about in the Danish text on her Christmas album? The text was written in 1850 by the Danish poet, playwright, linguist, and hymnist Bernhard Ingemann at the request of a friend. The German text was popular, and Ingemann wrote from a Scandinavian perspective.

The Danish and German texts for this tune are significantly different. The German text, written in the late 1600s by German Jesuits, used a nature metaphor to describe Jesus, with a trinitarian reference in the last verse.

The Danish lyrics stress respect and admiration for creation, placing angels, who promote peace on earth, at the story's center. Music plays an important part in the story as songs are carried by a historical tradition leading back to the birth of Jesus and carried forward by the pilgrim choir. The lyric’s stress on angels singing evokes classic ideas about the music of the spheres, at one with the deep truths of the universe.

This hymn is THE Christmas hymn in the Nordic countries and traditionally sung on Christmas Eve. The hymn is sung in native languages of all Nordic countries including the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and the Northern and Southern Sami people. This hymn is also sung at funerals as the closing song, especially in Sweden.