

## "Erschallet, ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten!" BWV 172

1. Erschallet, ihr Lieder, erklinget, ihr Saiten!  
O seligste Zeiten!  
Gott will sich die Seelen zu Tempeln bereiten.

2. *Wer mich liebet, der wird mein Wort halten,  
und mein Vater wird ihn lieben, und wir werden  
zu ihm kommen und Wohnung bei ihm machen.*<sup>3</sup>

3. Heiligste Dreieinigkeit,  
Grosser Gott der Ehren,  
Komm doch, in der Gnadenzeit  
Bei uns einzukehren;  
Komm doch in die Herzenshütten,

1. Ring out, you songs; sound out, you strings;<sup>1</sup>  
O most blessed times;  
God will prepare [Christian] souls as temples [for him to inhabit].<sup>2</sup>

2. *Whoever loves me [Jesus], he will keep my word,<sup>4</sup> and  
[God] my father will love him; and we [God the father and I]<sup>5</sup>  
will come to him<sup>6</sup> and make [our] dwelling place in him.<sup>7</sup>*

3. Most holy Trinity,  
Great God of honor,<sup>9</sup>  
Do come, at the time of grace,<sup>10</sup>  
To sojourn in us.  
Do come into the tabernacles<sup>11</sup> of the heart,

<sup>1</sup>These exuberant commands concern more than the praise of God. In Lutheran understanding, God's "Gnadengegenwart" ("Grace-Presence") would be summoned by the sound of the music to inhabit the hearts of believers. Bach noted (in the 1740s) in the margin of his personal Bible, at 2 Chronicles 5:13, concerning music in the Jerusalem Temple under King David: "NB. Bei einer andächtigen *Musique* ist allezeit Gott mit seiner Gnadengegenwart" ("NB. At a [rendering of] devotional *Musique*, God is always manifest by means of his Grace-Presence"). The Hebrew Bible passage that Bach was commenting on was believed to convey God's foreshadowing of Christian liturgical music: at the sound of the priestly music of the Israelites, the "Glory of the LORD" (Luther Bibles, "Herrlichkeit des HERRN") was summoned to inhabit the ancient literal Temple, manifested by means of a visible "mist" ("Nebel") or "cloud" ("Wolke") enclosing God's invisible Grace-Presence; likewise, then, the sound of the cantata would summon God's Grace-Presence to enter the new figurative Temple, the hearts of Bach's performers and listeners. Regarding the "temple" of the Christian believer's soul/body/heart, see fn. 2 and fn. 11, below.

<sup>2</sup>"Soul" is used in this movement of the cantata simply in the sense of a "[bodily alive] person," not the "[incorporeal] spirit [of a dead, or alive, person]." Technically, it is the Christian believer's *body* that God inhabits as a "temple." In the Luther Bibles of Bach's day, 1 Corinthians 6:19 reads "Wisset ihr nicht, dass euer Leib ein Tempel des Heiligen Geistes ist, der in euch ist, welchen ihr habt von Gott, und seid nicht euer selbst" ("Do you [followers of Jesus] not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own").

<sup>3</sup>John 14:23.

<sup>4</sup>In Lutheran interpretation, "to keep the word [of Jesus]" meant to accept, through the gift of faith, the gospel's message of salvation in Christ.

<sup>5</sup>This biblical text speaks directly of Jesus and God the father. Luther held, however, that the "we" here must refer to the three persons of the Holy Trinity: God the father, God the son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. The cantata's next movement thus speaks of the Trinity coming "to sojourn in us," namely in "the tabernacles of the heart" of Christian believers.

<sup>6</sup>Some translations read "We [*Christians*] will come unto *Him* [God] and make our abode with *Him* [with God, in heaven]." Although grammatically plausible, this rendering cannot be right, as it wholly misconstrues the biblical context.

