

Morning has Broken by Eleanor Farjeon, 1931

“Morning has broken” appeared first in the USA in the Presbyterian *Hymnbook* (1955), but it was not until Cat Stevens (now Yusuf Islam) sang it on his triple platinum album *Teaser and the Firecat* in 1971 that the song became well known and, as a result, has been included in most hymnals since that time. This is a rare, though not unique, example of a Christian hymn receiving acclaim through the popular media.

Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965) was born in Westminster, London, England. She was the daughter of a novelist and had around 80 works to her credit. Farjeon received several awards for her literary efforts including the Carnegie Medal, the Hans Christian Anderson International Medal, and the Regina Medal.

UM Hymnal editor Carlton Young notes that the “text effectively links and expresses the creation stories in Genesis 1 and John 1, and reminds us that each new day is a gift from God.” The morning sings in the sounds of the blackbird—an echo of the “Word” or the voice of the Incarnation itself.

The second stanza closes with a reference to God walking in Eden through the garden - “where his feet pass.” This is an echo of Genesis 3:8: “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” There is, however, no hint in this idyllic account of the fall of humanity that follows in that verse.

The final stanza personalizes this experience. “Mine is the sunlight! Mine is the morning.” We share in the freshness and possibility of the “one light Eden saw play.” Our response is to “Praise with elation” for “God’s re-creation of the new day.”

At first glance, this “Morning has broken” may seem naïve in our current polluted environment of waning fresh water supplies, greenhouse gases and smog. Unlike the earlier days of the 20th century when Farjeon penned this poem, we now know that the earth’s resources are limited and its beauty is ours to preserve and foster. Yet, we all dream for a day when the beauty of the earth may be restored and that the rising of the morning sun will be a symbol of hope where all will share in the earth’s abundance.

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Psalm 63

- ¹ O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.
- ² **So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.**
- ³ Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
- ⁴ **So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.**
- ⁵ My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
- ⁶ when I think of you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
- ⁷ **for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.**
- ⁸ **My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.**
- ⁹ But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
- ¹⁰ **they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.**
- ¹¹ But the king shall rejoice in God;
**all who swear in God’s name shall glory,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.**

Isaiah 55: 1-9

¹ “Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.

Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.

² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

³ Incline your ear, and come to Me.

Hear, and your soul shall live;

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.

⁴ Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people,
A leader and commander for the people.

⁵ Surely you shall call a nation you do not know,
And nations *who* do not know you shall run to you,
Because of the LORD your God,
And the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.”

⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,

For He will abundantly pardon.

⁸ “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD.

⁹ “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

1 Corinthians 10: 1-13

¹ Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.