

Where is Andy? Did you know that there is a hymn about Andy and me?

The hymn is "In the garden" the words are: "*Andy walks with me, Andy talks to me.*" And that is called a Mondegreen.

The term mondegreen was originally coined by author Sylvia Wright, and has come to be quite widely used. As a child, Sylvia heard the lyrics of The Bonny Earl of Murray (a Scottish ballad) as: "*Ye highlands and ye lowlands Oh where hae you been? Thou hae slay the Earl of Murray And Lady Mondegreen*"

It eventually transpired that Lady Mondegreen existed only in the mind of Sylvia, for the actual lyrics said that they "slay the Earl of Murray and laid him on the green." And to this day Lady Mondegreen's name has been used to describe all mishearings of this type!

In other hymns and songs of the church we also have mondegreens: "*I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, no turkey man, no turkey man.*" (no turning back, no turning back). But someone misheard it.

Having said that...let us turn our hearts to worship.

CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 33:1-4 (Common English Version)

All you who are righteous, shout joyfully to the LORD!

It's right for those who do right to praise God.

Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre!

Sing praises to him with the ten-stringed harp!

Sing to him a new song! Play your best with joyful shouts!

Because the LORD's word is right, his every act is done in good faith.

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created and you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations, through Christ the Lord, Amen.

LIVING THE WORD

Psalm 33 has 22 verses as do several other Psalms. That is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The poet is suggesting that you need the alphabet to help you spell out the Word of the Lord. The first four verses invites us to sing to God 'a new song.'

That includes being open to Miss. Under Standings. There must also always be a new song, for God is always doing surprising new things. God's Word gives us much to think about, for instance: "Play your best with joyful shouts!"

Life should include playing and life was meant to have laughter... Mondegreens can make us laugh.

One church music director wrote: "Being raised in the church, I might hear a number of hymns sung incorrectly by children since they can't read the hymnal." She shares this one from 'Away in a Manger,' "The cats are lawn mowing the babies throw rakes." Which of course should be 'the cattle are lowing, the baby aways.' We often have to be reminded to laugh by children.

Mondegreens can somehow make sense in the minds of those who are younger. We brag about teaching the children "Jesus Loves Me" as one of their first songs. Yet even simple songs can be misunderstood: One child

continued to sing 'They are wheat, but He is straw.' The misunderstandings can then stick in our heads for there-after every time we sing that hymn.

THE WORD PSALM 33:5-9

He loves righteousness and justice; the LORD's faithful love fills the whole earth.
The skies were made by the LORD's word,
all their starry multitude by the breath of his mouth.

**He gathered the ocean waters into a heap;
he put the deep seas into storerooms.**

**All the earth honors the LORD; all the earth's inhabitants stand in awe of him.
Because when he spoke, it happened! When he commanded, there it was!**

LIVING THE WORD

In verses 4 and 5, the scripture speaks of God's faithful Love. In Hebrew the meaning of the word faithful is 'hesed,' God's loyal-love which creates goodness of heart in all people. God's Word works quietly, continuously and unnoticed, like a flow of thought and movement of power in human lives. It can seldom be captured in moments or dates; it is like the growth of a child. Probably it is best seen in family life. Yet it is new every morning; it is absolutely reliable, and it is to be found everywhere in the whole earth.

Because the psalms often come to us in word pictures and poetic language, we cannot take them too literally. God gathered the ocean waters into a heap? Water is difficult to heap... God put the deep seas into storerooms? We don't really think of the ocean bottom as a great storeroom. But we can understand the intent of the words and take them seriously... the LORD's faithful love fills the whole earth. Heaps and storerooms full!

Mondegreens can ruin a song, they have to be accepted with understanding and care, and then let go as to not keep you from further faith growing through the original intent. One man said : "When the Roll is called up yonder I'll be there" was sung by a me as "When the Road is called a Byonder I'll be there."

"For years, as a little kid, I had been singing this song at church. I could never figure out why anyone would call a road a byonder, and why I'd be there. I was an adult before I realized what the real lyrics were."

Mondegreens can sometimes disturb a child, if they think that there is fearful intent in the words. As when 'Through many dangers, toils and snares' becomes 'Through many dangerous toys and snails.' After that 'Amazing Grace' doesn't feel the same. Here is how it was shared with me:

"This is one of my 3-year-old son's favorite bedtime songs, so when we sang this verse, he asked me if any of his toys were the dangerous ones. I had no idea what he meant until I asked him. He said, "Mommy, we just sang about the dangerous toys and snails in the grace song!" I laughed for so long! It took a while for both of us to get to sleep after that."

With some children it may be ok to laugh, but when it comes to the 'fear factor' it may be best to leave them with the mondegreen, than to correct it – unless of course, they ask. Eventually, they learn when they can read the words for themselves and it is a good story to tell, where they can laugh at themselves, which can also be a healthy adult response.

With the scriptures, we have nothing to fear. We can be in awe of God without being in fear. Verse 9 says that by God's Word things happened. In God's wisdom, the world of nature was created, a never ending mystery that humans continue to explore; God also created and continues to create, history. Which is revealed to us through the Bible,

THE WORD Psalm 33:10-15

The LORD overrules what the nations plan; he frustrates what the peoples intend to do.
But the LORD's plan stands forever; what he intends to do lasts from one generation to the next.
The nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom God has chosen as his possession, is truly happy!

The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees every human being.

From his dwelling place God observes all who live on earth.

God is the one who made all their hearts, the one who knows everything they do.

LIVING THE WORD

In these words we are reminded that God is in control and has more power than anything we can be or create. God speaks to each of us individually and knows us inside and out. In the history of humanity, it is the Bible that reveals to us how we can understand the meaning of our human story.

Even so we can still only know our own story from afar because we are following a long way behind the finger of God in our lives. If God can create, God can also un-create. Any plans we create can be overruled by God's plan. Therefore how blessed are those who learn to follow God's plan, often without understanding, but through faith in their Creator.

Mondegreens can change a life: One of the songs we sang as children was "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam." One child heard it differently and sang "Jesus wants me to use sunscreen." For a child doesn't that make much more sense than asking us to be a sunbeam? Just as parents promote things like sunscreen and Bike helmets for our own benefit, Jesus promotes the sharing of our gifts for the benefit of others and to spread the 'Good News' of God. Jesus wants us to shine in all that we do.

I am not a big fan of Country Music, but my husband and boys are, so it is playing often when I am with them. I began to hear one song that I thought was not too bad. Here is what I heard:

There might be a little dust on the Bible, but don't let it fool ya about what's inside.

There might be a little dust on the Bible, it's one of those things that gets sweeter with time.

She was sittin in the porch swing as I pulled up the driveway.

My ole heart was racing as she climbed inside.

She slid over real close and drove down to the lake road, watched the sun fade in that big red sky.

I reached under the front seat and said, now here's something special.

It's just been waiting for a night like tonight. There might be a little dust on the Bible, but don't let it fool ya about what's inside.

There might be a little dust on the Bible, it's one of those things that gets sweeter with time.

I had to admit to Donald that I had finally heard a decent country western song. He just shook his head and told me it is about a bottle of wine, not the Bible. (*"Dust on the Bottle" Recorded by David Lee Murphy*) So now you know my own personal mondegreen...Because as adults we don't always read the lyrics of the songs we listen to and sing, or catch all of the lyrics as we hear them on the radio, we, too can get caught by Mis. Under Standing.

THE WORD Psalm 33:16-22

Kings aren't saved by the strength of their armies;

warriors aren't rescued by how much power they have.

A warhorse is a bad bet for victory; it can't save despite its great strength.

**But look here: the LORD's eyes watch all who honor him,
all who wait for his faithful love, to deliver their lives¹ from death
and keep them alive during a famine.**

We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield.

Our heart rejoices in God because we trust his holy name.

LORD, let your faithful love surround us, because we wait for you.

LIVING THE WORD

This section of Psalm 33 begins with something that humanity continues to try and deny. Swords or guns, that isn't where the real power comes from. In Jesus final instructions to the disciples as he prepared to send them out he said: *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;"* Matthew 10:28

So God's love is the strongest power. And 'the Lord is our shield.' Understanding may come from the Word for us. We say the words, but are they the right words? Or do we misunderstand? And do we live in faith with the Word? In the last line the psalmist writes: *"LORD, let your faithful love surround us, because we wait for you."* Are we really waiting in our lives for the Lord? This morning was all about the need to pay attention to the Word and the right words, but also to find God's meaning for us in them.

Mondegreens can be more dangerous than toys or snails. I often speak of 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' as I imagine how Charles Wesley might feel about how this hymn that God created through him is played and used today, 300 years later. A pastor shared this: "Well, I was pretty young, and I happened to be singing along at my grandmother's house, when my father started laughing and laughing...he then proceeded to tell all my relatives about it. I had sung: "Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners wreck a child."

The words we use can have many meanings. Sometimes we get the words mixed up and we forget what their real intent was and is. This may not hurt the body, but may damage the soul. "Oh, be careful little mouth what you sing. For the Father up above is looking down – in love. Oh, be careful little mouth what you sing."

I invite you to continue to pay attention to what you are singing. Sometimes we don't even take time to read the words, but often we read or sing them so quickly, that we miss the blessings that are hidden there for us.