



Dear Friends,

This Sunday we are welcoming people and their pets to our service! It is our 11th Blessing of the Animals Service, but let me remind you again, this service is for, *"animals that are comfortable being with other animals!"* Please don't bring pets that will be stressed by the experience. (If it is more practical – and comfortable for everyone involved – you are welcome to send me a photograph of your pet by Friday 12pm – or even better – you and your pet together!)

It is hard to separate this service from the hymn, *All Things Bright and Beautiful*. (Some of you will remember its use in the wonderful 1988 RSPCA ad
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vO5qXw-WTDk>.)

This hymn was written by Cecil Frances Alexander, an Anglo-Irish hymnwriter and poet, and published in her *Hymns for Little Children* of 1848.

Some suggest the hymn was inspired by Psalm 104:24-25: *"O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, great and wide; creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great."* Others say it could have been inspired by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: *"He prayeth best, who loveth best; All things great and small; For the dear God who loveth us; He made and loveth all."* There are certainly similarities there! There is also a theory inspiration came from William Paley's *Natural Theology*, published in 1802.

Many of the verses of the hymn have remained unchanged. (You can read Alexander's full text below.) But verse three, *"The rich man in his castle,/The poor man at his gate,"* is no longer included. Some give this lyric a sympathetic reading, saying Alexander was speaking of the equality of rich and poor in the eyes of God. In another text, *Verses for Holy Seasons* (1846), she writes, *"The poor man in his straw-roofed cottage,/The rich man in his*

lordly hall", stating that their prayers to God are of equal importance, "*He listens, and He answers all*". However, Percy Dearmer, editor of *The English Hymnal* (1906), omitted this verse, stating that the words reflected the "*passivity and inertia at the heart of the British Establishment in the face of huge inequalities in Edwardian society*".

The version that we will sing on Sunday has undergone further changes. It includes verses by Brian Black and the compilers of *Together in Song: The Australian Hymn Book II*, and refers to Australian – rather than English - fauna and flora and landscape.

This Sunday, we do not want to sing these words passively or respond to the crisis in our world with inertia but continue to hear in them an invitation to appreciate and care for creation – and praise the Maker! As the hymn concludes, "*How great is God Almighty/who has made all things well.*"

Grace and peace,

Belinda

Original words for Cecil Frances Alexander's *All things bright and beautiful*:

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.*

Each little flower that opens,
Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
He made their tiny wings. *[Refrain]*

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And ordered their estate. *[Refrain]*

The purple-headed mountain,
The river running by,
The sunset and the morning,
That brightens up the sky. *[Refrain]*

The cold wind in the winter,
The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruits in the garden,–
He made them every one: *[Refrain]*

The tall trees in the greenwood,
The meadows where we play,

The rushes by the water,
We gather every day;– *[Refrain]*

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well. *[Refrain]*