

Hymn of the Month is a worship-focused initiative of the Salem Hellers Music Ministry. Worship is the most important thing we do; as part of our efforts to enrich and deepen our worship, each month we will focus on a less familiar or more recently composed song or hymn that we hope will become appreciated and loved by our congregation. We will explore different ways to introduce and incorporate these songs throughout the month; we want to help you become comfortable with them. May we grow together in faith as we learn these theologically rich hymns and join our voices in corporate worship.

Listen to a recording of this month's hymn on our new website at www.salemhellers.com. Look for *Hymn of the Month* in the Worship tab menu and click on "visit the download page".



32 *These Great Things*
November 2025

1

*How can it be this truth divine
declared by God above?
That all things by His grand design
work good for us by love.*

2

*Called by our Lord in purposed ends
no tragedy shall win;
No curse for those He calls His friends;
He saved us from our sins.*

3

*Foreknown by Him with hearts made new,
to His Son we conform.
No pow'r on earth can this undo
for those He's made reborn.*

4

*First He did choose and called He then
to surely justify;
For those of the faith beyond our ken
He soon will glorify.*

Chorus

*What shall we say
to these great things of mystery sublime?
That if He is for us, we can sing,
now and for all time.*

The Story Behind the Hymn: Theologian R.C. Sproul was inspired to write hymns after traveling to Eastern Europe. As he worshipped with non-English speaking congregations, he realized the familiar melodies of the great hymns of the faith enabled a unified experience in worship despite the language barrier. Concurrent with his interest in the revival of Reformation truth, he desired to write "theologically rich music to encourage and equip the church." Although Sproul is widely known as a preacher and teacher, few are aware that he was an amateur musician with experience in violin and piano.

The Words: Sproul points to Martin Luther's view that "next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." Sproul advocates for the singing of hymns as a means of communicating Biblical truth and states: "Music and hymns are biblical; the Psalms are the hymnbook of the Old Testament." Pastor Tim Challies affirms "good theology sung well renews our minds, comforts our souls, and encourages us in the work of the kingdom. Our generation must recapture the church's historic conviction that its anthems and hymns are not indifferent matters; it is our responsibility to show the coming generations what good theology looks like in song."

The Music: Composer Jeff Lippencott is best known for his television and movie scores. Disappointed by the declining inclusion of hymns in worship services, he offered to set Sproul's hymn texts to music. As a Christian, Lippencott writes all music for the glory of God, but through his collaboration with Sproul he had the freedom to express his faith through the music he wrote. His priority was to make the lyrical content singable and memorable. He states "there is something that music does that can't be expressed in a book. It goes somewhere deeper. With hymns, we try to express ourselves, with the Lord's help, through songs and let those melodies and lyrics draw us closer to the Lord." Sproul affirmed Lippencott's efforts: "One of the things that I have loved about working with Jeff is that when I write lyrics, he gets them. The music he created translated the lyrics without distortion and enhanced them. His music takes the sweetness of the truth to a whole different level." Both men hope that for many years to come, people will hear the biblical truth of this hymn and will be blessed by it.