

ABIDE WITH US

DAILY HYMN DEVOTIONS

Richard C. Resch

Daniel Zager

ABOUT THE COVER

Artist Edward Riojas was commissioned to create the cover art for this devotional, *Abide with Us*, based on the Emmaus account from Luke 24:13–35. There, Jesus opened the Scriptures to disciples who had asked Him to stay, or abide, with them. Today, one of the beautiful and powerful ways the Scriptures continue to be opened to disciples of Jesus Christ is through the church’s hymns. The daily devotions within this book are based on the theology of these hymns.



Published by Concordia Publishing House
3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
1-800-325-3040 • cph.org

Copyright © 2025 Richard C. Resch and Daniel Zager

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

Hymn texts with the abbreviation *LSB* are from *Lutheran Service Book* © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Hymn texts with the abbreviation *TLH* are from *The Lutheran Hymnal* © 1941 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotation from *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Hymns*, vol. 1 is © 2019 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from the Small Catechism are taken from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* © 1986, 2017 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from *Lutheran Service Book: Altar Book* are © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this publication are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from *Luther's Works* in this publication are from *Luther's Works*, American Edition, volumes 1–30 © 1955–77 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved; volumes 31–55 © 1957–86 Augsburg Fortress. Used by permission of the publisher.

See “Acknowledgments” for further copyright notices.

CONTENTS

Preface	4
January	7
February	39
March	69
April	101
May	131
June	163
July	193
August	225
September	257
October	287
November	319
December	349
Holy Week	381
First Week of Easter	388
Acknowledgments	397
Index of Hymns	399

PREFACE

When we think of hymns, it is quite natural to think first and foremost of congregational singing of hymns during the Sunday Divine Service in our churches. Secondly, we may think of hymn singing in the home, perhaps during evening devotions and children’s bedtime. Or we might recall singing at the bedside of the saint about to enter eternal rest, perhaps the closing stanza of the hymn “Abide with Me”:

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heav’n’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me. (*LSB* 878:6)

This single example of the richness of our hymnody suggests the premise of this book—that our hymnic heritage deserves to be used on a *daily* basis. Whether we sing, speak, or read silently these miniature sermons of the church, our faith is strengthened for daily living and in anticipation of the sure and certain hope of eternal life. Our hymns proclaim the Gospel by pointing us to Jesus. They help each of us to recall our Baptism and to anticipate with deep reverence and holy joy the presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Our hymns teach us, encourage us, and console us.

The book that you are holding in your hands provides a devotion for each day of the year. Each devotion begins with a hymn stanza followed by a brief devotional exposition of the hymn. A thematically linked closing hymn stanza follows, sometimes drawn from the same hymn as the opening stanza, sometimes drawn from a theologically complementary hymn. These closing texts provide an opportunity for prayer, though the reader will recognize that such poetic prayers sometimes differ from the type of prose prayers that are more customary in devotional books.

In addition to the daily devotions, this book provides a two-week series of devotions from Palm Sunday (Sunday of the Passion) through the Second Sunday of Easter, during which the reader is encouraged to depart from the daily devotional calendar to meditate on these high holy days.

Because most of the hymns can be found in *Lutheran Service Book* (which you will find abbreviated as *LSB*), we have used that hymnal to easily reference them. A few are from other hymnals, but all showcase

the rich theology and comfort of the church's song. (If using *Lutheran Service Book* with this book, note that the Small Catechism can be found in that hymnal on pages 321–30.)

May these hymn-based devotions enrich the lives of God's saints as we live out our vocations here and look to eternal life in the presence of Christ.

The authors thank our editors at Concordia Publishing House—Jamie Moldenhauer, Lisa Clark, and Peter Reske—for their guidance and expertise in the editing and production of this book. Additionally, Richard Resch gives thanks to Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, where he learned confessional theology and where his vocation as Seminary Kantor was to immerse himself in Lutheran music and hymnody daily. Daniel Zager recalls with deep gratitude his loving parents, who provided him an elementary school education at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, where he sang hymns on a daily basis and memorized and recited hymns every week.

