**Name of Class**

**How Lovely Shines the Morning Star– CW 79:1,2,4**

**PREPARATION**

**Objective**

The student will:

1. Discover reasons why we can thank God for being connected to him through faith.
2. Identify ways to stay connected to Jesus.
3. Sing, perform, and associate the tune with the text.

**Materials Needed**

1. *Christian Worship* or a copy of the text of the hymn
2. *Christian Worship Handbook* (optional)
3. Bibles
4. NPH Hymnsoft (optional)
5. Pictures of Philip Nicolai
6. A map of Germany

**Words to Know**

pining

mortals

supernal

**Biblical Connections**

John 15:1-8 (The vine and the branches)

2 Corinthians 5:8

**Key Question**

**Why do we want to be a branch connected to a special “tree?”**

*Without a connection to Jesus, our Morning Star, we die spiritually and spend eternity in hell. When Jesus, our Bridegroom, is connected to us, we are guaranteed life in heaven. Because of this connection, we live a life of good works.*

**LESSON**

**Introduction**

Who likes to garden and landscape? Unfortunately, what sometimes happens to tree branches? (they turn dead, no leaves, just bare, something killed the branch, a bad connection) What do you do with these branches? (cut them down, ugly-looking; taking up needed space) Today, Jesus is going to call you a branch. How nice, huh? As we look at the queen of all hymns (yes, there is a King), **why do we want to be a branch connected to a special “tree?”**

**Background Information**

* Philipp Nicolai wrote both the words and music
* Nicolai wrote this as a pastor in Unna, Germany. See map.
* Bad things happened in his city:
  1. 1400 people died from a plague in about five months
  2. In one week, 170 people died.
  3. In one stretch, Pastor Nicolai did up to 30 funerals per day!
* Listen to what he said amidst all the dying. What can you learn from him?

*“Now has the gracious, holy God most mercifully preserved me amid the dying fomr the dreadful plague, and wondering sapred me beyond all my thoughts and hopes…O Jesus, how I wish that I might speak of Thee in shouts of joy like those of the choirs of angels. O how happy I am to use my thoughts and talents in the service of Thy praise.*

* So respected is this hymn that its nickname is “the queen of chorales”
* The great Bach wrote music with it. Listen.

<http://cyberbrethren.com/2010/01/06/o-morning-star/>

**Stanza 1**

**Words to Know**

pining – longing, obsessed

1. **The following are names given to Jesus. Explain the significance of each name.**

**Morning Star/Light in Judah** – *he is our Light in this world of darkness; he gives us the light of faith to know Jesus*

**Bridegroom** – *Jesus is our groom; we (the church) are his bride; this shows how much Jesus loves us*

**King and Prince of Grace** – *there is no better example of love*

1. **What are some expressions that show God’s greatness?**

*Holy, great and glorious, victorious, filling all the heavenly places*

**Stanza 2**

**Words to Know**

mortals – humans

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1. **Read John 15:1-8. What are we compared to in this section? What is Jesus compared to?**

*We are branches. Jesus is the vine*

1. **Discuss the importance of a branch being connected to the main part of the tree.**

*A branch dies without being connected to its life-source, the vine (the main part of the tree). These branches get cut down because nothing grows on them. If connected, they bear beautiful leaves/fruits, and look healthy.*

1. **True/False. People die if they don’t stay connected to Jesus.**

*True spiritually. As the hymn says, Jesus supplies us life throughout the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word.*

*False physically. Many people don’t know about Jesus but still “live.”*

1. **It says “resting never.” Thinking of what John says about being connected to Jesus, what do you think this means?**

*We can’t wait to show our love and thanks for what he does with us every day. Don’t rest! These good works last until we die.*

**Stanza 4**

**Words to Know**

Supernal – relating to above, heavenly; out of this world

1. **More names for Jesus are given. Explain a time in your life when you will want to be reminded of these wonderful names.**

**Friend** – *answers will vary*

**Eternal (the first and last)** – *answers will vary*

1. **Another ingredient that makes this song the “queen” is when it reminds us that our Lord has no end to him. Draw a representation of this.**
2. **How could Pastor Nicolai be so sure when he says “[Jesus] will take me to that holy place”?**

*God-given faith saves. He buried hundreds in his life. He could remind hundreds of their eternal resting place in heaven.*

1. **Is Pastor Nicolai too excited to die? Explain.**

*No. Perhaps confident is a better word. He is not afraid because he is connected to Jesus, branch to vine.*

1. **Compare Pastor Nicolai to Paul (2 Corinthians 5:8). Do we share the same attitude?**

*Both were ready for heaven when God decided it was time.*

*Although we are young and can’t wait to do many things when we get older, nothing can top our future activities in heaven.*

**Key Question**

**Why do we want to be a branch connected to a special “tree?”**

**Key Summary**

Without a connection to \_\_\_\_\_\_ (Jesus), our Morning Star, we die \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (spiritually) and spend eternity in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (hell). When \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Jesus), our Bridegroom, is connected to us, we are guaranteed life in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (heaven). Because of this connection, we live a life of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (good works).

**Sing the Hymn!**

Accompaniment and voices can be found on the *CD*.

**Prayer**

Dear Jesus, thank you for teaching us about all the saving things you do for us. Your love for us is so great. Keep us strongly connected to you, our Vine. Help us show our love for you in how we live our life. Amen.

**ACTIVITIES**

**Memory**

Memorize stanzas 1,2

**Writing Activity**

*Stay Connected:* You know the importance of taking care of your lawns, flowers, bushes, and the like. Today, you learned the importance of staying connected to Jesus, our vine and branch. Write down specific ways that will help ensure that you have a secure connection with Jesus.

**Visual Activity**

*Picture It:* Let’s review and note important metaphors that can be used with this hymn.

Branch: us

Vine/Tree: Jesus

Gardener: God

Gardener’s Tools: Means of Grace: (the Bible and the Sacraments)

Put these comparisons into some kind of illustration. Use any media form for your illustration.

**Speaking/Listening/Performing**

*Skit:* In groups no smaller than four, perform a short skit that puts the metaphors from activity 3 into action. At least 1 student is needed for the branch, one student for the vine, one student for the gardener, at least one student for the tools. Remember: you can use whatever props you wish to present the information, but be **very clear** on who’s who and what you are doing. Hint: large name tags for individuals and props would be good.

**Cooperative Learning**

See activity four.

**Hymnal Connection**

**Performance Option - tentative**