

“Sehet, welch eine Liebe hat uns der Vater erzeiget” BWV 64

1. *Sehet, welch eine Liebe hat uns der Vater erzeiget,  
dass wir Gottes Kinder heissen.*<sup>1</sup>

1. *See what love [God] the father has shown us, that we  
[Christians] are called God's children.*

**2. Das hat er alles uns getan,  
Sein gross Lieb zu zeigen an.  
Des freu sich alle Christenheit  
Und dank ihm des in Ewigkeit.  
Kyrieleis!**<sup>2</sup>

**2. All this he has done for us  
To show his great love.  
For this rejoice,<sup>3</sup> all Christendom,  
And thank him for this in eternity.  
Kyrieleis.**<sup>4</sup>

3. Geh Welt! behalte nur das Deine,  
Ich will und mag nichts von dir haben,  
Der Himmel ist nun meine,  
An diesem soll sich meine Seele laben.  
Dein Gold ist ein vergänglich Gut,  
Dein Reichthum ist geborget,  
Wer dies besitzt, der ist gar schlecht versorget.  
Drum sag ich mit getrostem Mut:

3. Be gone, world, keep only what is yours;  
I want and wish to have nothing of you.  
Heaven is now mine;  
In this my soul shall refresh itself.  
Your gold is a fleeting good,  
Your wealth is borrowed;  
He who possesses this is downright poorly provided for.  
That is why I say with assured courage:

**4. Was frag ich nach der Welt  
Und allen ihren Schätzen,  
Wenn ich mich nur an dir,  
Mein Jesu, kann ergötzen!  
Dich hab ich einzig mir  
Zur Wollust vorgestellt;  
Du, du bist meine Lust:  
Was frag ich nach der Welt!**<sup>5</sup>

**4. Why would I ask [anything] of the world  
And all its treasures  
When I can find enjoyment,  
My Jesus, only in you?  
You alone have I  
Set before me for delectation.<sup>6</sup>  
You, you are my delight:  
Why would I ask [anything] of the world?**

5. Was die Welt  
In sich hält,  
Muss als wie ein Rauch vergehen.  
Aber was mir Jesus gibt,  
Und was meine Seele liebt,

5. What the world  
Contains  
Must, like smoke, fade away.  
But what Jesus gives me,<sup>7</sup>  
And what my soul loves,

<sup>1</sup>John 3:1. Luther's rendering of the passage involves one more word: "Sehet, welch eine Liebe hat uns der Vater erzeiget, dass wir Gottes Kinder *sollen* heissen" ("See what love [God] the father has shown us, that we [Christians] *should* be called God's children").

<sup>2</sup>A stanza of "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ."

<sup>3</sup>"Freu" and "dank" are imperative, not indicative. The indicative forms "freut sich" and "dankt" have only one syllable anyway, but the imperative forms "freue dich" and "danke," when clipped of their second syllables, smoothly accommodate the hymn's melody.

<sup>4</sup>"Kyrieleis" is a contraction of the Greek expression "Kyrie eleison" ("Lord [God], have mercy [upon us]").

<sup>5</sup>A stanza of "Was frag ich nach der Welt."

<sup>6</sup>In eighteenth-century and later German, the word "Wollust" was generally employed to refer to pleasure/indulgence in a negative sense (as a vice, for example, in the libretto from Bach's Cantata 213); but in older German (as in this hymn stanza), "Wollust" could refer to delectation, with positive connotations.

<sup>7</sup>What Jesus gives foremost, according to the New Testament, is "eternal life."

Bleibet fest und ewig stehen.

Remains, securely and eternally.<sup>8</sup>

6. Der Himmel bleibet mir gewiss,  
Und den besitz ich schon im Glauben.  
Der Tod, die Welt und Sünde,  
Ja selbst das ganze Höllenheer  
Kann mir, als einem Gotteskinde,  
Denselben nun und nimmermehr  
Aus meiner Seele rauben.  
Nur dies, nur einzig dies macht mir noch Kümmernis,  
Dass ich noch länger soll auf dieser Welt verweilen;  
Denn Jesus will den Himmel mit mir teilen,  
Und darzu hat er mich erkoren,  
Deswegen ist er Mensch geboren.