Abide in Me, and I in you. (John 15:4)

JANUARY 1

This Jesus came to end sin's war;
 This Name of names for us He bore.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! With thanks embrace
 Another year of grace. (LSB 896:3)

KING DAVID SINGS, “O GOD, SAVE ME BY YOUR NAME” (PSALM 54:1). Jesus’ name, the name above all other names, has been *on* you, *with* you, and *in* you since the day of your Baptism. There it has been, your abundant source of life and salvation. In David’s troubles, he turned to the name that saves. May we follow his lead as we start the new year. Let the name of Jesus be our first thought in the morning and last thought at night. Let that name be on our lips for all needs, great and small, as we place our trust entirely in the One who saves. And may the only name that is omnipotent bless all our days.

Also, may His precious name always be hallowed, revered, and treated appropriately among us. As God’s children, we know well from the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer how much He cares about our use of His name. Unfortunately, we live in a time and a culture when the name of Jesus is being seriously abused around us; may we never be part of such misuse.

Jesus! Name of wondrous love,
 Name all other names above,
 Unto which must ev’ry knee
 Bow in deep humility. (LSB 900:1)

Since there is no better way to start a new year than with Jesus’ name on our lips, let us sing and rejoice and, with thanks, embrace another year of grace from the source of our life and salvation. “Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!” (Psalm 113:2-3).

“God, Father, Son, and Spirit, hear! To all our pleas incline Your ear; upon our lives rich blessing trace in this new year of grace.” Amen. (LSB 896:7)

JANUARY 2

Wide open stand the gates adorned with pearl,
While round God's golden throne
The choirs of saints in endless circles curl,
And joyous praise the Son!
They watch Him now descending
To visit waiting earth.
The Lord of Life unending
Brings dying hope new birth! (LSB 639:1)

WIDE OPEN STAND THE GATES ADORNED WITH PEARL” IS A ONE-of-a-kind sermon in hymn form on the blessed Sacrament of the Altar, written by the nineteenth-century pastor Wilhelm Loehe, who is commemorated today. In this hymn-sermon, Loehe gives all the clouds, smoke, and awe-filled profundity of the angels’ “Holy, holy, holy” (Isaiah 6:2-4) in a congregational hymn, teaching hungry saints what is happening here.

And what is happening? The angels who first watched God descend to a manger now watch God descend to feed His people at the Table with His very body and blood! How can the Lord God of heaven and earth be coming down, so far down, to an altar as food? Yet, dear Christian, it is true! And He is doing it for you!

We are indeed the “waiting earth.” We desperately need the gift of such heavenly food to live. This Bread of Life gives new birth, blessed forgiveness, health, and peace that passes all understanding. And that peace is Jesus Christ Himself. Now present on the altar for us are both host and meal—a glorious feast that binds us in unity and joins us with all the company of heaven.

Fellow saints, nothing like this happens in the rest of our lives. This overwhelming, beyond-belief beauty happens only in His Divine Service and at His Table. In these words, Pastor Loehe paints this stunning picture for you to sing—and you are in the picture!

“O Christ, whom now beneath a veil we see, may what we thirst for soon our portion be: to gaze on Thee unveiled and see Thy face, the vision of Thy glory, and Thy grace.” Amen. (LSB 640:5)

JANUARY 3

Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light,
 And usher in the morning.
 Ye shepherds, shrink not with affright,
 The day of grace is dawning.
 This Child, though weak in infancy,
 Our confidence and joy shall be,
 The pow'r of Satan breaking,
 Our peace with God now making. (LSB 378:1)

BE NOT AFRAID, YE SHEPHERDS! A NEW MORNING HAS BEEN ushered in, and the day of grace has dawned! God has set in motion His mighty plan to save us. More joyous news has never been heard. Fear not! What an extraordinary new day dawned on this earth at Jesus' birth. Fear not!