<sup>7</sup>In this context the phrase "und Wohnung bei ihm machen," strictly speaking, does not mean "and take up residence *with* him"—the German "bei" is used here more in the sense of "*in*" than of "*with*." On the biblical notion that God lives "*in*" the body of the Christian believer, see fn. 2, above. (God's living "*in*" the believer's body is the subject, also, of movement 3.)

<sup>9</sup>The modern genitive singular "Gott der Ehre" was given as "Gott der Ehren" in older German.

<sup>10</sup>"Gnadenzeit" is a synonym for "Gnadenfrist" ("grace period," or "time of pardon," or "time of remission/redemption"). The term is also employed theologically to refer to the whole era of Christian salvation.

<sup>11</sup>"*Hütten* [of the heart]," here, is essentially a biblically derived synonym for the "*Tempeln* [of the soul]" in movement 1. The Luther Bibles had employed the word "Hütte" ("habitation") both for the "tent of meeting" and for the "tabernacle" of the ancient Israelites in the wilderness during their exodus from slavery in Egypt into freedom in Canaan. The tabernacle described in the Hebrew Bible was an elaborate portable sanctuary whose shape and contents foreshadowed Solomon's Temple, the center of Israelite national life in its biblical period.

Sind sie gleich gering und klein,  
Komm und lass dich doch erbitten,  
Komm und ziehe bei uns ein!<sup>8</sup>

Even though they are lowly and small;  
Come and do let yourself be entreated,<sup>12</sup>  
Come and take up residence in us.

4. O Seelenparadies,  
Das Gottes Geist durchwehet;  
Der bei der Schöpfung blies,  
Der Geist, der nie vergehet;  
Auf, auf, bereite dich,  
Der Tröster nahet sich.

4. O paradise of the soul,<sup>13</sup>  
Through which God's [Holy] Spirit wafts;<sup>14</sup>  
[The Spirit] who blew [living breath into Adam] at creation,<sup>15</sup>  
The Spirit who never perishes.<sup>16</sup>  
Up, up, [soul,] prepare yourself;  
The Comforter [Holy Spirit]<sup>17</sup> draws near.

5. [ANIMA]  
Komm, lass mich nicht länger warten,  
Komm, du sanfter Himmelswind,  
Wehe durch den Herzengarten!<sup>18</sup>  
[SPIR(ITU)S. S(ANCTU)S.]  
Ich erquickte dich, mein Kind.  
[ANIMA]

5. [SOUL]  
Come, let me wait no longer;  
Come, you gentle wind of heaven,  
Waft through the garden<sup>19</sup> of the heart;  
[HOLY SPIRIT]

<sup>8</sup>In the text booklets made available to Bach's fellow congregants in 1731, this line reads "Komm und *kehre* bei uns *ein*" ("Come and *sojourn* in us"), and some modern editions of the cantata provide this reading. Bach's surviving musical materials, however, clearly read "Komm und *ziehe* bei uns *ein*" ("Come and *take up residence* in us"). In any event, the meanings of the verbs *einkehren* and *einziehen* are very similar.

<sup>12</sup>The hope that God can be entreated especially if he is dwelling in the temple is expressed in 2 Chronicles 6:18-20.

<sup>13</sup>The "Seelen" in "Seelenparadies" is genitive singular ("paradise of the soul"), not plural ("paradise of souls"). See also the sense of line 5, whose command is in the singular.

<sup>14</sup>On the the Holy Spirit's inhabiting the soul, see fn. 2, above; see also fn. 22, below. The soul is being likened here to the "paradise" of the Garden of Eden in the creation narratives from the Hebrew Bible. In Genesis 1:2, the "ruach elohim" ("breath/spirit of God" or "wind from God") is said to hover over the waters of the earth at creation (considered a "paradise" before Adam and Eve's fall into sin, which brought their expulsion from Eden). Luther rendered the "ruach elohim" as "der Geist Gottes" ("the Spirit of God"), and he understood "the Spirit" to be "the Holy Spirit," the Third Person of the Trinity (see fn. 5, above).

