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Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart

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Recommended Citation

Schaap, James C., "Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart" (2017). *Faculty Work: Comprehensive List*. 648.
http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/648

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Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart

Abstract

"Something there is about music that won't let go. Dementia robbed my friend's mother of most of her sense, but when her children sang her favorite hymns, she was right there with them."

Posting about hymns of the heart from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/thy-word-have-i-hid-in-my-heart/>

Keywords

In All Things, lectionary, God's Word, songs, music

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Thy Word Have I Hid in My Heart

 [all in allthings.org /thy-word-have-i-hid-in-my-heart/](http://allthings.org/thy-word-have-i-hid-in-my-heart/)

James Calvin Schaap

February 15, 2017

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 119:9-16](#)

[Proverbs 2:1-15](#)

[Matthew 19:1-12](#)

Some say it's the Jesuits, others claim Karl Marx. Who knows who said it first? It's a line you can attribute to just about anyone, someone thoroughly despised or blessedly loved: "Give me a child until he is seven, and I'll give you a man."

Willa Cather claimed that "most of the material a writer works with is acquired before the age of fifteen," a maxim I've always thought on the money—and, of course, it's helpful in reading Nebraska's great early-20th century novelist, who left her beloved red plains but never really departed at all. Her most memorable novels are set right there where she spent her first 15 years.

Something gets in us early on, something that doesn't leave—all of us.

My granddaughter called to ask me some questions for a paper. "Grandpa," she said, "what was school like when you were a boy?"

I mumbled through an answer, nostalgia as far away as the foothills of the Rockies. "Who was your best friend?" "What did you do at recess?" "Did you do any pranks?" "Who was your favorite teacher?"

Cute, huh? But then, I'm her grandpa. Had she asked me for a kidney, I'd have cut it out right then and there.

But neither her questions or my answers drew me back the way a Caring Bridge comment did some time ago, a note from dear friends who are going through tough times, holed up in a hospital a dying loved one is not likely to leave.

"Much of our singing comes from Let Youth Praise Him," my friend wrote, "the songbook many of us grew up with in Christian school."

Like me. I did. I knew by heart the very tunes they were singing in that hospital room.

"Those songs shaped us—shaped our theology and thus our lives," he wrote, and he's right. And then, "Revisiting them after these several decades has been a blessing."

From a thousand miles away I could sing along, and I wouldn't have needed a book.

The high drama of "The Ninety and Nine That Safely Lay" will be in me forever, even though I haven't sung that song since I was twelve. "Far and Near the Fields are Teeming," "Give, Said the Little Stream," "Humble Praises, Holy Jesus"—they're all there; as well as the complete score of one-act play: "Master, The Tempest is Raging." All those songs are just in storage.

Here's one that bounces up from Psalm 119: "Thy word have I hid in my heart/that I might not sin against thee./ That I might not sin/That I might not sin/Thy word have I hid in my heart."

If you're my age, chances are you can't repeat those words without drumming the table or humming along.

Something there is about music that won't let go. Dementia robbed my friend's mother of most of her sense, but when her children sang her favorite hymns, she was right there with them.

I don't know exactly what the psalmist meant when he pledged what he did—God's word hidden away in his heart; but I've got a whole songbook in mine. And I'm certain those tunes will be there when I'm in a bed I won't be leaving, those who love me all around.

I know the songs I'll want sung. The words are here in my heart.