

November 21<sup>st</sup>

Memory verse

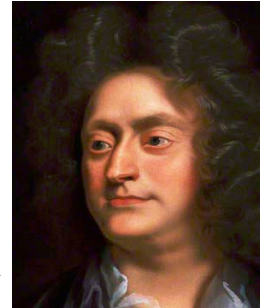
**O Lord, how great are thy works!**

and thy thoughts are very deep. Psalm 92:5

Younger children can learn the words in bold.

Something to sing

One of England's greatest composers, Henry Purcell (1659-1695) died on 21<sup>st</sup> November. You can see from his dates that he was still quite a young man when he died. The picture on the right was painted not long before he died. He was a chorister at the Chapel Royal and later the organist there. His life spanned the reign of two evil kings, Charles II and James II and he died in the happier reign of King William III. Much of his music was written for the Chapel Royal where the brothers Charles and James liked elaborate music such as that with which they had grown up in Catholic France when they were young. Perhaps his most famous anthem is *Hear my Prayer O Lord* which has a haunting and almost desolate beauty. Find a recording to listen to.<sup>1</sup> The words are from Psalm 102 as they are found in the Prayer Book: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my crying come unto thee."



Purcell also wrote music for plays and court entertainments. His *King Arthur* which was first performed at the Queen's Theatre, London, contained a song *Fairest Isle All Isles Excelling*, that became very popular. It was still well known in Charles Wesley's day and he was not born until some twelve years after Purcell's death. Charles Wesley was fond of and knowledgeable about music. If you did the lesson about the composer William Boyce on February 7<sup>th</sup> you will remember reading the poem he wrote on Boyce's death. It was Purcell's *Fairest Isle all isles excelling* that triggered Wesley's writing of one of his most famous and most Scripture-filled hymns, *Love divine all loves excelling*. Although we sing this hymn to other tunes now, it was Purcell's tune that Wesley had in his mind when he wrote this hymn. I have put the score and music in today's optional resources so that you can sing it for yourself just how Wesley first imagined it.<sup>2</sup>

Something to read from African history<sup>3</sup>

Later this month<sup>4</sup> we have a lesson on John Bunyan's wonderful book *Pilgrim's Progress*. The book begins with John Bunyan telling the reader how he came to write the book:

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and, behold, I saw a man clothed with rags...



In the picture on the left you can see John Bunyan himself lying down in his "den" dreaming the story. On the right is the Pilgrim with his burden escaping from the City of Destruction which you can just see in the background. *Pilgrim's Progress* is a book everyone should read I hope you will read it yourself if you have not already done so. I am not the only person to think that everyone

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyieyUw3GXk> shows the score as you go along so you can follow.

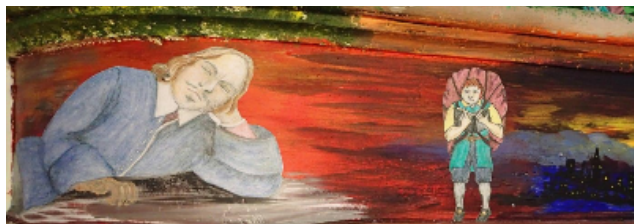
2 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr-u\\_cRcyXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr-u_cRcyXQ) has an excellent performance of the words and tune together.

3 Information from John S. Ross Sound the Trumpet: An introduction to the life and ministry of Tiyo Soga, 1829-1871 *Haddington House Journal* Vol.12 (2010) p.103 and other sources.

4 30<sup>th</sup> November.

should read Pilgrim's Progress. Over the years it has been translated into over 200 languages (Dutch was first in 1681) by people who knew how valuable it is to the reader. Here are those opening words again in a translation that was finished on **November 21** 1866:

Ngathi ngihamba enhlane yalumhlaba, ngafika endaweni ethile lapho okwakulobhalu khona. Ngacambalala lapho ukuthi ngilale: ngathi ngilele ngaphupha iphupho. Ngaphupha, khangela-ke, ngabona umuntu egqoke amadabudabu emi endaweni...



