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# *A Sermon from the Mountain*

for

Four-part Mixed Voices, Baritone Solo,  
2 Violins, Viola, Cello, Bass, Guitar, Drum, and Organ (*ad libitum*)

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Orchestral materials and vocal score for baritone soloist are available  
from the publisher on a rental basis.

Performance time: 40 minutes

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## NOTES AND TEXT

**A Sermon From The Mountain** is a tribute to the slain leader of the non-violent movement in this country. It was commissioned in April, 1968, by the Franconia Mennonite Chorus, Hiram Hershey, Conductor, and first performed by them on April 13, 1969. There were two main sources of inspiration for its writing: first, the Biblical verses often quoted by Dr. King as the basis for his beliefs, and the Spirituals which so often uniquely illuminate and apply the texts.

My sources for the Biblical texts are Dr. King's sermons, articles (notably **Letter from Birmingham Jail**) and books. Central to an 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." Also, "returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction." And again, "Non-violence is a powerful and just weapon. It is a weapon unique in history, which cuts without wounding and ennoble the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals."

The healing sword was wielded by a musically gifted people. "We did not hesitate to call our movement an army. But it was a special army, with no supplies but its sincerity, no uniform but its determination, no currency but its conscience. It was an army that would move but not maul. It was an army that would sing but not slay. . . In a sense, the freedom songs are the soul of the movement. They are more than just incantations of clever phrases designed to invigorate a campaign; they are as old as the history of the Negro in America. They are adaptations of the songs the slaves sang. . . the sorrow songs, the shouts for joy, the battle hymns and the anthems of our movement. I have heard people talk of their beat and rhythm, but we in the movement are as inspired by their words. . . These songs bind us together, give us courage together, help us to march together."

The **Sermon** is cast in the form of a church service with a leader who intones the sonorous Biblical texts, and a congregation, complete with its own soloists, which responds melodically, rhythmically and emotionally to his preaching. The role of the leader in the complete musical setting is divided between a speaker, who reads from Dr. King's Sermons, and a baritone soloist, who sings the Biblical texts to original music accompanied by string orchestra. The complete vocal score, which contains this music, and the orchestral score and parts are available on rental from the publisher. The part of the baritone soloist may be assumed by the speaker, in which instance the Biblical texts as well as the quotations from Dr. King's speeches are read by him, the chorus singing the responses from the chorus parts. In this manner of performance, the chorus sings the second response **He's the Lily of the Valley** continuously, ignoring the indications of measures rest (the leader having read the complete Biblical text before the chorus begins); or the chorus may pause for the leader to read the verses during the rests. Either the full work or the abbreviated version contained in the Choral Score may be performed with organ alone; organ, guitar and drums (using this score and much imagination on the part of the guitarist and drummer); or as written for organ, guitar, drums and string orchestra.

## I. Invitation

“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,  
Chillun, a-talk of home, Lord.

## II. Blessings

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

### III. Exhortation

“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

“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 at 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

“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: 1-2*)

### *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

“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 our 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 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*)

# A SERMON FROM THE MOUNTAIN

(Martin Luther King)

**Choral Score**

I<sup>a</sup> Invitation  
(Baritone Solo) - Tacet 23 measures

Alice Parker

I<sup>b</sup> Response

## Way up on the mountain

Slow and free

Tenor Solo

Soprano Alto

Tenor Bass

Way up on the mountain, Mountain top, I  
Lord, Lord,

5

T solo

S A

T B

heard God talk-in', Chil-lun, a-talk of home.  
Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord.

10

T Solo

S A

T B

One day, Lord, one day, Climb the mountain, Wid  
Lord, Lord,



II<sup>a</sup> Blessings

(Baritone Solo) - Tacet 32 measures

II<sup>b</sup> Response

He's the Lily of the Valley

33 Andante  $\text{♩} = 72$   
*mp*

Soprano Solo  
He's the Lil - y of the Val - ley, —

Soprano Alto  
O, my

Tenor Bass

37

S Solo  
He's the White Rose of Shar - on, —

S A  
Lord, — He's - a my

T B  
He's my

41

S Solo  
He's the Great Phys - i - cian, — He

S A  
Lord, — He's my Lord,

T B  
He's my Lord,

46

S Solo  
heals your sor - rows. —

S A  
*mp* He's - a my Lord. —

T B  
*mp* He's my Lord. —

Chorus tacet 43 measures

Tempo I

63 31 *mp*

S. Solo He's the Lil - y of the Val - ley, He's the

S A He's my Lord,

T B Hm, He's my Lord,

99

S. Solo White Rose of Shar - on, He's the Lord that

S A Hm, He's my Lord, (hm)

T B He's - a my Lord,

104

S. Solo was and is to come, He's the

S A He's my Lord,

T B Hm, *mf*

108 *espr. ten.*

S. Solo Rock the Church is built up - on.

S A Hm, He's my Lord.

