

### **1) The Nativity Window, St. Leon Cathedral**

### **2) Handel's Messiah: Bringing Scripture to Life**

Week 3 of 7, John Kincaid, Summer, 2013

### **3) A Friend in Need**

- 2 events came together to change Handel's life
- They arrived when Handel was at his lowest point
- First, a friend, Charles Jennens, gave Handel a gift
- Jennens had written a story of the life of Christ
- Jennens selected Scriptures from the King James
- He had carefully arranged the verses like poetry
- Jennens' text could be easily set to music

### **4) Faith, Hope, and Charity – 1 Cor.13:13**

- 2nd, just then, Handel received a job offer
- A charity wanted him to compose music for a benefit
- Consider the timing & purpose of the 2 events:
  - to spread the good news of Christ and
  - to extend Christian love to the needy
- Consider the response they produced in Handel
- He was transformed from resignation & despair to great joy and a super-human accomplishment
- The facts give compelling evidence of God at work

### **5) A Super-Human Feat – Phil.4:13**

- Handel finished the Christmas portion in 6 days
- He was writing at about 100 times the speed of today's composers, without all their conveniences
- It was not just a brief inspiration for one song
- Handel sustained this pace for 3 weeks!
- Handel's biographers have concluded: it wasn't humanly possible without divine empowerment

### **6) What Handel Experienced**

- Handel tried to explain what he had experienced by quoting 2 Cor.12:2-3, Paul's vision of heaven
- The amount of work, the high quality, combined with the short time required, makes Messiah the greatest accomplishment in the history of musical composition

### **7) A Vision of Heaven**

- For 3 weeks, Handel's servant delivered meals
- He returned later to find Handel's food untouched
- The servant would never forget one special day:
  - As he opened the door, Handel said with tears streaming, "I saw all of heaven before me!"
- The servant recalled the title on the page of music: Hallelujah Chorus, based on Revelation, chapters 11 and 19 - the apostle John's vision of heaven

### **8) Page from Hallelujah Chorus (British Library)**

### **9) A Timeless Classic**

- The 1st performance of Messiah: 1742 in Dublin
- It raised enough \$ to free 100 people from prison
- Musicians were less experienced than in London
- So Handel wrote the music in basic 4-part harmony
- It was designed for a small orchestra
- Only the trumpet and violin have solo parts
- The music has remained popular, partly because most church choirs and orchestras can play it well
- Each generation has discovered new treasures

### **10) Messiah: Rejected, Then Accepted**

- Handel's popularity and success greatly increased after the Messiah, until he died 17 years later
- Even the church eventually accepted Messiah since it was only the singing of Scripture like a worship service
- There was no acting, no costumes or scenery; nothing that could be considered sinful

### **11) Another New Musical Form – Rom.8:28**

- The Bishop of the Church of England had unintentionally done Handel a favor; Messiah cost much less to produce than a sacred opera.
- The new musical form became known as the English oratorio. If you enjoy choir anthems and hymns during Sunday worship, thank Handel.

### **12) It is More Blessed to Give – Acts 20:35**

- Handel continued giving large portions to charities
- He never forgot how the Lord had blessed him
- His giving became so great that centuries later, authors were writing that "Messiah has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and provided for the orphan more than any musical production."
- Perhaps no other composer has contributed so much to the relief of human suffering

### **13) God So Loved the World - 1 Tim.2:3-4**

- Even greater is the spiritual impact of Messiah on listeners worldwide, across the centuries
- The Messiah is a wonderful way into the Bible, especially for people who have never read one
- Messiah has probably done more than all the books written about the Bible, to convince people outside the church that God cares about them, too

### **14) I Wish to Make Them Better - Rom.12:1-8**

- After the first performance in London, Handel was congratulated for the excellent entertainment
- Handel responded by saying "I should be sorry if I only entertain them. I wish to make them better."
- Handel died the day before Easter in 1759, soon after leading his final performance of Messiah

### **15) Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, London**

### **16) I know that my Redeemer liveth – Job 19:25**

- Handel was buried in Westminster Abbey
- Over 3000 people attended His funeral
- Handel's statue at the grave holds Messiah

### **17) Joy of the Lord is Your Strength, Neh.8:10**

- Musical techniques found in the Messiah became highly influential. The great composers Haydn and Beethoven shared how indebted they felt to Handel
- In the years before the Messiah, he refused to give in to the setbacks, illness and financial hardships.
- His life shows that joy comes from relying on God

