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Concert: The Beatitudes

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The Beatitudes

AN ORATORIO
BY
CESAR FRANCK

BERT R. LYON · CONDUCTOR
MAURICE C. WHITNEY · ORGANIST

SOLOISTS
JOSEPH LAUTNER · JOHN G. BAUMGARTNER
ELWOOD R. SCHWAN · CLIFFORD M. ORMSBY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 1932
SEVEN-THIRTY O’CLOCK

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
ITHACA, NEW YORK

WILLIAM F. HASTINGS, Minister
PROGRAM

Invocation

Reb. William F. Hastings

THE BEATITUDES

"The Beatitudes" takes for its text a poetical paraphrase of the Gospel. Satan vanquished by Christ, and suffering humanity regenerated by the Redeemer, are the themes of the poem, which is divided into a prologue and eight beatitudes. The formal oratorio style of "The Messiah" and "Elijah" are discarded for the more homogeneous form of the symphonic poem, and the work might, with propriety, be called a symphonic oratorio.

Each of the eight beatitudes is itself a short poem containing contrasting ideas; first, an exposition of the desires, the sorrows, the vices and evils which reign on earth; then the celestial affirmation of the healing of these evils and the promise of heavenly joy and peace. Finally the voice of Christ is heard proclaiming the beatitude which awaits those who are healed and sanctified.

The constant recurrence of the motive associated with the Christ, produces the unity of design found in the modern music drama. It is a melody so simple yet so striking that it cannot be forgotten after its appearance in the opening measures of the prologue.

THE PROLOGUE paints the picture of the old world, full of hate and desperation, and announces the coming of the Saviour.

Dark brooded fear o'er the land;
Oppression's pitiless hand
Crushed and degraded the weak.

The angels, hov'ring around the Master, chant their song:

O blessed be He, who now is pouring
Sweet Hope into hearts dark with fear.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE FIRST BEATITUDE opens with an energetic chorus for male voices in praise of riches and pleasure:

All the wealth of the Earth is our desire!

To this the celestial voices softly respond:

When our hearts are oppressed in the midst of our pleasure,
And despair without measure
Has filled us with dread,
Say, where has gladness fled?
The Voice of Christ declares him blessed who turns his heart from worldly pride; the celestial voices take up the theme, and in a moving and uplifting chorus, bring the beatitude to a close:

*Blessed is he in whom God's grace and love aboundeth;*  
*Angels for him heaven's gates fling open wide.*

_Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth._

THE SECOND BEATITUDE is introduced by a subject, first sung by the altos, expressive of utter hopelessness:

*The earth is dark, heaven's light has faded,*  
*Shedding no bright ray;*  
*Ev'ry hope with sorrow is shaded,*  
*And passeth away.*

The celestial choir sings softly:

*Poor human souls, thus*  
*Striving for the fitful joys of Earth!*  
*Whom deadly sin is driving!*  
*Give holy Meekness birth.*  
*Her sacred lamp burns ever brightly.*  
*She, only, can allay your care.*  
*She, only, maketh hang more lightly*  
*Those chains which goad you to despair.*

Consolation comes when the Voice of Christ proclaims the text of the Gospel itself.

_Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be Comforted._

THE THIRD BEATITUDE is a poignant song of Sorrow,

*Grief o'er all creatures reigns supreme.*

The gentle Voice of Christ answers:

_Blessed are the mourners, for they shall be consoled._

The celestial chorus ends the beatitude:

_O, blessed forever, they who suffer pain._

_Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,*  
*for they shall be filled._

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE is given to a solo tenor voice and is "a powerful expression of the soul’s despair, its appeal to divine justice, its striving after holiness." At its close, the Voice of Christ points the way to heaven.

Offertory
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

THE SIXTH BEATITUDE opens with a lament by pagan and Jewish women who mourn their departed Gods. Pharisees unite in a quartet of vain self-justification. The Angel of Death summons all before the judgment-seat of God. The angels are heard singing:

*Earthly knowledge, wisdom and merit*
*Ne'er make the gates of heaven unroll;*
*Only the meek and child-like soul,*
*Pure in heart and humble in spirit,*
*May enter this bright, holy place.*

In the actual words of the Gospel, Christ proclaims the words of consolation once more, and the celestial choir, with a final outburst of glory, brings the song to a close.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

THE SEVENTH BEATITUDE introduces Satan, who is heard summoning his followers, all the enemies of heaven. With hatred and fury, the choruses of tyrants, pagan priests and the multitude enter with wild and riotous music, calling for death and destruction. At no place in the oratorio is the Voice of Christ more sublime than in the simple answer:

*Blessed are they, who, with voice beseeching,*
*Turn aside wrath and vengeance;*
*They shall win eternal light.*

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE EIGHTH BEATITUDE brings another arrogant outburst from Satan, who hurls superb defiance at Christ. But He whom Satan defies, disdains to reply. It is the chorus of the Just whose voices are now heard singing, invoking Eternal Justice with unshaken faith. Christ, victorious, summons all the host of the righteous, and with ringing Hosannas, the angels acclaim in broad and massive tones, the eternal glories of those who enter the kingdom of heaven.

Benediction
The Choir
SELECTED FROM
THE ITHACA COLLEGE CHORUS

SOPRANOS
Iola Angood
Thelma Cautin
Ruby Coral
Eunice Elder
Anna Faller
Thelma Field
Edna Furr
Gladys Greenwald
Gladys Gross
Katherine Harris
Helen Hemman
Josephine Jacuzzo
Catherine James
Lorraine Johnston
Ruth Krusa
Marian LaFountain
Virginia Mather
Helen McGivney
Verna Moore
Gladys Reiner
Janet Rice
Dorothea Saunders
Kathryn Stickel
Dorothy Shelly
Grace VanZant
Winona Weed
Mrs. Winifred Williams

ALTOS
Frances Alexander
Ruth Austin
Helen Bowman
Katharine Campbell
Pauline Craig
Elizabeth Eddy
Martha Gifford
Elva Gross
Martha Holland
Ruth Kenney
Mrs. Dorothy Little
Dorothy Loesges
Rachele Lucia
Harriet Penniman
Miriam Prior
Carryl Sayre
Marian Taber
Alma Wilcox
Mrs. Florence Wilcox
Mary Zanin

TENORS
Lewis Bierly
Thomas Brown
Charles Budesheim
Carmen Caiazza
Urban Carvallo
William Dowler
Alton Fraleigh
Walter Frome
John Gleason
Anthony Gorruso
Dudley Mairs
Albert Odell
Joseph Sheckard
Reginald Sweet
George VanKurin

BASSES
William Bagley
Joseph Borelli
Charles Davis
Roger diNucci
Harris Dersham
George Driscoll
Ernest Eames
Oscar Ekberg
Arthur Garvey
Ray Hewitt
Raymond Howard
Donald Hubbard
Richard Kainu
John Kupsky
Kenneth Leiby
Paul Mackey
Clarke Maynard
Alexander Milne
Willard Musser
Clifford Ormsby
Richard Otto
Samuel Patinka
Charles Pavelec
Norman Pugh
Elwood Schwan
Burton Stanley
Erwin Tropp
Walter Voros
Harris Wilson
Bernard Windt
Robert York