

“Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee” ~ Henry J. van Dyke

This hymn is generally considered by hymnologists to be one of the most joyous expressions of hymn lyrics in the English language. Its author, Henry van Dyke, was born at Germantown, Pennsylvania, on November 10, 1852. During his lifetime he was recognized as one of the greatest Presbyterian preachers and leading liturgy figures in this country. He also served as a professor of literature at Princeton University from 1900-1923, was the moderator of his denomination, became a Navy chaplain during World War I, and represented his country as an ambassador to Holland and Luxembourg appointed by President Wilson. He was a prolific writer of devotional material with many of his books being best sellers. The text for this hymn was written while van Dyke was a guest preacher at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts. It is said that one morning van Dyke handed the manuscript to the college president, saying, “Here is a hymn for you. Your mountains (the Berkshires) were my inspiration. It must be sung to music of Beethoven’s “Hymn of Joy.” It was first published in van Dyke’s Book of Poems, third edition, published in 1911. The tune, “Hymn of Joy,” comes out of the final movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, composed from 1817-23, and published in 1826. Although Beethoven never wrote a tune specifically for a hymn text, a number have been adapted from his many famous works. This is the most widely used of these adopted hymn tunes. It was first adapted for a hymnal by Edward Hodges, an English organist who served the Trinity Church in New York City.

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!*

*All Thy works with joy surround Thee, earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee, center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in Thee.*

*Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother, all who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.*

*Mortals, join the happy chorus, which the morning stars began;
Father love is reigning o'er us, brother love binds man to man.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us Sunward in the triumph song of life.*