

*Hymn 635, How Good It Is to Thank the Lord*

The stanzas of the hymn follow along Psalm 92, and it came over into our hymnbook from the 1912 Psalter.

We sing our thanks for God's righteous rule to protect us. In the first stanza, we note the appropriateness of praising God's love and faithfulness and in the second stanza, we thank The LORD for the actions that He has taken. In the third stanza, we reflect on the wicked, who opposed God by their actions, and in the fourth stanza, on the flourishing of the righteous, who trust in God.

In a way, the tune comes to us from the Ukraine. Under the hymn, it tells us that the man who wrote this musical tune was Dimitri Bortniansky, born in 1751 in Glukhov, Ukraine!

When Dimtri Stepanovich Bortniansky was just 8 years old, he joined the choir. His strong talent at the local choir afforded him the opportunity to go to the capital of the Russian empire and sing with the Imperial Chapel Choir in Saint Petersburg, Russia. That put Bortniansky into the rare opportunity to study under the director, a famous Italian composer named Baldassare Galuppi. Later, when that director returned from Russia to Italy, he took the young boy with him back to Italy. Bortniansky studied with the great composer for 10 years; in that time Bortniansky himself become a composer, harpsichordist, and conductor. In fact, while in Italy, Bortniansky composed several operas and other instrumental music. Bortniansky returned to Russia, where he composed more operas and music. In 1796 Bortniansky was himself appointed Director of the Imperial Chapel Choir, becoming the first director who was a native citizen. With such a great choir at his disposal, Bortniansky set to work producing many compositions, more than 100 were religious works, sacred concertos, cantatas, and hymns. He composed in different musical styles, including choral works in French, Italian, Latin, German, and Church Slavonic. Bortniansky influenced Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky! It was Tchaikovsky who edited Bortniansky's sacred work, which was 10 volumes. Bortniansky died in St. Petersburg in 1825. He had been so popular in Russia that a bronze statue was erected in his honor in the Kremlin.

We can be thankful to God for Psalm 92, for this hymn, and for the musical skill of a man born in Ukraine to write the tune by which we sing it.

Let's give thanks to God by singing all four verses of 635, *How Good It Is to Thank the Lord*.