

Episode 11

History of Hymns

I NEED THEE EVERY HOUR

NARRATOR: The views and opinions expressed here are those of the guests and are not the official position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Annie Sherwood Hawks was born May 28, 1835 in Hoosick, New York. From an early age, she was an avid reader and wrote poetry. At age 14, Annie had a poem published in a newspaper in Troy, New York, and more poems followed in several local papers. At 24, she married Charles Hawks and moved to live in Brooklyn, New York. There she and her husband joined a church whose pastor was noted hymn writer and composer Dr. Robert S. Lowry. Dr. Lowry immediately recognized Annie's talent for writing and encouraged her to use it. In fact, he even offered, "If you'll write the words, I'll write the music," and he was as good as his word.

Annie Hawks was the mother of three children when the hymn for which she is best known was written. Annie later wrote, "I remember well, the morning when in the midst of the daily cares of my home, I was so filled with the sense of the nearness of the Master, that wondering how one could live without him either in joy or pain, these words 'I Need Thee Every Hour' were ushered into my mind. The hymn was wafted out to the world on the wings of love and joy, rather than under the stress of great personal sorrow. It was not until long years after when the shadow of a great loss fell over my way that I understood something of the comforting in the words I have been permitted to write."

Annie wrote over 400 hymns during her 83 years of life. "I Need Thee Every Hour" remains the most widely sung today.

(END MUSIC)

NARRATOR: Geslison and Groberg's arrangement of "I Need Thee Every Hour" has been our underscore.

(BEGIN MUSIC)

(Music: Merrill Jenson, "Safety in His Arms" [instrumental])

NARRATOR: Merrill Jenson's "Safety in His Arms," a medley of "I need Thee Every Hour" and "How Great the Wisdom and the Love" will underscore the story of the composer, Robert S. Lowry.

(Music: Merrill Jenson, "Safety in His Arms" [instrumental])

NARRATOR: Robert Lowry was born in 1826 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, educated at the University of Lewisburg in Pennsylvania, where he became a professor of literature and was an ordained Baptist minister.

(Music: Merrill Jenson, "Safety in His Arms" [instrumental])

NARRATOR: His ministry eventually brought him to Brooklyn, New York, where as pastor at the Hanson Place Baptist Church, he came in contact with Annie Hawks, with whom he collaborated on "I Need Thee Every Hour."

In Dr. Lowry's mind, his music was secondary to his ministry. But he wrote 500 gospel tunes, including "How Can I Keep From Singing" and "Shall We Gather by the River?". Dr. Lowry's comments show him to be a natural and gifted songwriter. "I have no method of writing songs. Sometimes the music comes and the words follow. I watch my moods, and when anything strikes me, whether words or music, no matter where I am, at home or on the street, I jot it down. My brain is a sort of spinning machine, I think, for there is music running through it all the time."

(Music: Merrill Jenson, "Safety in His Arms" [instrumental])

NARRATOR: I do not pick out my music on the keys of an instrument. The tunes of nearly all the hymns I have written have been completed on paper before I tried them on the organ.

(Music: Merrill Jenson, "Safety in His Arms" [instrumental])

NARRATOR: Frequently, the words of the hymn and the music have been written at the same time. Robert Lowry was coauthor of the text. He not only provided the music for the words of Annie S. Hawks but also wrote the words of the refrain, the last two lines of the hymn.

(Music: Merrill Jenson, "Safety in His Arms" [instrumental])

NARRATOR: The hymn was first published in 1873 in a collection Dr. Lowry edited. And in his later years, he edited many gospel music books for the music publishing firm of Biglow & Main.

Thanks to Karen Lynn Davidson for material from her book "Our Latter-Day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages."

[END MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Kenneth Cope offers this rendition of "I Need Thee Every Hour."

[BEGIN MUSIC]

(Music: Kenneth Cope, "I Need Thee Every Hour")

[END MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Michael Dowdle gives us an instrumental version of "I Need Thee Every Hour."

[BEGIN MUSIC]

(Music: Michael Dowdle, “I Need Thee Every Hour” [instrumental])

[END MUSIC]

[BEGIN MUSIC]

(Music: Kurt Bestor, “I Need Thee Every Hour” [instrumental])

NARRATOR: Kurt Bestor’s contemporary arrangement of “I Need Thee Every Hour” is really a rendering of Robert Lowry’s tune only, which is called “Need.”

(Music: Kurt Bestor, “I Need Thee Every Hour” [instrumental])

[END MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Octapella sings their a-cappella version of “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

[BEGIN MUSIC]

(Music: Octapella, “I Need Thee Every Hour”)

[END MUSIC]

NARRATOR: Mark Small and Robert Torres perform their Guitar Duo arrangement of “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

[BEGIN MUSIC]

(Music: Small-Torres Guitar Duo, “I Need Thee Every Hour”)

[END MUSIC]

NARRATOR: In closing, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square perform Kurt Bestor’s arrangement of “I Need Thee Every Hour.”

[BEGIN MUSIC]

(Music: Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra at Temple Square, “I Need Thee Every Hour”)

[END MUSIC]