

Good Friday Choral Vespers



Judas Betrays Jesus - Bryn Athyn Cathedral Stained Glass

Gospel of Mark Passion with Selections from Handel's *Messiah*

March 29, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Bryn Athyn Cathedral
www.brynathynchurch.org

Welcome to Our Special Good Friday Service

Please help us maintain a reverent atmosphere within the worship space by avoiding informal conversation.

Tonight's service will include readings from the Gospel of Mark and musical selections from George Frideric Handel's *Messiah*. The readings and the lyrics are included in this booklet so that you can read along as we go through the service. If you would like more information about the history of *Messiah* or things to listen for in each of the pieces, you can find some listening notes at the end of this booklet.

Please join us, as the formal service begins, in singing a hymn from the Liturgy. You can follow the order of service by turning to the hymn numbers given in this booklet. These numbers are also displayed on boards hung in various locations.

We do not pass a collection basket during the service. Offertory bowls are located at each entrance for free-will donations to support this church and the worship services and other activities it provides. Donate online at www.brynathynchurch.org.

We hope this service will be a blessing to you in your observation of Good Friday and that you will join us on Easter Sunday and regular Sundays after that. (See the back for more details.) If you have any questions, comments, or reflections, please do not hesitate to approach today's minister or a staff member. We'd love to talk to you!

Minister

Rev. Malcolm G. Smith

Musicians

Bryn Athyn Festival Chorus, dir. Graham Bier

Robin Bier, alto soloist

Bradley King, tenor soloist

Xuan Yao, violin 1

Edmond Chan, violin 2

Michael Stanley, viola

Gozde Tiknaz, cello

Leah Martin, organ

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Some modifications have been made in line with the Kempton Project Translation. More information at thesacredscripture.org

Preludes

Chorale prelude: “O Sacred Head Now Wounded” - Flor Peeters

A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth - Wolfgang Dachstein, arr. W. Barlow

Blessed Jesu, How Hast Thou Offended, op. 65 - Sigfrid Karg-Elert

If You Will Only Let God Guide You - Georg Neumark, arr. Craig Phillips

Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder - Dieterich Buxtehude

Prelude on “Wondrous Love” - Leah Martin

Overture from *Messiah* - Georg Frideric Handel

Hymn - *Please rise.*

“Father to Us, Thy Children Humbly Kneeling”854

Opening of the Word

Welcome and Introduction - *Please be seated.*

Reading: *Secrets of Heaven* 9937:1-3, 5-6

People in the church are familiar with the statement that the Lord bore the sins of the human race, but they do not know what it means to bear iniquity and sin. Some think it means that He took the sins of the human race onto Himself and allowed Himself to be condemned even to death on a cross, and that... the condemnation for sins was cast onto Him, [and so] people in the world have been made free from condemnation.

But no such ideas should be understood by “bearing iniquity”, for every individual person’s deeds await them after death, when they are judged, according to the essential nature of those deeds, either to life or to death. The Lord bears iniquities when He fights on behalf of a person against the hells; for no one is able to fight against them on their own. Rather the Lord alone does so, indeed constantly for every individual person....

When the Lord was in the world, He fought against all the hells and completely subdued them, and, as a result, He also became Righteousness. By doing that, He has rescued from damnation those who receive Divine Good and Truth from Him. If the Lord had not done this, no one could have been saved, for to the extent that the Lord does not move them away, the hells are unceasingly present with a person, controlling them. And the Lord moves the hells away to the extent that the person refrains from evils. The One, therefore, who alone fights for a person against the hells... is said to bear sins; for He bears that burden, alone.

While the Lord was in the world, He conquered the hells by means of conflicts brought about by temptations, and through this set all things in order.... Once these points are understood, it can be seen what is symbolized by everything said about the Lord in Isaiah chapter 53, a chapter dealing from beginning to end with the state of temptations He underwent, and so also with the state He was passing through when He was fighting with the hells.

“Carrying griefs, sorrows, and iniquities”, and “being pierced and bruised because of them” self-evidently means the state of temptations; for in those states there are experiences involving distress of mind, anguish, and despair, which cause the pain described in those verses. The hells bring such feelings about; for in temptations they assault the actual love of the one against whom they fight. Everyone’s love is the inmost core of their life. The Lord’s love was that of saving the human race.... This too is so described in Isaiah, where the Lord’s battles are the subject, in the following words,

He said, “Surely they are My people....”

Therefore He became their Saviour.

In all their affliction He suffered affliction;...

because of His love and His compassion He redeemed them,
and took them and carried them

all the days of eternity. (Isaiah 63:8-9)

Chorus: “Lift up your heads”

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.
(Psalm 24:7-10)

Chorus: “Behold the Lamb of God”

Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)

Reading: Mark 14:1-26

¹ After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how, taking hold of Him with deceit, they might kill Him. ² But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.”