6. Heaven remains certain to me,<sup>9</sup>  
And already in faith I possess it.  
Death, the world and sin,  
Yea, even the whole host of hell,  
Cannot snatch from me, as a child of God,  
The selfsame [heaven], now or ever,  
Out of my soul.  
Only this, only this alone still causes me grief:  
That I shall tarry yet longer in this world;  
For Jesus wants to share heaven with me,  
And for this he has chosen me;  
That is why he was born a human being.

7. Von der Welt verlang ich nichts,  
Wenn ich nur den Himmel erbe.  
Alles, alles geb ich hin,  
Weil ich genug versichert bin,  
Dass ich ewig nicht verderbe.

7. I desire nothing of the world,  
If only I inherit heaven.  
I give up everything, everything,  
Because I am amply reassured  
That I will not perish eternally.

**8. Gute Nacht, o Wesen,  
Das die Welt erlesen,  
Mir gefällt du nicht.  
Gute Nacht, ihr Sünden,  
Bleibet weit dahinten,  
Kommt nicht mehr ans Licht!  
Gute Nacht, du Stolz und Pracht,  
Dir sei ganz, du Lasterleben,  
Gute Nacht gegeben!**<sup>10</sup>

**8. Good night, oh [corrupted] essence  
That the world has chosen;<sup>11</sup>  
You do not please me.  
Good night, you sins;  
Remain far behind;  
Come no more into the light.<sup>12</sup>  
Good night, you pride and splendor;  
To you, you life of vice,<sup>13</sup> be altogether  
Bid good night.**

<sup>8</sup>A fuller understanding of these lines is provided by their source texts in the Luther's Bibles of Bach's day: 1 John 2:17, "Die Welt vergehet mit ihrer Lust; wer aber den Willen Gottes tut, der bleibet in Ewigkeit" ("The world, with its delight, fades away; but whoever does the will of God, he remains into eternity"); Psalm 37:20, "Die Feinde des Herrn werden vergehen, wie der Rauch vergehet" ("Like smoke fades away, the enemies of the Lord will fade away"); James 4:4, "Wer der Welt Freund sein will, der wird Gottes Feind sein" ("Whoever wants to be the world's friend, he will be God's enemy").

<sup>9</sup>That is, in Jesus, I experience a foretaste of heaven already now on earth, and I remain certain that after I die I will go to heaven.

<sup>10</sup>A stanza of "Jesu, meine Freude."

<sup>11</sup>The verb is past tense: "Das die Welt erlesen [hat]"; present tense would be: "Das die Welt erliest." "Die Welt" is the subject of the verb "erlesen," and "Wesen" is the object. "Wesen" means "essence," but it would not make theological sense to say that the world has chosen its primeval essence. "Wesen" here in connection with "die Welt" more likely refers to the changed essence of the "world" after the fall of humanity into sin, such that human nature and thus "the world" have become essentially corrupted. According to traditional Christian doctrine, only God can restore humanity and the world to the perfect condition before humanity's fall into sin. This understanding about the essence of "the world" is reflected in Luther's rendering of 1 Corinthians 7:31, "Denn das Wesen dieser Welt vergeht" ("For [with the coming of God's messiah, Jesus,] the [corrupted] essence of this world is fading away").

<sup>12</sup>The idea here is that one's sinfulness should not come forth "into the light" by manifesting itself in actual evil deeds; this language is derived from John 3:20, "Wer Arges tut, der ... kommt nicht an das Licht, auf dass seine Werk nicht gestraft werden" ("Whoever does bad, he ... comes not into the light, so that his works will not be [exposed and hence] punished").

Johann Oswald Knauer, adapted

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



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<sup>13</sup>“Lasterleben” means “life of vice,” not “burdensome life”; it corresponds to what Cicero and others called the “vita infamis” (“disreputable life”).