T B Hm, He's - a my Lord.

Chorus tacet 25 measures

III<sup>a</sup> Exhortation  
(Baritone Solo) - Tacet 59 measures

III<sup>b</sup> Response  
I want to live so God can use me

Chorus in unison *Fast* *f*  
 I want to live so God can

Guitar \* *Fast* *f* D

Drum \* *f*

Organ *Fast* *f*

3  
 SA TB *Fast* *f*  
 use me, Vic - to - rious in this land; I want to

Bm G A

*mp*

6  
 SA TB *Fast* *f*  
 live so God can use me, Vic - to - rious in this

D Bm G A

*mp*

\* The parts are to be improvised, using the printed notation only as a suggestion.

9

S  
A

land.

T  
B

land. I want to walk so God can use me, Vic -

D D Bm

*f* *mp*

12

S  
A

T  
B

to - rious in this land, I want to walk so God can

G A D

*f* *mp*

15

S  
A

T  
B

use me, Vic - to - rious in this land.

Bm G A D

*mf*

IV<sup>a</sup> The Rule  
 (Baritone Solo) - Tacet 21 measures  
 IV<sup>b</sup> Response  
 (Women's Voices)  
 My feet is tired

As a slow blues ♩ = 60

Contralto Solo

Soprano

Alto

As a slow blues ♩ = 60

Guitar

Drum

As a slow blues ♩ = 60

Organ

3

Alto Solo

*mp*

My feet is

Cm Cm7 Abmaj7

6

Alto Solo

tired\* but my soul

Cm Cm7 Cm6

♩ = ♩<sub>3</sub> ♩, with a relaxed swing.  
 \* Pronounce ti-uhd

8

A Solo

is at rest,

Abmaj7 Gsus C Cm Cm7

10

A Solo

My feet is tired, but my soul is at

Abmaj7 Cm Fm Cm Abmaj7

13

A Solo

rest. My feet is tired, but my

Cm Cm7 Abmaj7 Cm Cm7

*mf* *mp*

V<sup>a</sup> The Promise  
(Baritone Solo) - Tacet 141 measures

V<sup>b</sup> Response  
Well, I feel all right

Moderately fast with a swing

Tenor Solo

*mf* Well, I feel all right,

Soprano Alto

*mf* No con - dem - na - tion,

Tenor Bass

*mf* No con - dem - na - tion,

Drum

Moderately fast with a swing

*mf*

3

T Solo

Feel all right, Well, I feel all right,

S A

*Hm* O, no con - dem - na - tion, *Hm* O,

T B

*Hm* O, no con - dem - na - tion, *Hm* O,

Drum

6

T Solo

O, there's no con - dem - na - tion in my

S A

no con - dem - na - tion, O,

T B

no con - dem - na - tion, O,

Drum

8

T Solo  
soul. I been born of God,—

S A  
No con - dem-na-tion in my soul. \_\_\_\_\_  
No. \_\_\_\_\_ Born of God,

T B  
No. \_\_\_\_\_ Born of God, \_\_\_\_\_

11

T Solo  
No con - dem-na-tion, Born of God,— No con-dem-na-tion, I been  
Born of God,— Born of God,—

S A  
Born of God, \_\_\_\_\_ Born of God, \_\_\_\_\_  
Born of God, \_\_\_\_\_

T B  
Born of God, \_\_\_\_\_

14

T Solo  
born of God,— No con-dem-na-tion, O there's no con - dem-na-tion in my  
Born of God, O!

S A  
Born of God,— Born of God,—  
Born of God,—

T B  
Born of God, \_\_\_\_\_



VI<sup>a</sup> The Reward  
(Baritone Solo) - Tacet 35 measures

VI<sup>b</sup> Response  
Let justice roll down like waters

36  $\text{♩} = 72$  *marcato*

Soprano  
Alto

Tenor  
Bass

*mp unis.*

Let jus - tice roll \_\_\_\_\_ down like

$\text{♩} = 72$   
\* D open

Guitar  
Drum

*p*

Organ

$\text{♩} = 72$   
*mp*

39 *mp unis.*

S  
A

Let jus - tice roll \_\_\_\_\_ down like

T  
B

wa - ters, \_\_\_\_\_

\* D and A only

43

S  
A

wa - ters,

T  
B

Let jus - tice roll down like

47

S  
A

Down like wa - ters to the

T  
B

wa - ters to the

G

51

S  
A

sea.

T  
B

sea. Let jus - tice

\* C open

mf

mf

\* C and G only