³ And when He was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of ointment of very precious liquid spikenard. And she broke the alabaster flask and poured it on His head. ⁴ And there were some who were indignant within themselves, and said, “Why was this ointment wasted? ⁵ For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they criticized her sharply.

⁶ But Jesus said, “Let her be. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. ⁷ For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. ⁸ She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to put ointment on My body for burial. ⁹ Amen, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached through the whole world, what she has done will also be told as a memorial to her.”

¹⁰ And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. ¹¹ And when they heard it, they rejoiced, and promised to give him silver. So he sought how he might betray Him at an opportune moment.

¹² And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?”

¹³ And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and there a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. ¹⁴ Wherever he goes in, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher says, ‘Where is the inn where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” ¹⁵ And he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.”

¹⁶ And His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ In the evening He came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they sat and ate, Jesus said, “Amen, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.”

¹⁹ And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, “Is it I?” And another said, “Is it I?”

²⁰ But He answering said to them, “It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. ²¹ The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him,

but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

²² And as they ate, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

²³ And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, “This is My blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Amen, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Hymn - *Please remain seated.*

“Lord, We Pray Thee, Draw Thou Near Us”89

Reading: Mark 14:27-42

²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written:

‘I will strike the shepherd,
And the sheep will be scattered.’

²⁸ “But after I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.”

²⁹ Peter said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.”

³⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Amen, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.”

³¹ But he spoke more vehemently, “If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!”

And they all said likewise.

³² And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be distressed and to be in agony. ³⁴ And He said to them, “My soul is surrounded with sorrow, even to death. Stay here and watch.”

³⁵ And He went forward a little, and fell upon the earth, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. ³⁶ And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”

³⁷ And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Did you not have strength to watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is eager, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. ⁴⁰ And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

⁴¹ And He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough, the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Arise, let us go. See, My betrayer is near.”

Recitative: “He that dwelleth in heav’n”

He that dwelleth in heav’n shall laugh them to scorn; The Lord shall have them in derision. (Psalm 2:4)

Aria: “Thou shalt break them”

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. (Psalm 2:9)

Reading: Mark 14:43-52

⁴³ And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a crowd of many with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ And His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; take hold of Him and lead Him away securely.”

⁴⁵ As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” and kissed Him.

⁴⁶ And they put their hands on Him and took hold of Him. ⁴⁷ And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the chief priest, and cut off his ear.

⁴⁸ And Jesus answered and said to them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? ⁴⁹ I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not take hold of Me; but the Scriptures must be fulfilled.”

⁵⁰ Then they all forsook Him and fled.

⁵¹ And a certain young man followed Him, having a cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men took hold of him, ⁵² but he left the cloth and fled from them naked.

Chorus: “Surely He hath borne our griefs”

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows! He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. (Isaiah 53:4-5)

Chorus: “And with His stripes”

And with His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

Chorus: “All we, like sheep”

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.
And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

Reading: Mark 14:53-65

⁵³ And they led Jesus away to the chief priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. ⁵⁴ And Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the chief priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire.

⁵⁵ And the chief priests and all the council sought a witness against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree.

⁵⁷ And certain ones rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, ⁵⁸ “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.’ ” ⁵⁹ And not even then did their testimony agree.

⁶⁰ And the chief priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, “Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?” ⁶¹ But He was silent, and answered nothing.

Again the chief priest asked Him, saying to Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”

⁶² And Jesus said, “I am; and you will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

⁶³ And the chief priest tore his clothes and said, “What further need do we have for witnesses? ⁶⁴ You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?”

And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.

⁶⁵ And some began to spit on Him, and to cover His face, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophesy!” And the officers hit Him with a staff.

Aria: “He was despised”

He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:3)

Reading: Mark 14:66-72; 15:1-15

⁶⁶ And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the chief priest came. ⁶⁷ And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him intently and said, “And you also were with Jesus of Nazareth.”

⁶⁸ And he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are saying.” And he went outside to the porch, and the rooster crowed.

⁶⁹ And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, “This is one of them.” ⁷⁰ And he denied it again.

And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, “Truly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech is similar.”

⁷¹ But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak!”

⁷² And for the second time the rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word that Jesus had said to him, “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And when he thought about it, he wept.

¹ Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

And He answered and said to him, “You say.”

³ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. ⁴ And Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” ⁵ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.

⁶ And at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they asked for. ⁷ And there was one named Barabbas, who was bound with his fellow who had committed murder in the rebellion. ⁸ And the crowd, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. ⁹ But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.

¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. ¹² Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?”

¹³ And they cried out again, “Crucify Him!”

¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?”

And they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!”

¹⁵ And Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and delivered up Jesus, after he had whipped Him, to be crucified.

