



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I cannot believe another Christmas is already upon us. How the time has flown by! In reflecting on this Christmas season, one of my favorite Christmas songs is **I Wonder as I Wander** that I recorded on my Christmas CD **Glorious Impossible Christmas**.

"I Wonder as I wander" is a song written by John Jacob Niles. The song has its origins in a song fragment collected on July 16, 1933 by folklorist and singer John Jacobs Niles. While in a town of North Carolina, Niles attended a fundraising meeting held by evangelicals who had been ordered out of town by the police. In his unpublished autobiography, he wrote of hearing the song:

A girl had stepped out to the edge of the little platform attached to the automobile. She began to sing. Her clothes were unbelievable dirty and ragged, and she, too, was unwashed. Her ash-blond hair hung down in long skeins.... But, best of all, she was beautiful, and in her untutored way, she could sing. She smiled as she sang, smiled rather sadly, and sang only a single line of a song.

The girl, named Annie Morgan, repeated the fragment seven times in exchange for a quarter per performance, and Niles left with "three lines of verse, a garbled fragment of melodic material—and a magnificent idea". (In various accounts of this story, Niles hears between one and three lines of the song.) Based on this fragment, Niles composed the version of **I Wonder as I Wander** that is known today, extending the melody to four lines and the lyrics to three stanzas. His composition was completed on October 4, 1933. Niles first performed the song on December 19, 1933.

I Wonder As I Wander

*I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.
When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it then did recall.*

*I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky*

I love this song for the simple reason that the music and the lyrics paint a beautiful picture of us, the sinner, and Christ, the Savior. The picture of the girl Annie Morgan being ragged, poor, unwashed and worn is a picture of us coming to Christ our Savior just as we are: a tired, poor, dirty, worn sinner. I am so grateful that because of Christ I no longer have to wander and wonder. I know the question as to why Christ came as I learned the other evening is simply for you and me, the poor sinner. Now Christ overwhelms me with His love, washes me clean by His blood and clothes me in His robes of righteousness. We have so much to be thankful for! I know that for me I have the most precious gift of all. A creator who has made me fearfully and wonderfully, a heavenly Father who loves me unconditionally and Christ my Savior, who came to earth as a baby , grew into a man who died for me as my Savior and rose again as my Redeemer and now I have new life in Christ living within me! My prayer for you as that you will truly find Christ in a new and deeper way this Christmas.

Please keep Ray and me in your prayers as we leave for Haiti January 3-11, 2012 to bring the good news of Christ to the Haitian people through message, music and service. If you would like to make a financial contribution to Sara Aten Music Ministries for the Haiti trip please visit my website at www.saraaten.com for information. My CDs are available any 3 for \$25 plus \$2 shipping. There is still time to order them for Christmas gifts!

May God richly bless you!

Sara