<sup>15</sup>The language of this line is derived from Genesis 2:7, "Und GOTT der HERR machte den Menschen aus einem Erdenkloss, und blies ihm ein den lebendigen Odem in seine Nase; und also ward der Mensch eine lebendige Seele" ("And the LORD GOD made the man [Adam] out of a clump of earth, and into his nose blew him living breath; and thus the man became a living soul").

<sup>16</sup>"The Spirit [of God] who never perishes" is probably meant in contrast to the "spirit" of the writer of Psalm 143:7, who says "HERR, erhöre mich bald; mein Geist vergeht" ("Lord, hear me soon; my spirit perishes").

<sup>17</sup>The expression "the Comforter" is derived from John 14:16, "Es ist euch gut, dass ich hingehe; denn so ich nicht hingehe, so kommt der Tröster nicht zu euch; so ich aber gehe, will ich ihn zu euch senden" ("It is good for you [disciples] that I [Jesus] should go there [to heaven]; for if I should not go there, then the Comforter will not come to you; but if I should go, I will send him to you"). At the time of the writing of the gospel, the Greek term "ho parakletos" ("the paraclete"), which Luther rendered as "the Comforter," apparently carried a range of meanings, from "the [legal] advocate/helper" to "the [all-purpose] comforter/helper" (inclining, however, toward the legal connotation). Luther, following traditional interpretation since the time of the early postbiblical church fathers, took John's term to be a title for the Third Person of the Trinitarian God, "the Holy Spirit"; also, John 14:26 had identified "the paraclete/Paraclete" with "the holy/Holy spirit/Spirit" that God would send to the followers of Jesus after he, Jesus, had departed.)

<sup>18</sup>This line, curiously, is missing in the text booklets that were made available to Bach's fellow congregants in 1731. It was most likely a simple printing error.

<sup>19</sup>Regarding the "wind" (identified with "the Spirit of God") and the "garden [of Eden]," see fn. 14, above. These lines also draw on the language of Song of Solomon 4:16, "Stehe auf, Nordwind, und komm, Südwind, und wehe durch meinen Garten" ("Arise, northwind, and come, southwind, and waft through my garden"). In Lutheran interpretation of this passage, the "wind" was the Holy Spirit that wafts through the "garden/paradise" of the community of believers, first as a harsh northwind that chastens them (with the condemning harshness of the law) and then as a warm southwind that revives them (with the loving grace of the gospel).

Liebste Liebe, die so süsse,  
 Aller Wollust Überfluss,  
 Ich vergeh, wenn ich dich misse.  
 [SPIRITUS SANCTUS]  
 Nimm von mir den Gnadenkuss.  
 [ANIMA]  
 Sei im Glauben mir willkommen,  
 Höchste Liebe, komm herein!  
 Du hast mir das Herz genommen.  
 [SPIRITUS SANCTUS]  
 Ich bin dein, und du bist mein!

I will revive<sup>20</sup> you, my child.  
 [SOUL]  
 Most beloved love that [is] so sweet,  
 The superfluity of all [virtuous] pleasure,<sup>21</sup>  
 I will perish if I want for you.  
 [HOLY SPIRIT]  
 Accept from me the kiss of grace.  
 [SOUL]  
 Be welcome to me in faith;  
 Supreme love, come in [to my garden].  
 You have captured my heart;<sup>22</sup>  
 [HOLY SPIRIT]  
 I am yours, and you are mine.<sup>23</sup>

**6. Von Gott kömmt mir ein Freudenschein,  
 Wenn du mit deinen Äugelein  
 Mich freundlich tust anblicken.  
 O Herr Jesu, mein trautes Gut,  
 Dein Wort, dein Geist, dein Leib und Blut  
 Mich innerlich erquicken.  
 Nimm mich  
 Freundlich  
 In dein Arme, dass ich warme werd von Gnaden:  
 Auf dein Wort komm ich geladen.<sup>24</sup>**

**6. A halo of joy<sup>25</sup> comes [into view] to me from God  
 When you [Jesus] do glance amicably at me  
 With your dear little eyes.<sup>26</sup>  
 O Lord Jesus, my cherished possession,  
 Your word, your Spirit,<sup>27</sup> your body and blood  
 Inwardly<sup>28</sup> revive me.  
 Take me  
 Amicably  
 Into your arms, that I may be warmed<sup>29</sup> by [God's] grace;**

<sup>20</sup>“Erquicken” can mean “to refresh,” but here—especially in light of the sense of line 3 from movement 4—it seems more to connote “to revive,” as is the case with the old-fashioned English verb “to quicken” (to give or restore spiritual life to, to revive, to animate).

