

Monday - March 21

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)

I will admit it I have it pretty good living in Northern California. On New Year's Day I walked out my front door and was greeted by the sweet scent of daphne flowers in my garden. I can anticipate the advent of spring earlier here than one can in Ohio. Each year as spring approaches, I am again reminded in so many ways that God is with me. And then I remember Robert Browning's optimistic *Pippa's Song*:

*The year's at the spring,
And days at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!*

There are so many flowers that it is impossible to choose a best, and so it is with hymns. But we can have our favorites. One of my favorite hymns is *In the Garden*, written by gospel composer C. Austin Miles in 1912. It describes an intimate encounter with Jesus:

*I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.*

*He speaks and the sound of His voice
Is so sweet the birds hush their singing
And the melody that He gave to me
Within my heart is ringing.*

*And He walks with me
And He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own
And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known.*

I feel safe and at peace as I walk and talk with God in the person of Jesus. I imagine our closeness as He reaches out to hold my hand. Holding a hand is such a wonderful, emotional act of love. I recently held the hand of a dying parent, and it was an unforgettable experience. Blessed be our Lord who lets us know that we are His own, in the deepest and most loving way.

Michael

Prayer: Dear God, thank you for being with us in friendship, intimacy and compassion. Help me to see joy in all Your creation and remember that You are always with me, not in fear but in love. Amen.