

# CHURCH MOUSE

Oh I know some of my humanistic (mouse-anistic in mouse speak) associates would say it was coincidence, others would say it was just luck and even those who would say the stars were lined up just right, I know it was an answered prayer. You may remember in the last *Knox Talks* I wished to hear the choir sing the hymn “It Is Well”. Not only did they sing that hymn on the day *Knox Talks* came out, but Phyllis Dobbie included in the bulletin a more detailed biography of Horatio Spafford the author of the hymn, written by James Mumford.

As any Christian knows, the proper response to answered prayer is to give thanks to God. Quite often we neglect to do that because we forget what we asked for, or just plain take it for granted. Although thankfulness is not a fruit of the spirit, it is an indication of a Christian with an appropriate attitude. It is cause for rejoicing. As Pastor Paul pointed out in his April 20th sermon when he was having our youngsters climb on the offering plate (snow saucer), the more we give of ourselves to God, the more joy will enter our lives. He pointed out that the addition to the church was a testimony to the world of our thankfulness, indeed all the churches in our cities and towns are an expression of gratitude to God.

Many hymns have been written expressing thanks but one of the classics is “Now Thank We All Our God” penned by Martin Rinkart. You may remember Pastor Paul gave a brief biography of Rinkart in one of his sermons last year. We also sang the hymn in that service. In case you have forgotten, I’ll give a short biography. He was born on April 23, 1586 in Eilenberg, Saxony, Germany and was ordained to the ministry in the Lutheran Church after graduating from the University of Leipzig. He was called to minister in his home town at the age of thirty-one. He arrived in Eilenberg

just in time for the beginning of the Thirty Years War 1618-1648. The walled city became a haven for refugees and military fugitives. Pestilence and famine became a way of life with a particularly devastating plague in 1637. Rinkart became the last standing minister overseeing up to fifty funerals each day. During these trying times Martin provided food and clothing from his own family and also wrote sixty-six hymns.

“Now Thank We All Our God” was first published in 1644 and the tune written by Johann Cruger was added in a 1647 edition. It soon became the second most sung hymn in Germany right after the number one, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”, written by Martin Luther.

Many of my mouse-anistic acquaintances would consider Rinkart a lunatic, some would even claim he had no right (we need more mice rights) to show any thankfulness because he was acting so un-human to do so. I love how some mice try to control the actions and attitudes of others through the loose interpretation of “rights” and how they should be applied. I know, I know I digress.

Martin Rinkart, like the apostle Paul leaned on his strong faith to carry him through inhuman and devastating times to maintain an attitude of thankfulness. His spirit lives through the hymns we are fortunate enough to enjoy to-day. If he had not left his testimony through music, we would likely never know about his life story and the enduring testimony of faith and gratitude one can only experience through the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Your brother (or maybe sister)-in-Christ,

*your quiet servant  
Churchmouse*

