



This Is My Father's World

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Text

Maltbie D. Babcock (1858-1901)

Year of Publication

1901

Tune

TERRA BEATA (traditional English melody)
arranged by Franklin L. Sheppard (1852-1930)

Scripture References

Psalm 8; Psalm 121:1

Theme

All nature reminds those who look and listen to live with reverence for God's gifts of life and beauty.

TEACHING ACTIVITY

Family Tree

Materials

Patterns for tree and leaves	Scissors
Duplicating equipment	Markers
Construction paper	Glue

Process

Duplicate a copy of the tree and the leaf for each child. Prepare a sample family tree to use while telling the hymn story. Glue the tree to a sheet of construction paper. Cut eleven leaves from various colors of construction paper. Write the following words on the leaves:

Maltbie D. Babcock branch:

Served as a minister
Excelled in swimming and baseball
Played musical instruments
Wrote poetry
Walked in nature

Mrs. Babcock branch:

Published poem

Mary Babcock Crawford branch:

Wrote last verse

Franklin L. Sheppard branch:

Arranged music

God's Children branch:

Look and listen for beauty
Praise God
Trust God

Attach the leaves to the branches either in advance or while telling the story.

Story

Place sample family tree where children can see wording and reach to add leaves.

Do any of you know what the word "genealogy" means? Genealogy is the study of family history, like who are your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. All of us have a history, and so do all hymns.

This is a family tree to help us discover the story behind a famous hymn called "This Is My Father's World." (Point to the hymn title written on the tree trunk.)

The first branch tells us the name of the man who wrote the words that we sing; his name was Maltbie D. Babcock. (Point out this branch.)

Here are some of the leaves that can add to our understanding about Reverend Babcock. (If possible, allow listeners to add the leaves as each is discussed.) That was your first hint—Reverend Babcock served as a minister in the Presbyterian church. (Attach leaf.) Often we think of ministers as being more interested in books and words, but Reverend Babcock was also a talented athlete excelling in swimming and baseball. (Attach leaf.) He also had musical gifts and could play the organ, piano, and violin. (Attach leaf.) Obviously, he was also a poet because he left us these beautiful words for “This Is My Father’s World” written just one year before he died at the early age of forty-three. (Add leaf.) Those who knew him best remembered his favorite hobby—walking in nature—and the words he always said just before he left, “I am going out to see my Father’s world.” In the original poem, there are sixteen verses, and each of the verses starts with “This Is My Father’s World.” (Attach leaf.)

Of course, on a family tree, we are never alone, there are always others whose lives influence and affect ours. It was Reverend Babcock’s wife who saw that his poem was published after his death, and his daughter, Mary Babcock Crawford, wrote the last verse of the hymn we sing. (Add leaves to branches.)

On a family tree we only add the names of those to whom we are related, but this family tree represents God’s family so we can add others who also belong to God.

Reverend Babcock’s inspiring poem was set to music by a talented member of God’s family and a warm, personal friend of the poet, Franklin L. Sheppard. Mr. Sheppard used an old English folk tune known as TERRA BEATA, which is Latin for “Blessed Earth.” (Add leaf.)

This next branch is for us — you and me — because as God’s children we belong to the family of God. The hymn reminds us that those who love God respond by looking at nature, listening to nature, and praising God for the beauty of our earth. When we see the majesty of creation all around us and realize that God is the power behind all of nature, we must realize that God is in control, and we can trust God like a small child trusts a loving father. (Add leaves.)

Like all living trees, God’s family tree keeps growing. There are many, many branches and many, many leaves. Maybe this week you will want to take a walk to see the trees and to tell your earthy family just like Reverend Babcock often did, “I am off to see my Father’s world.”

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