### **18) Your King is Coming – John 12:15**

- The words of Luke 2 echo the words of Isaiah 40
- The song For Unto Us proclaims the king is coming
- We expect Messiah to be born with a trumpet fanfare
- But He was born in a lowly cattle shed. The next sounds we hear aren't trumpets, but tranquil strings

**19) The Little Hills Rejoice – Psalm 65:12**

- The setting for Pastoral Symphony is not a palace
- It is a Bethlehem hillside where David had written “The Lord is my shepherd” 1000 years earlier
- Our word pastor is from the Latin for shepherd
- Messiah speaks of flocks, lambs, and yokes
- This is a rural scene, in the quiet countryside
- The Messiah’s birth is good news for all people
- The news was given first to certain poor shepherds

**20) In the Presence of the Lord – 1 Sam.6:20**

- The angel appears; the shepherds are terrified
- Listen to the soprano’s voice and the violins
- If you don’t feel some chills here, you might want to check and see if you have a pulse
- The shepherds are suddenly in God’s presence
- Old Testament prophets feared to even describe it

**21) He Gives Us the Victory – 1 Cor.15:57**

- The multitude of the heavenly host joined the angel
- The Greek word for host means “army”
- The “Lord of hosts” means God of armies
- God’s Son had arrived, prepared for battle
- But the message was about the Prince of Peace
- His love would give believers the victory over sin

**22) Pastoral Symphony/There Were Shepherds Lk.2:8**

**23) And, Lo, the Angel – Luke 2:9** And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

**24) And the Angel Said – Luke 2:10-11**

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

**25) And Suddenly – Luke 2:13**

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying:

**26) Glory to God - Luke 2:14** Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men.

**27) The Purpose of His Birth**

- Jesus was born so that He could die for our sins
- God’s plan before creation. Rev.13:8; 1 Pet.1:20
- The decision was not Pontius Pilate's. John 19:11
- The priests, who desperately wanted Jesus dead, said "but not during Passover." Matt.26:1-5
- Jesus, not His enemies, set the time for Calvary
- Jesus willingly went to the cross. Matt.26:53

**28) Rejoice in the Lord Always - Phil.4:4**

- Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem not on a white horse, but on a small donkey
- Just as Zech.9:9 had foretold, 500 years earlier
- Consider what God did for us in Luke 2
- Handel leaves the amazed shepherds, and turns back to the prophets, who saw this in advance
- Their response was to rejoice

**29) Rejoice Greatly - Zechariah 9:9-10**

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is the

righteous Savior; he shall speak peace unto the heathen

**30) God is Able – Dan.3:17; 2 Co.9:8; Eph.3:20**

- Meekness is power under control, the perfect balance of strength and compassion
- God was able to bring home the people of Judah
- God is strong: able to save & keep us saved. John 10:28
- God is also gentle. Heb.5:2; 1 Ki.19:12; Matt:11:29

**31) The Good Shepherd - John 10:11**

- Christ is the Good Shepherd
- The Early Church thought of Jesus caring for them
- This is the image Handel wants us to remember

**32) Yesterday, Today and Forever – Heb.13:8**

- As Handel moves from Isaiah 40 to Matthew 11, he is making his statement of faith:
- Isaiah’s gentle shepherd = John’s Good Shepherd
- The two women sing the same tune: “He shall feed his flock” (Old Testament) = “Come unto him” (New Testament)
- The unchanging message: God gives us comfort
- His name is Jesus Christ

**33) Then Shall the Eyes – Isaiah 35:5-6**

Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

**34) He Shall Feed His Flock - Isaiah 40:11**

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: and he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.

**35) Come Unto Him – Matthew 11:28**

Come unto him, all ye that labor, that are heavy laden, and he will give you rest Take his yoke upon you, and learn of him; for he is meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls

**36) His Yoke Is Easy - Matthew 11:30**

His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

**37) Thy Rod, Thy Staff, Thy Yoke**

- The Lord’s rod and staff comfort us. Psalm 23
- The oppressor’s rod and yoke burden us. Isa.9:4
- Christ gave Himself as the sacrifice for our sins
- But in the end, the government will be on His shoulders, not the cross of Calvary
- Christ puts His yoke on us, which is easy to bear
- He harnesses together people from all walks of life, all over the world, from every generation, to serve as ministers of reconciliation. 2 Cor.5:18-21

**38) The True Meaning of Christmas**

- We celebrate Christmas as the birthday of Jesus, the anniversary of God coming to us in Christ
- This separates Christianity from all other religions: God chose us before creation; God is seeking us
- But the true meaning of Christmas is even more

**39) The Greatest Gift**

- Wise men came to Him bearing great gifts
- Christ came to us, so we can come to God
- Our sins are forgiven. There’s no greater gift