<sup>21</sup>The language of this line is derived from Psalm 36:9, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “du tränkest sie mit Wollust als mit einem Strom” (“you [God] give them [the ‘children of men’] of [virtuous] pleasure to drink, as of a river”). The Lutheranism of Bach’s day made a distinction between a “vernünftige Wollust” (“reasonable pleasure”) that is of God and a “verderbte Wollust” (“corrupted pleasure”) that is of the world.

<sup>22</sup>A verbatim quotation of Song of Songs 4:9, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach’s day reads “Du hast mir das Herz genommen, ... liebe Braut” (“You have captured my heart, beloved bride”). The “bride” and the “bridegroom”/king of the Song of Songs were understood in Christian interpretation to be a foreshadowing of Jesus and the church or the individual Christian soul, who would be “wed” at the end time. The “garden” of the Christian heart is the place that the cantata text is asking the Holy Spirit to enter.

<sup>23</sup>An allusion to Song of Songs 2:16 and 6:3, “Mein Freund ist mein, und ich bin sein” (“My beloved is mine, and I am his”), which is expressed, however, by the female lover (who was taken to foreshadow the Christian soul—see fn. 22, above), not by the male lover.

<sup>24</sup>A stanza of “Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern.”

<sup>25</sup>The “Freudenschein” is a synonym for “Gnadenschein,” the halo that surrounds Jesus’s head and back in artistic depictions of his glory.

<sup>26</sup>“Mit deinen Äugelein” (often mistranslated as singular) means, literally, “with your little eyes.” But the diminutive (“Äugelein”) was clearly meant to be read as an endearment term (“dear eyes,” or “dear little eyes”), even if the principal motivation for its use was simply to provide a rhyme for “Freudenschein.”

<sup>27</sup>Romans 8:9 speaks of the “spirit/Spirit of Christ” (Luther: “Christi Geist”); in Lutheran interpretation this referred to the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, described as being not only God the father’s but also Christ’s Holy Spirit.

<sup>28</sup>That is, spiritually.

<sup>29</sup>On the warmth of God’s grace, see the note on the warmth of the gospel in fn. 19, above.

7. CHORUS REPETATUR AB INITIO

Salomo Franck (attrib)

**At your word I come, invited [into the kingdom of God].<sup>30</sup>**

7. REPEAT OPENING CHORUS<sup>31</sup>

(transl. Michael Marissen and Daniel R. Melamed)



Scan or go to <http://www.bachcantatatexts.org/BWV172> for an annotated translation

<sup>30</sup>An allusion to Luke 14:15-17, which in the Luther Bibles of Bach's day reads "Sprach er zu ihm: Selig ist, der das Brot isst im Reiche Gottes; er aber sprach zu ihm: Es war ein Mensch, der machte ein gross Abendmahl, und lud viel dazu; und sandte seinen Knecht aus zur Stunde des Abendmahls, zu sagen den Geladenen: Kommt, denn es ist alles bereit; und sie fingen an, alle nach einander, sich zu entschuldigen" ("He [a fellow dinner guest] said to him [Jesus], 'Blessed is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of God'; but he [Jesus] said to him, 'There was a man who made a great supper, and invited many to it; and at the hour of the supper [he] sent his servant out, to tell the invited: "Come, for everything is prepared"; and they began, everyone after another, to excuse themselves'").

<sup>31</sup>In Bach's performances in the 1710–20s, the opening chorus was repeated; his later performances included only movements 1–6.