

Oh, How Blest Are Ye Whose Toils Are Ended

TLH 589, *O Wie Selig*

Holy Mother Church has used this hymn for approximately 375 years (Simon Dach wrote it in 1635) on solemn occasions such as this (Commemoration of all the Parish Faithful Departed, *Todtenfest*, traditionally the Last Sunday of the Church Year). In it can be felt all the tenderness, happiness, and quiet confidence which fill her heart as she thinks of those who are now at rest in the Lord. The verses for the Faithful (1,3,5,7,9,11) were translated from the German by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1845; the Responses of the blessed Dead (2,4,6,8,10,12), for the Soloist or Choir, were translated from the German in 1945 by Zion's Third Pastor, the sainted Rev. Kenneth E. Runge.

Oh, how blest are ye whose toils are ended.
Who through death have unto God ascended!
Ye have arisen
From the cares which keep us still in prison.

*Truly, we to glory have arisen
From all cares that held us in a prison,
Earthly toil ended,
We unto our God are now ascended.*

We are still as in a dungeon living,
Still oppressed with sorrow and misgiving;
Our undertakings
Are but toils and troubles and heartbreakings.

*We no more as in a dungeon wander;
God has taken us to Heaven yonder.
Tears and frustrations
Are the sum of earthly expectation.*

Ye meanwhile are in your chambers sleeping,
Quiet and set free from all your weeping;
No cross or sadness
There can hinder your untroubled gladness.

*Oh, our destiny, how blest! How wond'rous
To be free from earthly pain so pond'rous!
Naught but rejoicing
Fills us now, our thanks and praises voicing.*

Christ has wiped away your tears forever;
Ye have that for which we still endeavor;
To you are chanted
Songs that ne'er to mortal ears were granted.

*Ah, what words, what language might we borrow
To describe our freedom from all sorrow!
Naught else but singing
Of the Angels in our ears is ringing!*

Ah, who would then not depart with gladness
To inherit heav'n for earthly sadness?
Who here would languish
Longer in bewailing and in anguish?

*In the world man's heart is torn with anguish,
Constantly his soul in pain must languish;
But Jesus' merit,
Death a door has made, Life to inherit.*

Come, O Christ, and loose the chains that bind us;
Lead us forth and cast this world behind us.
With Thee, th' Anointed,
Find the soul its joy and rest appointed.

*Dearest friends, we say farewell with gladness;
May our death not cause you grief and sadness.
By Christ invited,
Someday we again shall be united!
Amen.*