

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy by Joseph Hart, 1759

The invitation hymn “Come, ye sinners, poor and needy” dates from 1759, when it was published in Joseph Hart’s *Hymns Composed on Various Subjects* under the title “Come, and welcome, to Jesus Christ.”

The original opening line, “Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched,” was modified by Augustus Toplady, the 18th-century author of “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me.”

Hart (1712-1768) was born in London, where he became an independent Calvinist preacher converted by the Moravians. This hymn never made it into any of the collections published by John and Charles Wesley, perhaps because Hart was critical of one of John Wesley’s sermons.

UM Hymnal editor Carlton Young notes that Hart’s “hymns ranked with those of Isaac Watts in popularity among independent hymn writers” of his day—quite a compliment.

Later in the 19th century, Ira D. Sankey, the musical partner of evangelist Dwight L. Moody, included this hymn in his famous *Gospel Hymns, Nos. 1 to 6 Complete* (1894), ensuring its popularity in Sunday schools and revival settings.

The anonymous refrain, beginning with “I will arise and go to Jesus,” makes a rather oblique reference to the parable of the Prodigal Son. The refrain was found in Southern hymnbooks as early as 1811.

The text may be partly an autobiographical commentary on Hart’s own spiritual journey. Mr. Reynolds notes that Hart “received an excellent education and, because of his knowledge of the classics and languages, became a highly esteemed teacher.”

For a number of years he drifted from the faith of his family, and by his own confession became a “loose backslider, an audacious apostate, and a bold-faced rebel.”

In 1757, at the age of 45, he experienced a spiritual awakening after attending a service at a Moravian chapel in London. During the two years that followed his renewal, he wrote many hymns marked by earnestness and love for Christ.

Dr. Hawn is professor of sacred music at Perkins School of Theology.

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Psalm 32

¹ Blessed are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

² **Blessed are those to whom the LORD does not hold guilty,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

³ When I did not declare my sin, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ **For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;

**I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”
then you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

⁶ Therefore let those who are godly
offer prayer to you;

**at a time of distress, the rush of great waters
shall not reach them.**

⁷ You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you encompass me with deliverance.

⁸ **I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**

⁹ Do not be like an unruly horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle.

¹⁰ **Many are the pangs of the wicked;
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.**

¹¹ Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous;
shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸ Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not ^[a]imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

St. Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

¹ Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." ³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

"A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to *his* father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.' So he divided to them *his* livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*.

¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.' "

²⁰ "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

²⁸ "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to *his* father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

³¹ "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "