

Hymn of the Week

February 17 • Epiphany VI

This Is the First of Songs

Text: *Psalm 1*, para. Richard Leach.

A paraphrase of the first Psalm of David, the first of several paraphrases and free verse done by Richard Leach.

Music: LE COMMANDEMENTS DE DIEU, public domain.

Topics: Song, Word of God

Scriptural reference: Psalm 1

About the author: Richard Leach is a leading contemporary writer of words for hymns. Using traditional forms, he creates striking new texts with biblical and theological integrity. His work is included in hymnals and hymnal supplements from a wide spectrum of denominations including the Church of Scotland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church USA and others; and in many independent hymnals and hymnal supplements. Selah has been publishing collections of his texts since 1995. He is a frequent presenter at conferences of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, and has been called a master of his craft in the review pages of The Hymn Society journal.

Leach describes his writing in this way: "I often write in response to particular Bible passages. I try to tell familiar stories in new ways, or listen to less familiar passages for what they might say to us. I want my hymns to enliven those who sing, to give singers something new which they can make their own."

Publications

Memory, Take the Hand of Hope (Selah, 2000)

Over the Waves of Words (Selah, 1996)

Selah Psalter (Selah, 2001)

Banquet without Walls (Selah, 2009)



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This Is the First of Songs

1 This is the first of songs for sing - ing: hap - py are those who
 2 This is the tree that keeps on grow - ing: life root - ed near the
 3 This is the chaff the winds will scat - ter: all that de - fies the

turn from sin, al - though its paths are walked by
 word of God. Fed by a deep de - light in
 Ho - ly One. God bless - es those whose ways are

ma - ny, in - vi - ting oth - ers to join in.
 scrip - ture, fruit - la - den branch - es spread a - broad.
 right - eous, ris - ing up - on them like the sun.

This Is the First of Songs

This is the first of songs for singing:
happy are those who turn from sin,
although its paths are walked by many,
inviting others to join in.

This is the tree that keeps on growing:
life rooted near the word of God.
Fed by a deep delight in scripture,
Fruit-laden branches spread abroad.

This is the chaff the winds will scatter:
all that defies the Holy One.
God blesses those whose ways are righteous,
rising upon them like the sun.