And that new day reveals God's grace, mercy, and love for us as nothing else could. Grace is unearned, unmerited, yet freely given, for we have a God of grace who loves to give His gifts of grace lavishly and freely. And when God took on human flesh, we received grace upon grace in the highest gift possible: the gift of His Son.

Do not be deceived by what looks like a weak baby in infancy. This baby is God! Yes, He is a newborn in a manger among the animals, but—wonder of wonders—that baby can break Satan's power and save us.

In this sublime hymn from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, we pray that this dearest child from heaven may come, dwell, and be cradled in our hearts.

“O dearest Child, whom I adore, whose grace surpasses measure, my Brother, whom I cherish more than earth with all its treasure: Haste from Thy manger to depart, O come and dwell within my heart; with joy will I receive Thee, a cradle there will give Thee.” Amen. (LSB 378:2)

JANUARY 4

O Jesus Christ,
Thy manger is
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.
For there, O Lord,
Doth lie the Word

Made flesh for us; herein Thy grace forth shineth. (LSB 372:1)

WITH JUST ONE LINE, PAUL GERHARDT OFFERS A BEAUTIFUL picture of the extremes to which our God will go for us: “O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is my paradise at which my soul reclineth.” Here, the awe and wonder of Jesus’ incarnation becomes intensely personal, as the writer brings a glorious objective truth to the individual Christian. Our souls are given paradise because our God chooses such poverty as He starts His plan to save us.

“The angel host can never boast” about what is happening (st. 5). They are, without a doubt, the grandest possible soundtrack for any event, but they are not the ones who receive this glorious gift. God did not descend to a manger as a baby for His angels. Rather, God came for His dear children, for you and for me. His extreme coming down brings us bliss and gladness beyond measure! Oh, how greatly He must love us!

Other stanzas in the gorgeous tapestry of Gerhardt’s hymn also display the extremes of our God in His incarnation. On the one hand, the sea and wind obey Him. On the other hand, He is coming to serve sinners in the greatest possible meekness as He joins them in their weakness. Oh, how greatly He must love us!

“Thy light and grace our guilt efface, Thy heav’nly riches all our loss retrieving. Immanuel, Thy birth doth quell the pow’r of hell and Satan’s bold deceiving. Thou Christian heart, whoe’er thou art, be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee! For God’s own Child, in mercy mild, joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!” Amen. (LSB 372:3–4)

JANUARY 5

Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
 And see what in the manger lies.
 Who is this child, so young and fair?
 It is the Christ Child lying there.

Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
 Through whom the sinful world is blest!
 You came to share my misery
 That You might share Your joy with me. (LSB 358:7–8)

SINGING, LIKE PRAYING, WAS A PART OF MARTIN LUTHER'S EVERY day. Perhaps you have seen the lovely painting of him playing the lute, surrounded by his family. That pictured Luther on a typical day, and at Christmastide especially, singing undoubtedly filled the air in Luther's home.

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come,” Luther's best-known hymn on the incarnation, is a marvelous example of his ability to bring great theological depth to even a young child. Luther tells of the Christmas miracle in a ballad form, like a story that unfolds. Therefore, here we have the most remarkable story ever told, now in the form of a cradlesong written by Luther, the Nightingale of Wittenberg.

Jesus Christ is this cradlesong, God's new song, come to earth to share our misery and bring us true joy for all eternity. This is nothing like the old song.

At this time of the year, our joy is boundless! The blessed saints could not be more filled with wonder, awe, and gratitude for this “new song” given to their hearts and lives—Jesus Christ. Sing for joy, O earth!

“My heart for very joy must leap; my lips no more can silence keep. I, too, must sing with joyful tongue that sweetest ancient cradlesong: Glory to God in highest heav'n, who unto us His Son has giv'n! While angels sing with pious mirth a glad new year to all the earth.” Amen. (LSB 358:14–15)

JANUARY 6

O Morning Star, how
fair and bright!
You shine with God's
own truth and light,
Aglow with grace and mercy!
Of Jacob's race, King
David's son,
Our Lord and master,
You have won

Our hearts to serve You only!
Lowly, holy!
Great and glorious,
All victorious,
Rich in blessing!
Rule and might o'er all
possessing! (LSB 395:1)

IN THE FINAL CHAPTER OF THE BIBLE, JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF as “the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Revelation 22:16). Today, on the feast of the Epiphany, we join with the hymn writer, Philipp Nicolai, to address our Lord with this name that He gave Himself.

