

IT IS WELL
February 27, 2011 – Music Ministry Sunday – John 6: 16-21
The Church of the Covenant

Today is Music Ministry Sunday where we thank God for the gift of music and praise and the people who share their gifts of music and praise with us each Sunday. Music has the power to open our souls and our hearts. Music sung to God has not only the power to open our souls and our hearts but to pour God into those souls and hearts. No music is composed in a vacuum; no hymn is written by its author just sitting down and deciding to write words. Great hymnody comes out of the crucible of life; it is forged in the vicissitudes of life and the victories of faith. Such is our final hymn today, written by Horatio Spafford, "It is Well with My Soul".

In November 1873 Horatio intended to travel to England to follow D. L. Moody and Ira Sankey in their Evangelistic crusade. He booked passage on the steamship Ville du Havre; the hymn tune is named for the steamship. At the last minute an urgent matter detained Horatio Spafford in New York and he sent his family, wife Anna, and four daughters, Maggie, Tanetta, Annie and Bessie, on ahead. During the wee hours of the night on November 22, 1873 the steamship struck another boat and the sea water poured in. The Ville du Havre tilted dangerously; screams, oaths and prayers merged into a nightmare of unmeasured terror. Passengers clung to posts, tumbled through darkness, and were swept away by the leviathan of the deep. Watery chaos is always a biblical image of the opposite of God. Loved ones fell from one another's grasp into the swirling deep. And within two hours, before rescue could occur, the mighty ship plunged beneath the waves awaiting that day when the sea shall give up its dead. The 226 fatalities included all four of Spafford's daughters; his wife survived but wished she hadn't. She telegraphed him from Wales a cable with two words only—"Saved alone." He immediately booked passage on another ship to join his grieving wife. The captain called him aside at one point and said, "I believe we are now passing over the point where the Ville du Havre went down." Spafford went to his cabin and prayed in his inconsolable grief—and finally prayed "It is well; it is well with my soul; the will of God be done." (from "Then Sings My Soul", by Robert J. Morgan, p. 185) It is one thing on a bright and sunny day to sing "It is well". It is quite another thing to sing "It is well with my soul" on the worst day of one's life. It brings new depth of meaning to line in his hymn, does it not, "When sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, It is well with my soul...."???????

Another boat; another story. Jesus' disciples went down to the sea and got in a boat and set out to Capernaum. It was dark. *"The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing."* (John 6: 18) Out in the middle of the sea billows rolling they are afraid. They are afraid that the sea might suck them down in the watery vortex of darkness and nothingness. It is then they see Jesus walking on the water and drawing near the boat. They are now doubly afraid—afraid of the chaos; afraid of the Creator. But Jesus says to them, the calm in His voice in stark contrast to the chaos of the sea, *"It is I...do not be afraid."* (John 6: 20) And their fears dissipated even as did the wind and the waves; they are calm and at peace. How does one say "It is well with my soul" on the darkest of days, when sorrow like sea billows roll? Because it is precisely then that Jesus comes, in a miraculous way perhaps, He comes and His presence makes us WELL and His presence comforts us and comforts our SOUL. He reaches out to us in love and speaks to our heart and says in the midst of the storm, *"It is I"*, It is I who love you, It is I who come to you, It is I who seek you out in the midst of your pain, STORM, It is I, It is I, It is I...Be NOT AFRAID...It is well with my soul when Jesus comes and reminds me in His presence there is nothing to fear...Amen.

By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!