This translation into the Xhosa<sup>5</sup> language which is widely spoken in Africa was made by the South African missionary-scholar Tiyo Soga (1829-1871). Tiyo Soga belonged to the Ngqika clan of the Xhosa people who live in South Africa's Eastern Cape. He was a descendant of Ngqika leaders, councillors and warriors and the son of a progressive father, Old Soga, who adopted modern agricultural methods to great advantage.

Old Soga's "great wife", Nosutu was Tiyo's mother and she had become a Christian. She taught her children about the Lord Jesus Christ from their early years.

The kraal, or enclosed village, where the family lived was near a mission station where the missionary in charge was William Chalmers (1802-1847) of the Glasgow Missionary Society. Here Tiyo's elder brother was educated and he passed on what he learned to Tiyo and other members of the family. He and his mother, Nosutu, built a little schoolhouse for the purpose. Then Tiyo went to William Chalmer's school himself and did well. Eventually he was sent to the Free Church of Scotland School not far from his home where he came top in almost everything. This was a school in which children were educated together regardless of ethnicity or skin colour. That may not seem unusual to us, but in 19<sup>th</sup> century Africa it was very unusual. Tiyo was educated alongside other Africans and also missionary children who were all treated exactly the same.

The school had to close when the terrible War of the Axe broke out in 1846. Tiyo was invited to go with the principal and two boys who were missionary's sons who were returning to Scotland. This was a huge matter for his mother to consider but Nosutu did not hesitate: "My son is the property of God; wherever he goes, God goes with him. If my son is willing to go I make no objection, for no harm can befall him even across the sea; he is as much in God's keeping there as near to me," she said.



And so it was that Tiyo continued his education at the Free Church of Scotland Normal Seminary, where he remained until 1848. It was at this time his mothers' gospel teaching began to have its effect on Tiyo's heart and her prayers for him were answered. Tiyo was converted and put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

On his return to South Africa he and a colleague were entrusted with opening a new mission station about fifteen miles from his old home. Here he began preaching and writing hymns in the Xhosa language.

But South Africa was still torn by war. A war called the War of Mlanjeni, broke out and Tiyo's colleague and his family left to move to a safer place. Tiyo and an elder, were left to carry on. Soon the mission station was burned down and they too had to flee. This was a hard time for Xhosa Christians.

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<sup>5</sup> If you want to know how to pronounce the word Xhosa properly there is a guide here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Trq\\_gIe1v04](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Trq_gIe1v04)

Tiyo then had another opportunity to go to Scotland for education. He prepared himself for becoming a minister first at Glasgow University and at the United Presbyterian Theological Hall. He made good friends here and often urged them to consider becoming missionaries in South Africa. He married too, a Scottish lass from a poor part of Glasgow.

Tiyo preached while in Scotland and often it was to congregations who had never heard an African preach before. The first time he preached in Scotland a little boy was sitting on the pulpit steps of the crowded chapel. Tiyo's hand was resting on the edge of the pulpit. The boy had never seen an African before and his utter curiosity got the better of him. As the congregation sang a Psalm, he stretched up and ran his finger across Tiyo's black hand to find out if the colour would rub off! As it did not, he licked his finger and tried again. Totally bewildered by this, the boy looked up and found Tiyo looking into his eyes and trying to restrain his laughter.

In Scotland Tiyo and his Scottish wife were loved and respected. It was a different matter when he took her home with him to South Africa. They were constantly stared at, criticised and subjected to rude remarks. They both bore this with patience, determined that they could be living proof of the equality of all peoples in God's sight.

A terrible disaster now befell the Africans in South Africa. A false prophetess, Nongqawuse, began telling the Xhosa people that the white settlers would be swept into the sea by the spirits of the ancestors. This would happen, she said, if the Xhosa people destroyed all their crops and killed all their cattle. She fixed a certain date for this to happen and the people began to obey the wicked command, destroying all their means of obtaining food in the coming year.

