Elements of Worship: Gospel Hymns (I Will Arise)  
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Chance to debrief on elements of Sunday worship. Sarum Prayer, Communion. Today, a gospel hymn, *I Will Arise* (Come Ye Sinners)

Elements of worship connect us to spiritual ancestors, glimpse into what moved them—their pain, sorrows, hopes, joys, wisdom, experience of God. In a culture with attention span of a fruit fly, its good to dip our canoes into a stream that goes back to Abraham & Sarah and a more nameless beyond.

A “gospel hymn”—simpler lyrics, feeling based, invitational, catchy (often lifted from bar tune of day). Not stately like Episcopal hymns. Found in African-American heritage hymnal, Methodist hymnal, Baptist hymnals. Gospel hymns came out of evangelical revivals: Great Awakening in Revolutionary War era, 2nd Great Awakening of Civil War. This written by an 18th Century Brit who came to faith age 45 after hard living, which meant getting pickled in the gin houses. Anti-slavery movement arose in this period fueled by revival. Picked up by American revivalists.

I love hymn’s vision of us as sinners. Often a word used to conjure guilt-shame (something to do with sex): finger-wagging moralistic, but in biblical languages, simply missing mark. Only a narcissist unable to identify with this part of our humanity.

Listen to the words used to describe this condition:

\[ V_1 \text{ Come ye sinners, poor & needy, Weak & wounded, sick & sore} \]
\[ V_3 \text{ Come ye weary, heavy-laden, Lost and ruined by the fall} \]

Every descriptive word evokes sympathy not moralistic outrage. Even ruined (in urban dictionary “really bleeping drunk”) is “ruined by the fall”—something we share with all people.

We sing songs to enter and own feelings. We don’t just have the feeling, then sing the song. Our feelings are often unfocused, conflicting, chaotic, hard to identify. We sing songs to enter and own feelings with more clarity, less chaos. A way of naming them.
What a benefit to enter and own this feeling! Knowing ourselves, accepting ourselves in our weakness, woundedness, and need and doing so sympathetically, without the wagging finger of blame—

Like any occupation, mine requires artfulness at times. Like when I see someone hurting and have to say: it’s time to get some help with this thing you’re struggling with. (male-pattern maleness)

When you’re the one struggling like that, you know the resistance feeling. Where does it come from? Shame & self-blame.

Animals frequently hide their weakness, wounds, injuries: Per Dr. Humphries, resident Vet: It’s called "masking symptoms" and it is the reason why with exotic pets (anything other than a dog or cat) they are often dying before you even realize they are sick. We see this in large herbivores like horses, who also are convinced that something will eat them at any moment. With dogs, what I see in the office all the time is the lameness the owner is concerned about disappears when they are in a stressful situation like the exam room - that's probably the same process of symptom masking.

Got my own examples! Depression after dad’s death. Follow up calls from hospice to care for caregivers. I ignore the calls. Nancy picks up one of the calls, they want to talk to me, I’m signaling “I’m not home!” and she says, “He’s right here and needs to talk to you.” Hands me the phone as I grind my teeth at her.

In 2015, once blue ocean planted, I knew I should get some serious counseling to process all this. I circled around that like a dog who can’t find a spot to lie down. Took months to ask for a referral, then months to make the call. Nothing but helpful.... Some of you noticed I was having hearing loss before I did. You normalize to your own normal and most thing sneak up slowly on us. It took my sister getting these, telling me how much difference it made. Then months of revving up to make the call? Beneath all that, hearing aid stigma.
I waited way too long to get financial planning help for retirement. Why? Embarrassed I hadn’t done a better job planning for it.

Come ye weary, heavy-laden Lost and ruined by the fall
If you tarry until you’re better You will never come at all
Right? Exactly!

Not a whiff of moralistic finger wagging in this song.
There no appeal to conscience for example.
In fact, conscience is only mentioned as a possible obstacle.

Let not conscience make you linger, Nor of fitness fondly dream

A nagging conscience can become its own obstacle as we caught up in a cycle of beating ourselves up and feeling we deserve it.

Let not conscience make you linger Nor of fitness fondly dream
all the fitness he requires, Is to feel your need of him

This is AA wisdom, right here.
All the fitness he requires is to feel your need of him.
In AA, all that’s required is the desire to stop drinking.

