

Behind the Hymn: The Promise

I've often written new texts for familiar Christmas tunes that have no accessible Christian text. My goal has always been to make the new text feel like it belongs to the melody. To do that, I've usually tried to maintain the flavor of the original text and tune. For example:

Love Has Come! ("Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella")

Infinite Lord ("Coventry Carol")

Light Is Shining All Around ("Ding, Dong, Merrily on High")

Partners in the Mystery ("Good King Wenceslas")

Deck the Halls

Here We Come Rejoicing ("Here We Come A-wassailing")

Jesus ("Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring")

On Christmas Day ("I Saw Three Ships")

The Flower ("Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming")

The Lamb of Christmas ("The Friendly Beasts")

Our local church, Kansas City First Church of the Nazarene, had an annual "hanging of the greens" service on the Sunday evening after Thanksgiving. Our minister of music, Danny Steele, would always sing "The Holly and the Ivy". The tune seemed attractive, but the text never spoke to me.

So in December, 1993, I began work on a new text for the tune. The scripture that I worked from had long intrigued me: *No matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ* (2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV). But the hymn didn't come easily. I eventually laid my notes aside and didn't come back to them until Advent of 1995, almost two years later. "The Promise" was then completed on December 14, 1995.

The truth expressed in the hymn still moves me. All God's promises, all His loving purposes, all His magnificent plans for us are fulfilled in Jesus Christ! *Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!* (2 Corinthians 9:15, NIV).

--Ken Bible

Hymn: [The Promise](#)