

“SERMON FROM THE MOUNTAIN”

Texts from Martin Luther King, Scripture and Spirituals

Music by Alice Parker

Presented at Idlewild Presbyterian Church

Sunday, April 10, 2011

as part of the 11:00 a.m. worship service

SERMON FROM THE MOUNTAIN

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Music by Alice Parker

I. Invitation

Dr. Montgomery

“We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountain top. I won’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to have a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over, and I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land.”

Baritone Solo

Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will tell us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. (Isaiah 2:3)

Tenor Solo and Chorus

Way up on the mountain, Lord,
Mountain top, Lord,
I heard God talkin’, Lord,
Chilun, a-talk of home, Lord.

II. Blessings

The Reverend Margaret Burnett

“I have nothing but praise for those of you who have already stood unflinchingly before threats and intimidation, inconvenience and unpopularity, arrest and physical violence, to declare the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. For such noble servants of God there is the consolation of the words of Jesus: Blessed are ye when men shall revile you ...”

Baritone Solo

Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:4-10-12).

Soprano Solo and Chorus

He’s the Lily of Valley,
He’s my Lord;
He’s the White Rose of Sharon,
He’s my Lord.

III. Exhortation

The Reverend Dr. Gayle Walker

“We need to recapture the gospel glow of the early Christians, who were nonconformists in the truest sense of the Word and refused to shape their witness according to the mundane patterns of the world. Willingly they sacrificed fame, fortune and life itself in behalf of a cause they knew to be right. Quantitatively small, they were qualitatively great.”

Baritone Solo

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 17:24-25)

Chorus

I want to live so God can use me,
Victorious, in this land:
I want to live so God can use me,
Victorious, in this land.

IV. The Rule

Ms. Corinne Nienhuis

“One day the South will recognize its real heroes. They will be old, oppressed, battered Negro women, symbolized in a seventy-two year old woman in Montgomery, Alabama, who rose up with a sense of dignity and with her people decided not to ride segregated buses, and who responded with ungrammatical profundity to one who inquired about her weariness. ‘My feet is tired, but my soul is as rest.’”

Baritone Solo

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:38-39)

Contralto Solo and Chorus

My feet is tired, but my soul is at rest.
Come, Lord Jesus.
Some say give me silver,
Some say give me gold,
But I say give me the grace of God,
‘Tis precious to my soul.
Go read the 5th of Matthew,
And read the chapter through;
It is a guide to Christians,
It’ll tell you what to do.

V. The Promise

The Reverend Anne H.K. Apple

“Christianity clearly affirms that in the long struggle between good and evil, good eventually will emerge as victor. Evil is ultimately doomed by the powerful, inexorable forces of good. Good Friday must give way to the triumphant music of Easter... Caesar occupied a palace and Christ a cross, but the same Christ so split history into A.D. and B.C. that even the reign of Caesar was subsequently dated by His Name.”

Baritone Solo

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1-12)

Tenor Solo and Chorus

Well, I feel all right,
No condemnation,
Feel all right,
No condemnation,
Well, I feel all right,
No condemnation,
No condemnation in my soul.

VI. The Reward

Dr. Montgomery

“The greatest stumbling block in the stride toward freedom is ... the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice... When Jesus says ‘Love your enemies’ He is setting forth a profound and ultimately inescapable admonition. Have we not come to such an impasse in the modern world that we must love your enemies – or else? The chain reaction of evil- hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars – must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation... But though I was initially disappointed at being categorized as an extremist, as I continued to think about the matter, I eventually gained a measure of satisfaction from the label. Was not Jesus an extremist for love: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you..’ Was not Amos an extremist for justice: ‘Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream’... Will we be extremists for hate or for love?”

Baritone Solo

Love your enemies and bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that spitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:44-45)

Baritone Solo and Chorus

Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night. Seek Him that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is His Name. (Amos 5:24, 6, 8)

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IDLEWILD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

1750 Union Avenue / Memphis, Tennessee 38104 / www.idlewildchurch.org
901-726-4681 / Fax 725-4535 / Recreation 725-4165 / Fax 278-8265 / Children's Center 725-7941

NOTES FROM THE PRESENTATION AT IDLEIWLD

This morning's 11:00 worship service features "Sermon from the Mountain," a jazz and spiritual tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. This special presentation is the result of many weeks of dedicated work. In particular, we thank vocal soloists Laurence Albert, baritone, Steven Albart, tenor, Ginger Hopkins, alto, and Beth Townley, soprano; string quintet musicians Susanna Perry Gilmore and Gaylor Patterson, violin, Jennifer Pucket, viola, Jonathan Kirkscey, cello, and Chris Butler, bass; the dedicated members of the Idlewild Adult Choir; and guitarist John Bass.

We are privileged today to welcome Alice Parker, the composer of "Sermon from the Mountain." Ms. Parker was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1925. She began composing early, and wrote her first orchestral score while still in high school. She graduated from Smith College with a major in music performance and composition, then received her master's degree from the Juilliard School where she studied choral conducting with Robert Shaw. Her life-work has been in choral and vocal music, combining composing, conducting and teaching in a creative balance. Her arrangements with Robert Shaw of folksongs, hymns and spirituals form an enduring repertoire for choruses all around the world. She continues composing in many forms, from operas to cantatas, sacred anthems to secular dances, song cycles to string quartets. In 1985, she founded Melodious Accord, Inc., a non-profit group which presents choral concerts and sponsors workshops, symposia and her many professional appearances. The Fellows programs have provided unique training for composers, conductors and song leaders. Her techniques have encouraged a generation of music teachers and choral conductors to think about music and the act of conducting in new ways. No less an authority than Robert Shaw himself has said of Parker, "...she possesses a rare and creative musical intelligence."

A hearty thanks to Dr. William Skoog of Rhodes College for his gracious assistance in having Ms. Parker with us today. On Monday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Parker will deliver the annual Springfield Music Lecture at the Rhodes College Ballroom.

ABOUT THE "SERMON"

Parker's "A Sermon from the Mountain" was commissioned in April 1968 by the Franconia Mennonite Chorus and was first performed on April 13, 1969. Ms. Parker explains her choice of texts in assembling the piece:

"There were two main sources of inspiration for its writing: first, the Biblical verses often quoted by Dr. King as a basis for his beliefs.... My sources for the Biblical texts are Dr. King's sermons, articles (notably Letter from Birmingham Jail) and books. Central to the understanding of the man and his mission must be the realization that he took the Sermon on the Mount with complete, terrifying literalness. The basis of the non-violent movement was to 'return good for evil. Christ showed us the way, and Mahatma Gandhi showed us it could work.'"

Ms. Parker goes on to point out that the "Sermon" is cast in the form of a church service with a leader who intones the Biblical texts along with quotations from Dr. King's speeches, and a congregation which responds musically to his preaching. Although the work was originally scored with a full orchestral accompaniment, Ms. Parker has authorized performances with scaled-down forces. *(Program notes from Unitarian Church of Evanston, Ill., Donald Draganski)