This Morning Star is fully divine, holy—shining with God's own truth and light. Simultaneously, He is fully human, lowly—living the perfect life that is impossible for us as fallen creatures before taking the weight of our sin on Himself and defeating death for us. Jesus, the Morning Star, is the visible manifestation of God, having come into this world for the sole purpose of our redemption.

This Morning Star is our merciful Lord and master, the one whose grace—undeserved love—makes all the difference as we live confidently here, knowing that His sacrifice has earned us an eternal home in His own presence. It is that confidence, rooted in Christ's saving work, that enables us to serve Him only, as the hymn says.

Thus, with Nicolai, we acclaim the Morning Star—great, glorious, victorious, ruler of all, rich in blessing! He is our Savior from sin and death.

“Almighty Father, in Your Son You loved us when not yet begun was this old earth's foundation! Your Son has ransomed us in love to live in Him here and above: This is Your great salvation. Alleluia! Christ the living, to us giving life forever, keeps us Yours and fails us never!” Amen. (LSB 395:4)

JANUARY 7

Come, heav'nly Bridegroom,
 Light divine,
 And deep within our
 hearts now shine;
 There light a flame undying!
 In Your one body let us be
 As living branches of a tree,

Your life our lives supplying.
 Now, though daily
 Earth's deep sadness
 May perplex us
 And distress us,
 Yet with heav'nly joy You
 bless us. (LSB 395:2)

PHILIPP NICOLAI'S HYMN CONTINUES WITH A DIFFERENT NAME of Jesus: the heavenly Bridegroom. The church, as the Bride, awaits His coming, with the expectant, fervent prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20). In His deep love, Jesus acts on behalf of His Bride. In the words of the hymn writer, Jesus is the "light divine." It is Jesus, the Bridegroom, who enters our hearts to light the flame of love, something we cannot do on our own. Indeed, Jesus is the life who supplies our lives, as a tree supplies life to its living branches. He is the vine; we are the branches (John 15:5).

Jesus comes to us in particular ways, that is, through His means of grace—summarized in a poetic economy of words by the hymn writer: "Your Word and Spirit, flesh and blood" (st. 3). That is all we need! We need the Word, read and preached. We need the Holy Spirit, who has called us by the Gospel and enlightened us with His gifts, as we read in Luther's Small Catechism. We need Christ's Holy Supper to receive His flesh and blood, given for the forgiveness of sins. By these means the Bridegroom, "our dearest treasure" (st. 3), provides heavenly food to refresh our souls and assures us of the abundant life He has planned for us. Through Him, "God's own love . . . has reached us" (st. 3). That is the heavenly joy provided to us by our Bridegroom, Jesus.

"Lord, when You look on us in love, at once there falls from God above a ray of purest pleasure. Your Word and Spirit, flesh and blood refresh our souls with heav'nly food. You are our dearest treasure! Let Your mercy warm and cheer us! O draw near us! For You teach us God's own love through You has reached us." Amen. (LSB 395:3)

JANUARY 8

What joy to know,
when life is past,
The Lord we love is
first and last,
The end and the beginning!
He will one day, oh,
glorious grace,
Transport us to that
happy place

Beyond all tears and sinning!
Amen! Amen!
Come, Lord Jesus!
Crown of gladness!
We are yearning
For the day of Your
returning! (LSB 395:6)

IN THE FINAL STANZA OF THIS GREAT HYMN, PHILIPP NICOLAI GIVES us words to sing and pray of the Christian’s greatest joy. We know that when life here ends, our Lord will “transport us to that happy place beyond all tears and sinning!” Can you imagine an eternity without tears, sickness, disappointments, worries, and concerns? Can you imagine a time and a place where sin and death are forever absent?