Recitative: “All they that see Him”

All they that see Him laugh Him to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying:.... (Psalm 22:7)

Chorus: “He trusted in God”

“He trusted in God that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, if He delight in Him.” (Psalm 22:8)

Recitative: “Thy rebuke hath broken His heart”

Thy rebuke hath broken His heart: He is full of heaviness. He looked for some to have pity on Him, but there was no man, neither found He any to comfort him. (Psalm 69:20)

Arioso: “Behold, and see”

Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow.
(Lamentations 1:12)

Reading: Mark 15:16-39

¹⁶ And the soldiers led Him away into the courtyard called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they put around his head a crown of thorns which they had braided. ¹⁸ And they began to greet Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” ¹⁹ And they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

²¹ And they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the field and passing by, to bear His cross. ²² And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. ²³ And they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not receive it. ²⁴ And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every one should take.

²⁵ And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. ²⁶ And the inscription of His crime was written above:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

²⁷ And with Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. ²⁸ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was counted with the transgressors.”

²⁹ And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “Ah! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save Yourself, and come down from the cross!”

³¹ Likewise the chief priests also, mocking, said to one another with the scribes, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, step down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.”

And those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

³⁵ And some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” ³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him be; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.”

³⁷ But Jesus, letting out a great cry, expired.

³⁸ And the veil of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that crying out like this He expired, he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!”

Chorus: “Since by man came death”

Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

(I Corinthians 15:21-22)

Recitative: “He was cut off”

He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgressions of Thy people was He stricken. (Isaiah 53:8)

Aria: “But Thou didst not leave”

But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell; nor didst Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. (Psalm 16:10)

Mark 15:40-47

⁴⁰ And there were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Little and of Joses, and Salome, ⁴¹ who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

⁴² And when evening had already come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³ Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ But Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and calling for the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. ⁴⁵ And when he found out from the

centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶ And he brought cloth, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the cloth and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. ⁴⁷ And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was put.

Aria: “I know that my Redeemer liveth”

I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. (Job 19: 25-26)

For now is Christ risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep. (I Corinthians 15:20)

Minister’s Prayer & the Lord’s Prayer - *Please kneel or bow your head.*

Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven so upon the earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Benediction

Closing of the Word - *Please rise.*

Hymn - *Please remain standing.*

“Abide With Me” 920

Postludes - *Please be seated.*

Recitative: “Then shall be brought to pass”

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” (I Corinthians 15:54)

Duet: “O death, where is thy sting?”

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. (I Corinthians 15:55-56)

Chorus: “But thanks be to God”

But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Corinthians 15:57)

Fugue in E Minor “the Big” - Nicolaus Bruhns

Listening Notes by Graham Bier

Georg Frideric Handel's *Messiah* is well-known these days as a Christmas classic, but that focuses on the first of three "acts". In the structure of the full oratorio, Part I focuses on the coming of the Lord to earth, but functions as a prologue to the centerpiece Part II, an exploration of the Lord's sacrifice, death, and resurrection. The familiar music of the Christmas portion is rightly beloved, but some of Handel's best music is found in the dramatic darker portions of Part II and the redemption that follows. In fact, Handel chose Eastertide as the season for the first performances in Dublin 1742 and London 1743. It is our hope that this timeless music deepens your relationship with this difficult and important text from the Gospels. Handel's music has been reordered to serve the specific narrative flow of the Passion according to Mark.

"Lift up your heads"

This text from Psalm 24 could be seen as looking forward to Easter or recalling the joys of Palm Sunday. It's the only place in *Messiah* where Handel wrote for more than four choral parts, but you don't hear them all at once. The music is structured as a conversation, with a trio of upper voices and a trio of lower voices trading off repetitions of the question "who" and its triumphant answer—all centered around a command to lift open the gates and allow Him entry.

"Behold, the Lamb of God"

Pivoting to the more somber topic of Good Friday, this was Handel's opening chorus to Part II. The sharp angular rhythms demand our attention, almost as if the singers' voices are catching and quivering with the import of the text until part-way through, the sopranos are left hanging while the lower voices circle underneath.

"He that dwelleth in heaven" and "Thou shalt break them"

Returning to the Psalms, this text calls for violence—a striking contrast between our natural desire for retribution and the path that the Lord chose. Written almost as a duet between the tenor and the violin, the fury of the music is irresistible. Hear how the violin leaps between biting high trills and pairs of low falling notes, as the singer throws his voice up and down, threatening almost to dash the music itself to pieces.

