

BLESSED ASSURANCE

This Sunday, August 13th, we will sing "*Blessed Assurance*" as our communion hymn. Many of you, like me, have probably known this hymn since childhood. I remember it, not so much from the Lutheran churches I attended with my parents, but rather, from the Baptist and Methodist worship services in my grandparents' congregations. There always seems to be a story behind the great hymns of faith that resonate so deeply within us. Such is the case of "*Blessed Assurance*."

One day in 1873, Miss Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) was in the home of her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph F. Knapp. Phoebe Palmer Knapp was a songwriter/composer and had just composed a simple tune which she played on the piano for Fanny and asked her, "What do you think the tune says?" "*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,*" answered Fanny, drawing from her phenomenal mental storage of scripture knowledge. She then continued: "*Oh what a foretaste of glory divine, Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*"

Fanny knew all about blessed assurance--from six weeks of age until her death shortly before her 95th birthday. At six weeks old, Fanny was blind. Her blindness was caused by a medical error when a doctor put mustard poultice on her inflamed eyes from a cold infection--resulting in immediate blindness. Her widowed mother and grandmother took her to the famous New York surgeon, Dr. Valentine Mott, but it was too late; the damage was permanent. He was heard to lament as they left the examining room, "Poor little blind girl." However, Fanny never saw her affliction as anything but a blessing. When she was eight years old she wrote this simple little verse:

*Oh, what a happy child I am
Although I cannot see
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.*

At age 15, Fanny entered the NY Institution for the Blind and was well known for her poetry and her vast memorization of Bible passages. Upon graduation, she remained on the faculty of NYIB for 11 years. Fanny went on to write lyrics for over 8,000 hymns and Gospel songs during her lifetime.

Knowing Fanny was blind gives a tremendous appreciation for the 2nd and 3rd verses that have to do with **sight**:

*Perfect submission, perfect delight, **Visions of rapture, now burst on my sight,**
Angels descending, bring from above, Echoes of mercy whispers of love.*

*Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above, Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

Once a preacher sympathetically remarked, "I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you." She replied quickly, "Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind?" "Why?" asked the surprised minister. "Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior!"

What is blessed assurance? "Blessed assurance" is a term that describes the assurance we have of our salvation. It signifies the confidence that comes from knowing that God has chosen us for salvation and will never abandon us. Having blessed assurance means having complete trust in God's promises. It is being absolutely certain that God will fulfill what He has said He will do. With this assurance, we can find solace in the knowledge that we are secure in God's hands, regardless of the challenges we face. Blessed assurance does not imply that we will never encounter difficulties or sorrows. On the contrary, we can be confident that God will use even the toughest times in our lives to bless and strengthen us. We can trust that He will never abandon us or forsake us, and that He works all things for our ultimate good. The hymn "***Blessed Assurance***" draws its title from this concept of unwavering certainty and confidence that we have in our salvation in Christ Jesus.