



# Hymn of The Week

October 30, 2020

## Reflection by Nan Schaefer on "Come, Labor On"

#719 in Covenant's *Glory to God* Hymnal

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"At this time of year, as the corn, soybeans, and other crops are being harvested, the hay and alfalfa have been rolled and stacked or laid under the white plastic tarps, everywhere you look the harvest continues. And God's words to each servant: 'Go work today.'"

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I love so many of our hymns, including many of the contemporary ones we have been learning with the New Day Band. However, this hymn had a very special meaning for me three particular times in my life--when I was pregnant and overdue! Please, labor, come ON!

But seriously, it speaks to me in many ways, especially as I get older. The beautiful words of "Who dares stand idle on the harvest plain, while all around us waves the golden grain?" At this time of year, as the corn, soybeans, and other crops are being harvested, the hay and alfalfa have been rolled and stacked or laid under the white plastic tarps, everywhere you look the harvest continues. And God's words to each servant, "Go work today."

The second verse speaks about the calling we all have "To young and old the gospel gladness bear." I have always gotten a sense of urgency from the words "Redeem the time, its hours too swiftly fly. The night draws nigh."

And in this time of COVID, the third verse send us a strong message. "Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fears. No arm so weak but may do service here; Though feeble agents, may we all fulfill God's righteous will."



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"This verse is reassuring to us—we will be rewarded for our labors when they are concluded. However, I still like the last verse in our hymnal the best—"Well done, well done."

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As I am now solidly in the fall of my life, I hear extra poignancy in the fourth verse in the hymnal: "Come, labor on. No time for rest till glows the western sky. Till the long shadows o'er our pathway lie, And a glad sound comes with the setting sun, 'Well done, well done.'" I hope to hear that assurance when my life's work is finished.

The hymn was written by Jane Borthwick in 1859 and revised to its current text in 1863. It was based on the Bible verse, "Well done, good and faithful servant" from Matthew 25:23. As I read about it online, I found the full text of it, including a couple of verses not included in our hymnal. The final one in the version I found was this: "Come, labor on! The toil is pleasant, the reward is sure; Blessed are those who to the end endure; How full their joy, how deep their rest shall be, O Lord, with Thee!"

This verse is reassuring to us--we will be rewarded for our labors when they are concluded. However, I still like the last verse in our hymnal the best--"Well done, well done."