

The Holiday Herald

24 December 2018

South Lake Tahoe, California

My Lord!

What A

Morning

Last night's clouds over Lake Tahoe scurry away at the start of a new day. The first four pictures in this newsletter were shot Saturday, 15 December, in El Dorado National Forest, Placer County, within a one-hour period around sunrise, which was at 7:12:05 a.m.

My Lord! What A Morning

When the American slave, whose name didn't survive into history, composed the words to the hymn "My Lord! What a morning," he or she wasn't trying to compose a Christmas carol. It didn't become one for me until last weekend.

I woke up Saturday morning at Lake Tahoe to shoot pictures for this newsletter, dialed in my Pandora Christmas station and drove out in search of snow scenes.

What I got was a sunrise that would not be ignored. So I didn't. I turned off Pandora and sang the hymn instead.



Wherever I go to create these newsletters, there's always a plan for what I might do. Sometimes I follow it.

But I try to be open to what I might find. It would be foolish to ignore what presents itself because what I discover is not what I planned.

I don't know if inspiration comes from God, but I do know I feel inspired when the natural world floods my senses, invades my brain and puts new stuff in there.

It's clear to me why my morning was so overwhelming. What's not clear is why some earlier morning was so impressive to a hymn composer who was not free as I was to enjoy it.

- Continued on next page

The day has officially begun over the ridge in Nevada. It will begin here in the town of South Lake Tahoe momentarily.

My Lord! What A Morning

- Continued from previous page

He or she – or ancestors in generations not far in the past – had been taught a religion from their captors and told that it justified their captivity. The religion was adopted, the interpretation was not, and the hymn has been sung around the world.

The version I've heard most is like the one in this video <https://youtu.be/qkF2VYyouj0> by the University of Illinois men's glee club. But there's another version I like with the same refrain but different verse tune sung by a Korean choir at <https://youtu.be/cbzwnWwT1c8>.

It's been recorded by Joan Baez <https://youtu.be/HMwzGzSxhyE> and the Australian group, The Seekers, <https://youtu.be/wOKDT0S203c> as a folk song. Marian Anderson, <https://youtu.be/mJoDR704-BA> the African-American singer denied permission to perform in Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution, and later Harry Belafonte, <https://youtu.be/izk0yPjX814> did solo recordings.

- Continued on next page

Barely visible on the top two ridges are parts of ski runs of Heavenly, Tahoe's largest ski area. The top of the mountain, hidden by the pine tree, is 10,040 feet (3,060 meters). I'm at lake level, 6,200 feet (1,890 meters).

My Lord! What A Morning

- Continued from previous page

For years what I've heard from Christians – my people – is that the holiday I'm about to celebrate has lost its meaning because the word "Christ" doesn't get mentioned enough.

My holiday isn't about other people observing it in ways that I require. It's my responsibility to observe it in the way that my friend from Hamlet, Sharon Davis, posted a few days ago on Facebook: Feed the hungry, comfort the afflicted, love the outcast, forgive the wrongdoer, inspire the hopeless.

My wish for the relatives, friends and colleagues – among them Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and non-religious folks – who receive this newsletter are that you enjoy the holidays that are yours as much as I enjoyed creating this illustrated vision of our common season.



Sunrise reaches the tops of Maggie's Peaks above Emerald Bay, 8,600 and 8,500 feet, respectively (2,591 and 2,621 meters), which means sunrise is imminent in the Central Valley.



A barn and ranch house in Hope Valley just below Kit Carson Pass, El Dorado National Forest, Alpine County.



Cars descend northbound along U.S. 50 into the Truckee River Canyon toward Lake Tahoe with snow-capped mountains in Nevada in the distance. The white clearing near the lake is Lake Tahoe Airport.