

WORSHIP NOTES

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost • October 16, 2011

The Season

The Sundays after Pentecost are numbered consecutively to mark the passage of time, and they are a valuable reminder that the Christian life is an everyday vocation. We celebrate our growth as individual believers and as the body of Christ, and in this harvest season we recognize and give thanks for the many gifts and blessings we have received. Today, in the midst of our current economic troubles and heated political climate, we hear a timely reminder that the ultimate claim on our lives belongs to God. We are challenged to look at our lives, our schedules, our priorities, the sum total of what makes up our living and consider a question. What belongs to God?

In Word . . .

In our reading from Second Isaiah, Cyrus, a civil authority, is an instrument of God's goodness, liberating Israel from Babylonian captivity. Today's psalm is one of the seven enthronement psalms that declare the "kingship of the Lord," and emphasize the sovereignty of God over all nations. Our Gospel also enters the civil arena as the Pharisees and Herodians (a political faction loyal to the House of Herod) question Jesus on the subject of paying taxes. Jesus recognizes the intent of their question and does not resolve the issue, but gives it back to them (and us) to struggle with. "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's." In Jesus' questions, whose head, whose title, we hear echoes of Genesis 1:27; and we are reminded that we are made in the image of God. If the emperor claims a coin that bears his image, then certainly God claims whatever bears his image. We are children of God; made in God's image . . . What would it mean if we allowed that identity to shape everything we do? It doesn't solve all difficulties or challenges of living in this world and being faithful to God, but it does point to a way to go in dealing with conflicting loyalties and claims on our lives. In every age Christians are faced with balancing the demands of Caesar with the commands of God. Paul summons the community at Thessalonica to persevere and grow in "the work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope." What better way could there be to repay to God what is truly God's?

And Song . . .

Traditional (9:00)

"O Bread of Life from Heaven" is a Latin hymn translated by Philip Schaff and first published in *Christ in Song* in 1869. The tune, O WELT, ICH MUSS DICH LASSEN, is a 15th century German melody adapted by Heinrich Isaac, 1539; harmony by Johann Sebastian Bach, 1729. Today's prelude, composed by Emma Lou Diemer, is based on this tune. Emma Lou Diemer was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and studied music at Yale University. She earned a doctorate in composition from Eastman School of Music and was a Fulbright scholar at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, Belgium. She now serves as organist at First Presbyterian Church in Santa Barbara. In 1995 she was named AGO composer of the year. Diemer brings an innovative approach to the challenge of the juxtaposition of tonal melodic material with contemporary harmonic material.

Contemporary (10:30)

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam (all for the greater glory of God), often signified by the letters AMDG, was the motto and standard of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Jesuit order. It was the intent of Ignatius to place himself at the service of Christ and to labor with Christ in bringing the Kingdom of God to fulfillment. Today's prelude, "All for your Glory" by Dan Schutte, is based on that motto and is a prayer that everything we do, everything that happens to us, is for God's glory.