Pastor Nicolai lived during a time of plague in the late sixteenth century, at one point having to contend with 170 deaths in his town during a single week—an unimaginable challenge to any pastor in ministering to his people by applying the comfort of the Gospel. Nevertheless, he wrote, “Christ goes with us all the way—today, tomorrow, ev’ry day! His love is never ending!” (st. 5). Jesus is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 22:13). That constant reality, which we grasp only by faith, enables us (with Pastor Nicolai) to look with confidence to our eternal future with Christ, regardless of our circumstances here. This is our certainty, and it is all we need when confronted with the tears and sins of our lives.

Thus, we pray, “Come, Lord Jesus! . . . We are yearning for the day of Your returning!”

“O let the harps break forth in sound! Our joy be all with music crowned, our voices gladly blending! For Christ goes with us all the way—today, tomorrow, ev’ry day! His love is never ending! Sing out! Ring out! Jubilation! Exultation! Tell the story! Great is He, the King of Glory!” Amen. (LSB 395:5)

JANUARY 9

Why lies He in such mean estate
 Where ox and ass are feeding?
 Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
 The silent Word is pleading.
 Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
 The cross be borne for me, for you;
 Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
 The babe, the son of Mary! (LSB 370:2)

FOR SOME PEOPLE, CHRISTMAS SONGS CONJURE IMAGES OF snowflakes and goodwill. But many Christmas hymns do not shy away from key words like *sin*, *death*, *blood*, or *cross*—because those words are critical to the biblical story of what our God did. The writers of such hymns state what happened in Bethlehem and what was at stake in this birth, vividly telling of what God did, is doing, and will do.

William Dix’s “What Child Is This” is a wonderful example. “Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, the cross be borne for me, for you.” It is incredible that this carol is so popular when it is so raw and accurate concerning who Jesus is and that He came to die! Dix even dares to use the term *sinners*. Many people avoid words like *sin* and *sinners*, considering such words judgmental and off-putting, particularly to those who are not believers. But the world is filled with sinners, and thanks be to God that this birth happened to save sinners—to save *us*. God acted because we needed Him to act. “Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!”

“Come from on high to me; I cannot rise to Thee. Cheer my wearied spirit, O pure and holy Child; through Thy grace and merit, blest Jesus, Lord most mild, draw me unto Thee! Draw me unto Thee!” Amen. (LSB 386:2)

JANUARY 10

The only Son from heaven,
Foretold by ancient seers,
By God the Father given,
In human form appears.
No sphere His light confining,
No star so brightly shining
As He, our Morning Star. (LSB 402:1)

E LISABETH CRUCIGER WAS A DEAR FRIEND OF MARTIN AND KATIE Luther, and she wrote this rich text about the brightly shining Morning Star now appearing in human form. Martin Luther realized, quite early on in the Reformation, that hymns in the vernacular gave Gospel truths directly to the hearts and minds of the saints. Therefore, he encouraged his friends to write these needed hymns, and Cruciger followed his advice.

All the hymns from the earliest days of the Reformation are filled with doctrine, including this one. They clearly and powerfully articulate the Gospel and thus could not be richer. And this was so needed! *What God has done* (Gospel) was in direct contrast and opposition to the dominant presence of *what we must do* (Law) that surrounded Luther at that time. The people had to be taught the difference! In the hymns that resulted, there were no throwaway words or ideas. Too much was at stake in churchly singing to waste time on fluff.

The light of Jesus Christ shines brightly in the days of Epiphany, and the light of the Gospel shined brightly in the days of the Reformation.

“O Lord, our hearts awaken to know and love You more, in faith to stand unshaken, in spirit to adore, that we, through this world moving, each glimpse of heaven proving, may reap its fullness there. O Father, here before You with God the Holy Ghost and Jesus, we adore You, O pride of angel host: before You mortals lowly cry, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, O blessed Trinity!’”
Amen. (LSB 402:3–4)