Inside we’re a congress of competing voices: stern, demeaning, lax, apathetic, mean, kind, judgmental. The loudest voices are often not the wisest. Often the gentlest voices are wisest.

We sing this song in order amplify those saner-wiser-kinder voices and to drown out the mean-demanding-judgmental ones.

We sing this song to enter and own the feelings that lead to life.
What do we need in that state of resistance due to shyness, embarrassment, pride, shame, self-blame?
We need the chorus, baby!

*I will arise and go to Jesus! He will embrace me in his arms. And in the arms of my dear savior, O there are 10,000 charms!*

10,000 Charms! That’s a charm for every situation. You’re not gonna get some standard off the shelf help. 10,000 charms!

I love this phrase. The sector of Christianity that this song came from doesn’t like magic. Your Baptist great-grandmother would freak out if she saw a picture of a Ouija board. Yet the word charms has that connotation—an exotic-magic vibe.

There it is: *in arms of my dear savior, O there are 10K charms!*
ATTRACT, ALLURE, CHARM, CAPTIVATE, FASCINATE, ENCHANT

It’s the language of romance, isn’t it? *In the arms of my dear savior, O there are 10,000 charms!*

Things come out of the evangelical heart in song that are not allowed in the evangelical mind. A man, John Hart, wrote these words: *in the arms of my dear savior, O there are 10,00 charms!*

This sharp gender-binary so much religion wants to assert, defend, prop up—it’s passing away. In worship we’re moving into the realm beyond gender binary.

A straight man can sing this—I feel romantic yearnings for my dear savior, though literally it’s a gay-man lyric.

Ah the subversive nature of worship, and of art, of this song.

*I will arise and go to Jesus, he will embrace me in his arms, and in the arms of my dear savior, O there are 10,000 charms!*
Close by letting Sue Brokaw bear witness to the effect of this song in her late husband Caleb’s last days especially. Caleb had this kind of romantic love for his dear savior. The Jesus Caleb knew is the Jesus I want to know.

A word about Caleb-Sue-Evie

_Caleb had a really nice singing voice and always used it cheerfully to participate in singing in church regardless of whether he liked the music. In fact when we first attended the “church that shall not be named” about eight years ago, he was feeling critical of the music and was having difficulty participating when he felt the Holy Spirit say “acquiesce.” From then on, he always did just that during the music part of worship and never regretted it.

We were introduced to the hymn "Come Ye Sinners" through Blue Ocean, where it was sung as part of worship many times in 2015, the year Caleb experienced a major decline in health due to lung cancer. In the days before his death, Caleb was asked what he wanted done at his memorial service, and after brief consideration, he asked for this song as part of it. Conversation during those days was difficult for him, with tumors pressing on his vocal chords and making it hard for him to speak, so I did not ask why he chose it. It seemed clear enough, and I assumed the choice was for the following two reasons. The first was that he understood what it meant to be “weak and wounded, sick and sore” and that the arms of Jesus indeed seemed like a welcoming place to someone who was completely weary with fighting illness. He knew that in the days to come he would be going “somewhere,” and the idea that he could arise and go to Jesus was inviting, even empowering, since "arising and going" anywhere had become quite difficult too. The second reason I believe this song appealed to him was the salvation message it has for all of us that no matter what place we are in, whether wounded, weary, or even tarrying until we are better, Jesus has compassion, love, and power to meet us. I saw Caleb experience mysterious comfort from Jesus during his illness, and this song expresses that comfort.

QUIET REFLECTION
Take a moment to regard yourself with kindness as this song is inviting us to do.

Take a moment to identify some aspect of your humanity that could be described with words like weak, wounded, sick and sore, weary, heavy-laden.

30 seconds

Now instead of saying, “I am feeling discouraged about my marriage….or I am feeling lonely….or I am distressed by this that or the other. Say, your name….

Come ye sinners, poor and needy
Weak and wounded, sick and sore
Jesus ready stands to save you
Full of pity, love, and power

Come ye thirsty, come and welcome
God's free bounty glorify
True belief and true repentance
Every grace that brings you nigh

Chorus: I will arise and go to Jesus
He will embrace me in His arms
In the arms of my dear Saviour
Oh, there are ten thousand charms

Come ye weary, heavy-laden
Lost and ruined by the fall
If you tarry until you're better
You will never come at all
Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream
all the fitness he requires
Is to feel your need of him