

## Devotion

Good Friends of Crete UMC,

I've always been an early riser. It's both a blessing and a curse. I'm awake with the first bird call which means it's just beginning to dawn. The skies are clear today, so with cup of coffee in hand, I went out onto the back patio to watch the sun rise over the hills and fields to the east.

"How Great Thou Art" is a hymn that comes often to my lips, as it did this morning. I grew up in what used to be called the Swedish Covenant Church and we sang it with gusto, often with a verse or two in Swedish, no less. The poem was written by a Swedish pastor named Carl Boberg. The story goes that one day he was caught in a thunderstorm on the southern coast of Sweden. The violence of the storm followed by the return of the sun and the singing of birds left him falling to his knees in awe. Soon he penned the nine stanzas of the original version in Swedish. Several years later, Boberg unexpectedly heard his poem sung by a congregation to an old Swedish folk melody. The same tune sung today. (For the rest of the story you can go to <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/history-of-hymns-how-great-thou-art>)

When Billy Graham was asked why he used the song so much at his crusades, he said this:

"It glorifies God. It turns Christians' eyes toward God rather than upon themselves. I use it as often as possible because it is such a God-honoring song."

And I think he was right. The atmosphere shifts and if only for that moment, whispering How Great Thou Art to the sunrise this morning, (in the words of the Venerable Bede) "I was no longer the center of my life and therefore I could see God in everything".

Especially today, we need those moments, dear friends. Attached is a link to a video of our Director of Music, Brenda Kenyon singing "How Great Thou Art", accompanied by her husband, Paul. Click to watch <https://youtu.be/0XMN-z7v7uo>. Let's gather around this song together, turning our eyes from ourselves, the storms that assail and to our great God, for "The same God who is over the storms, who created the hills and the valleys, comes down to be our helper. The same God who spoke the mountains into existence, who knit us together in our mothers' wombs, sent His own Son to take our place on the cross. And that same God will come again one day to make all things right (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Yours in storm and sun, Pastor Kristen

Below are the words to "How Great Thou Art":

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made,  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:  
Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:

How great thou art! How great thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:  
How great thou art! How great thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,  
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

Refrain

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,  
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin.

Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
Then I shall bow in humble adoration,  
And there proclaim, My God, how great thou art!

## **Music:**

Click the underline blue line to watch video—

How Great Thou Art <https://youtu.be/0XMN-z7v7uo>