The day arrived. Nothing happened. Now what were the people to do? A great famine began: the people had nothing left to eat. They flocked in droves to the little mission station where Tiyo and his wife did what they could to provide for the starving and homeless people.

Later Tiyo and a colleague built a little mud-walled church and here there were services in English for settlers and in Xhosa too. Tiyo thought that the terrible failure of the prophecy would turn his people to the gospel. At first this was not the case. But then gradually he began to see conversions. More and more Xhosa people came to the little church seeking to find the Saviour. At last there was a congregation of about 150.

But now Tiyo was becoming ill. There were bad pains in his side and chest. Off he rode to King William's Town where he could consult a doctor. Alas, nothing could be done. The pains he felt were the beginnings of tuberculosis, which in those days had no cure.

Time was short now. Tiyo's life was ebbing away. He spent much time writing as he longed to finish the translation of the first part of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He had started it as a student in Glasgow. The work was finished on **21st November**, 1866. His journal entry for that day, reads,

*Quarter past nine o'clock, night. Finished, through the goodness of Almighty God, the translation of the first part of the Pilgrim's Progress, my fingers aching with writing.*

Tiyo was still preaching. In fact, he was a preacher that all sorts of people wanted to hear in all sorts of places. The Xhosa people listened to him. The settlers listened too. Pulpits were open to him in Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Dutch Reformed churches. He preached in **Port Elizabeth**, **Uitenhage** (now renamed **Kariega**), **Grahamstown** (also called **Makhanda**), **Bedford**, **Alice**, **King**

**William's Town** (now renamed **Qonce**) and in **Cape Town**. The prejudice he and his wife had experienced in their early days in South Africa began to melt away.

Tiyo also was also a hymn writer. He wrote one of Africa's most famous hymns “Lizalis’ idinga lakho, Thixo Nkosi yenyano!” (Fulfil thy promise, Faithful God!)” and it is still widely sung today.

Tiyo was positive about his Xhosa background. God, he explained had made black Africans “durable, tenacious and accustomed to adversity.” Darwin's *Descent of Man* was published in the year of Tiyo's death. In it Darwin argued that

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes [that is, the ones which allegedly look like people] ... will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the Negro or Australian [Aboriginal] and the gorilla...

In other words, the Xhosa people, along with all black people, will become extinct, exterminated by the “superior” white people. This is a prophecy as valueless as that of Nongqawuse! Tiyo would have rejected this unbiblical and unpleasant argument which has led to misery across Africa.<sup>6</sup> He was sure that his people would survive. He went further: they were “a noble race,” who if left in peace and not driven from their lands by settlers and colonial governments, would flourish. Tiyo encouraged his people to take every advantage of education, agricultural techniques, modern clothing and other advantages of Western culture. However he was clear that there were bad things in Western culture that needed to be avoided too. Consumption of alcohol to excess was one of these. He was concerned above all that they should accept Christianity as it was the source of all good. He recognised that his own children might be tempted to feel ashamed of their mixed Xhosa-Scottish parentage. “For your own sakes never appear ashamed that your father was a Xhosa, and that you inherit some African blood. . . .take your place in the world as coloured, not as white men; as Xhosas, not as Englishmen...” he told them.

Tiyo died as he had lived preaching the gospel. He had gone to establish a new outstation and was overtaken while there by cold, wet weather. A fever that proved fatal set in. His memory is still beloved in South Africa.

Brave Janet Soga then went to live with her aged mother-in-law Nosutu to ensure that the children all became proficient in Xhosa. She then took them to Scotland for higher education. The boys returned to South Africa after completing their education, several of them as missionaries. That was what Janet Soga wanted best of all.



### Map work

Get out your atlas and find South Africa. Can you find the places highlighted in **green** in the account above?

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<sup>6</sup> See for instance the lesson for 4<sup>th</sup> July.