

My Loved Ones:

God says in Psalm 23:6 - “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

The hymn history today has some aspects of Ohio history to it. Philip P. Bliss was from Rome, PA, wrote many gospel songs that we still sing, was a close friend of D. L. Moody, and died with his wife in the Ashtabula Train Bridge Accident in 1876 in Ashtabula, OH. His remains are buried there.

The song we’re considering today came into being when Al Smith received a letter from a relative of Philip Bliss a number of years ago about “Uncle Phil” because Al Smith was interested in hymn histories. The relative of Philip Bliss recounts how 6-year-old Philip went to school and met his first teacher and fell in love with the red-haired, green-eyed, young beauty named “Miss Murphy.” The class memorized Psalm 23 a verse-a-day at the beginning of the year, but young Philip still couldn’t read. When they came to “surely goodness and mercy,” young Philip thought they were saying “surely good Miss Murphy shall follow me,” and he took it as a sign that he was to be married to her! Well, they didn’t get married, but when Al Smith got that letter, he said to his good friend, John W. Peterson, “that would be a great title for a song.” Before the end of the day, Smith and Peterson had written the song that we sing today.

The song written in the 60’s had a great impact on many. Mrs. Martin Luther King, Sr. (not Jr.), Alberta Williams King was murdered in her own church 6 years after her son, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Mrs. King so loved this hymn that we’re taking about today, that she left detailed instructions about her funeral when her son died 6 years earlier. Part of the service was televised for the world to see, and the part that was recorded was when the choir sang “Surely Goodness and Mercy.”

All of this came about as a result of a little barefoot, 6-year-old boy and the love of his life at the time, Miss Murphy!

I know of a situation in which someone had two dogs and named them “Goodness” and “Mercy” and they followed their owners around all the days of their lives!

But the truth of the matter is this: God’s goodness and mercy is following us. Do you recognize it? Can you think and see various aspects in your life in which God has been so gracious and giving, but also merciful and sparing in your life? And it won’t end here. God promises that the same goodness and mercy that saved us, follows here in this life, will “lead us home,” too. Today, stop and thank the Lord for His goodness and mercy, and stop and look for them every day in your life!

We love you and are praying for you today.