“Surely He hath borne”, “And with His stripes” and “All we like sheep”

This trio of choruses functions as a self-contained scene, stitched together into one by the musical instruction “attacca” to go on to the next without pause. The first chorus is itself structured with three audibly different musical ideas. “Surely” is a unified exclamation with all of the voices synchronized in block harmony. “He was wounded” breaks into more complicated harmony with the voices hanging onto notes against each other and weeping through the clashes. “The chastisement” combines these two ideas, starting with vertical whiplashes of sound and moving into smooth dissonant harmonies again. “And with His stripes” is a classic piece of fugal counterpoint. That’s a fancy way of saying that a theme gets passed independently around the four voices. The first four notes are shaped a bit like a musical cross: over, up, down, but note how the end of the phrase “healed” gets the longest stretch of notes each time. In the third chorus, you can hear Handel’s musical version of sheep literally going astray and turning around and around, and maybe even enjoying themselves as they go “every one to his own way”. But we aren’t left with the bleating—the music grinds to a halt as the chorus concludes with a devastating realization of what is taking place.

“He was despised”

In the introduction to this alto solo, you can hear the three syllable words “despised” and “rejected” played as isolated sequences of falling notes. This music is slow, and full of phrases that go down with the sorrows of the text. The full aria runs longer than 10 minutes, and is often shortened as it is in tonight’s service.

“All they that see Him”, “He trusted”, “Thy rebuke” and “Behold and see”

Most of the music in *Messiah* is reflective, with texts chosen as commentary on the story rather than narrative of action—unusual in the more typically plot-driven genre of opera and oratorio. But in this sequence, the choir steps away from its reflective role and plays a character: that of the mob. Although the text is taken from Psalm 22 instead of one of the Gospels, the music and function is the same as the crowd scenes in J.S. Bach’s Passion oratorios. Bookended by the tenor as narrator, you can hear the unruly crowd roiling with accusation, reinforced by the music’s uncoordinated and unrefined quality. Handel even works a derisive laugh into the tenor part about halfway through. After, the tenor soloist returns to reflection.

“Since by man came death”

This short chorus contains as dramatic a musical contrast as Handel wrote in his lifetime. The voices start alone, quiet and slow, then the orchestra comes racing in with a celebratory response. Just as Paul’s text in his first letter to the Corinthians is structured with these two pairs of ideas: since/also and for/so, the music juxtaposes these dramatic extremes twice.

“He was cut off” and “But Thou didst not leave”

This cheerful tenor solo contrasts the earlier “Behold and see”. Jesus’s followers witnessed apparent failure and tragedy, but had also been clearly told what would happen, both by the Lord during His life on earth, and by scriptural prophecy. We know what happens next and this music, with its flowing confident bassline and easy harmonies, reminds us what is to come.

“I know that my Redeemer liveth”

Contrast the easy musical cheer of the tenor’s most recent solo with the studied, quiet conviction of this next aria, originally a duet for soprano and violin but here lowered for alto and viola. There is plenty to listen for in this longer aria, such as the repeated rising fourth (an upward leap, but not too flashy) on the words “I know”, underscoring the truth of the singer’s belief again and again. Toward the end, Handel uses the simple structure of an irresistibly rising scale of notes (just above an octave) as the voice soars aloft on the phrase “for now is Christ risen”.

“Then shall be brought”, “O death” and “But thanks be to God”

Even in “full” performances of *Messiah*, this duet and chorus are often cut for time, which is a pity because they’re delightful. “O death, where is thy sting?” is the only duet in the entire oratorio. You can hear the voices how they almost taunt death with childish innocence as they play a game of vocal leap frog. The chorus responds with a song of thanksgiving. Notice how the phrase “who giveth us the victory” uses a falling scale to express confidence and conclusion, while a similar falling scale earlier in this service was used to show weeping and sorrow. One difference is speed and rhythm, with this latter version being both faster and having a few jaunty uneven moments. Like most of these choruses where the voices play off of each other, they all come together for a moment of clarity at the end—just as each of us brings our own context to a service like the one this evening, but also joins with others in reflecting on the sacred text and the shared experience of worshiping together.

Easter Family Festival Services & Easter Scenes

March 31, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m. at the Bryn Athyn Cathedral

On Easter Sunday we will offer two identical services, both in the nave. There will be one talk for the whole family. The doors to the nave will open 20 minutes before the start of the service for people to come in and view scenes depicting parts of the Easter story before the service begins. The Easter scenes will be indoors this year because Easter is so early this year.

To celebrate the Lord's resurrection, the congregation is invited to bring an offering of flowers or potted plants at the beginning of the service. These offerings will be distributed to church members on Easter Monday who have suffered a recent loss or challenging time.

Regular Sunday Worship Services

9:30 a.m. - Young Children's Service (Cathedral Undercroft)

9:30 a.m. - Family Cathedral Service (Cathedral Nave)

10:15 a.m. - Informal Family Service (Cathedral Undercroft)

11:00 a.m. - Adult Cathedral Service (Cathedral Nave)

Visit brynathynchurch.org/worship for more information about our Easter services, regular Sunday services, and upcoming organ vespers services.



Bryn Athyn Church

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