



HEART WARMERS

It is Well with My Soul

By Jeni Janek

I've always loved the song. A haunting melody of archaic words woven into a tapestry of emotion. I always revel at how deep the meaning truly is. I could listen to "*It Is Well With My Soul*" over and over, and never get tired of it.

In fact, I found myself recently playing it over and over on my way to work or to a conference, or school, because I know that we are living in times of great need, great anxiety for many, and feeling the presence of peace is not always easy. And then a friend sent me a text. "We are having a retreat, and I want you to come". Now, this was not my first invitation. I'd often been asked by wonderful and well-meaning friends, but my excuse-making skills kicked into high gear and I would conjure something (or actively seek out) to prolong my meeting with fate.

This time, I found none. I reluctantly gathered my gear and met at a clandestine church parking lot with a handful of women, several of whom I'd never met. We were all tired. We were all overloaded. We were carrying burdens and racing the clock at every moment of every day. We were trying to be happy about sacrificing a weekend in a remote location away from life as we knew it. I looked around at the tired faces and realized one thing; we were all the same.

Upon getting into the car with other travelers, I saw a small paper calendar on the floorboard with the words, "*It Is Well With My Soul*" written on it. "Hmmm...", I thought out loud. "I love this song and story", I said out loud. The driver, one of our retreat organizers smiled at me and said, "Then you are in the right place".

Once we arrived, I saw the whole facility adorned with the words, "*It Is Well With My Soul*" draped from wall-to-wall. It was the theme of the whole gathering, and a story I could relate to. I'll save you the longer part of the story (though you can read it at:

<https://www.staugustine.com/article/20141016/LIFESTYLE/310169936>), but suffice it to say, a man named Horatio G. Spafford penned this hymn amid the most horrible and tragic of circumstances. He lost nearly all of his family in a shipwreck in 1871 and went on to endure one relentless trial after the other. His life was full of adversity and devastation. But, he was resilient and very spiritually engaged in spite of it. He was the picture of perseverance.

This was the basis of a whole weekend devoted to overcoming life's obstacles in a spiritually connected manner with people who understand, connect, accept, and love.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that I was able to go away and fix all the world's problems and come back with any sort of a magic wand. I have seriously contemplated finding a sign for my workspace (and home) that says, "magic wand broken, self-help skills still work". Maybe that's for others, but more readily, it's for me. But, what I will share is that I was in the right place at the right time. Refilled my tank.

I know you're probably handling things that are very difficult. Maybe you have that circle around you; maybe you need a circle around you. The weather beats us all up over time but we can find refuge. Sometimes it just takes us pausing to look for it or notice it especially if it's always been there and we just haven't really looked for it.

My hope is that you have or can find peace and be able to confidently say, "*It Is Well With My Soul*".