

From the Zucchetto

The 4th Week in Easter Season

“And Can It Be” a hymn by The Rev. Charles Wesley

In May of 1738, Charles Wesley, an Anglican priest, wrote the hymn “And can it be” which we sang last Sunday. I commend it to you for your personal devotion and reflection as we, the Saints of St. Paul’s, continue to grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God our Savior Jesus Christ.

To listen to this great hymn, please google “And can it be that I should gain.” The best version is found on YouTube.

Here it is verse by verse, stanza by stanza, with my brief reflections on each.

1. And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who him to death pursued? Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

In the first stanza, Wesley expresses amazement over the love expressed in God the Son dying for him; it is a mystery that we who caused his death now benefit from it. The questions “Died He for me, who caused His pain?” and “How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?” reflect deep wonder at God’s mercy.

2. 'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies! Who can explore his strange design? In vain the first-born seraph tries to sound the depths of love divine. 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore, let angel minds enquire no more.

In the second stanza, Wesley calls for adoration at the incomprehensibility of God’s love and mercy in our Lord’s sacrificial death. Even the angels cannot fully comprehend the depth of God’s love.

3. He left his Father's throne above — so free, so infinite his grace — emptied himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race. 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; for, O my God, it found out me!

Here Wesley celebrates Christ’s humility and grace in leaving His heavenly throne to die for humanity. It references the incarnation and the redemptive work of Jesus, highlighting the unending mercy that reaches even the most underserving sinner.

4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night; thine eye diffused a quickening ray; I woke, the dungeon flamed with light; my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

With the fourth stanza Wesley reflects on personal liberation from sin, using imagery of imprisonment and chains. The verse draws on biblical metaphors, such as the liberation of Peter and Paul, to illustrate the freedom we experience through our relationship personal with Christ Jesus.

5. No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him, is mine; Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine, Bold I approach th' eternal throne, and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

The final stanza rejoices in the results of Christ's amazing and merciful work which is the assurance of our salvation for there is no condemnation for those who have been made alive in Him. In Him we may boldly approach God's eternal throne while we await the reception of our crown which the Lord has promised to all who love Him.