



March 18, 2026

MESSENGER

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“AND ARE WE YET ALIVE?”

Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was the author of some of the Church's classic hymns, such as *“O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing,” “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”* and *“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.”* Actually, he may be the most prolific hymn-writer of all time, credited with more than 6,000 titles, most of which are lost and forgotten.

I've personally just discovered one of his songs that is well-known as an opening worship hymn in traditional Methodist circles: **“And Are We Yet Alive?”** It's sung to the tune we use for *“Blest Be the Tie that Binds.”*¹ The lyrics celebrate the simple wonder of awakening to one more day of life. This was something I took for granted when I was younger, but as an old dude, I identify with it more each new morning I open my eyes. I'd like to meditate with you on Wesley's insights.

First, it may seem odd to begin a hymn with the word *“And.”* However, this wasn't uncommon for Wesley; I found eighteen of his hymns that begin with the word *“And,”* including his well-known *“And Can It Be that I Should Gain.”* I think it reflects the fact that Wesley saw all human life as a **continuity**, rather than a series of mini-dramas. When a church congregation sings it at the opening of a worship service, they're reflecting on their spiritual journey since the week before. In fact, they're connecting with all the generations of worshipping believers who have passed their Christian faith on to them. For me, it's comforting to know that the beginning or ending of my Christian life is only a tiny blip on the history of God's work on earth. There was an *“and”* at the start of my life, when I was born, and there will be another *“and”* at my funeral, when my faith journey will be continued by a new generation.

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Now, consider the six stanzas of the hymn by which Wesley describes the realities he can anticipate for each new day:

(1) *And are we yet alive, and see each other's face?*

Glory and thanks to Jesus give for his almighty grace!

[Seeing each other's face is reassuring; seeing Jesus through worship is an even greater new-day experience.]

(2) *Preserved by power divine to full salvation here,*

Again in Jesus' praise we join and in his sight appear.

[Even though we're still on this earth, we are able to experience "full salvation," as if we were already in his eternal presence.]

(3) *What troubles have we seen, what mighty conflicts past,*

Fightings without and fears within, since we assembled last!

[Just in the past week alone, we've experienced enough hardship to destroy us if we could only depend on our own strength and ability.]

(4) *Yet out of all the Lord has brought us by his love:*

And still he does his help afford and hides our life above.

[We can count on him to come through in the week ahead of us as well, because he's preserving us for "our life above."]

(5) *Then let us make our boast of his redeeming power,*

Which saves us to the uttermost, till we can sin no more.

[Rather than boasting that we are alive one more strength, let's "boast" only in the fact that he is able and willing to save sinners like us.]

(6) *Let us take up the cross till we the crown obtain,*

And gladly reckon all things loss so we may Jesus gain.

[Let's determine to live during the week ahead week realizing that only the things we do for him matter at all; the rest should be thrown away.]

I opened this article by mentioning that I discovered this hymn as an old dude, whose days on earth are numbered. But Charles Wesley actually wrote these words when he was only 42, in the prime of life, four decades before his death. Blessed is the person who learns this lesson early, that every day you wake up should be treasured as a gift from God!

Pastor George Van Alstine

¹ You can listen to this hymn sung at a Sunday morning service at Polk Street United Methodist Church, in Amarillo, TX, with lyrics - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNnAyvgWqKA&list=RDYNnAyvgWqKA&start_radio=1