

= Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot , BWV 39 =

Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot (Break your bread for the hungry) , BWV 39 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed it in Leipzig and first performed it on 23 June 1726 , the first Sunday after Trinity . About three years earlier , on the first Sunday after Trinity of 1723 , Bach had taken office as Thomaskantor and started his first cycle of cantatas for the occasions of the liturgical year , and on the first Sunday after Trinity 1724 he began his second cycle , consisting of chorale cantatas . As he composed no new work for the first Sunday after Trinity 1725 , Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot is regarded as part of his third cantata cycle .

The text is from a 1704 collection attributed to Duke Ernst Ludwig von Sachsen @-@ Meiningen . The symmetrical structure of seven movements is typical for this collection , beginning with a quotation from the Old Testament , culminating in a central quotation from the New Testament and ending with a chorale . The theme is an invocation to be grateful for God 's gifts and to share them with the needy .

Bach set the opening movement as a complex choral structure , but the central movement as a simple solo for the bass voice , traditionally considered the voice of Jesus . The instrumentation is for woodwinds and strings , including recorders as a symbol of poverty , need and humility . It is possibly the last time that Bach scored recorders in his cantatas .

= = History and text = =

Bach composed the cantata for the first Sunday after Trinity . This Sunday marks the beginning of the second half of the liturgical year , " in which core issues of faith and doctrine are explored " . Bach had taken office as Thomaskantor in Leipzig on that occasion in 1723 , responsible for the education of the Thomanerchor , performances in the regular services in the main churches of the town including Thomaskirche and the Nikolaikirche . He had started the project of composing one cantata for each Sunday and holiday of the liturgical year , termed by Christoph Wolff " an artistic undertaking on the largest scale " . In 1724 he started a project on the first Sunday after Trinity to exclusively compose chorale cantatas , based on the main Lutheran hymn for the respective occasion . After two years of regular cantata composition , Bach performed a cantata by his relative Johann Ludwig Bach for the first Sunday after Trinity in 1725 , and it was not until one year later , at the start of his fourth year in the office , that he composed Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot for the occasion .

The prescribed readings for the Sunday were from the First Epistle of John , (the " God is Love " verses , 1 John 4 : 16 ? 21) , and from the Gospel of Luke (the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus , Luke 16 : 19 ? 31) . While Bach 's first cantata for the occasion , Die Elenden sollen essen , BWV 75 (1723) , had concentrated on the contrast of rich and poor , and his second one , the chorale cantata O Ewigkeit , du Donnerwort , BWV 20 (1724) , had reflected on repentance , the theme of Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot was to be grateful for God 's gifts and share them with the needy .

According to Christoph Wolff and Klaus Hofmann , the cantata text is taken from a 1704 collection which is attributed to Duke Ernst Ludwig von Sachsen @-@ Meiningen . Works from this collection had been set to music by the court composer Johann Ludwig Bach , whose cantatas Bach had frequently performed in 1725 . They all start with an Old Testament quotation , then focus on a New Testament passage in a central movement . The librettist organized the text in seven poetic movements , divided into two distinct parts . Both parts begin with a quotation from the Bible , but not , as in several other Bach cantatas , taken from the prescribed readings . Part I starts with a quotation from the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 58 : 7 ? 8) , Part II begins with a quotation from the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 13 : 16) , which forms the text for the central fourth movement . The first part derives from the words of the prophet a call to love one 's neighbour and to share God 's gifts , the second part similarly deals with thanks for God 's gifts and makes a promise to love one 's neighbour and share . The poet closed the cantata with stanza 6 from David Denicke 's hymn " Kommt , laßt euch den Herren lehren " (1648) , which summarizes the ideas . This hymn is sung to

the melody of " Freu dich sehr , o meine Seele " , which was codified by Louis Bourgeois when setting the Geneva Psalm 42 in his collection of Psalms octante trios de David (Geneva , 1551) . Bourgeois seems to have been influenced by the secular song " Ne l'oseray je dire " contained in the Manuscrit de Bayeux published around 1510 .

Bach first performed the cantata on 23 June 1726 . It is considered to be part of Bach 's third annual cantata cycle in Leipzig . While the first and second cycle lasted one year , according to Christoph Wolff , the cantatas of the third cycle date from a period beginning on the first Sunday after Trinity , 3 June 1725 , and lasting for about three years . Musicologist Julian Mincham notes that " Bach attached personal significance to this particular day and consequently sought to parade a work of considerable substance " .

= = Structure and scoring = =

Bach structured the cantata is in two parts , to be performed before and after the sermon . The first part begins with a chorus , followed by a recitative and aria . The second begins with the central movement , a biblical quotation sung by the bass as the vox Christi , followed by an aria , recitative and a concluding chorale . Bach scored it for three vocal soloists (soprano (S) , alto (A) and bass (B)) , a four @-@ part choir SATB , and a Baroque instrumental ensemble of two alto recorders (Fl) , two oboes (Ob) , two violins (VI) , viola (Va) and basso continuo (Bc) . The recorders (flauti dolci) represent poverty , need and a " mood of humility " . It is possibly the last time that Bach scored recorders in his cantatas .

In the following table of the movements , the scoring follows the Neue Bach @-@ Ausgabe . The keys and time signatures are taken from Alfred Dürr , using the symbol for common time (4 / 4) . The instruments are shown separately for winds and strings , while the continuo , playing throughout , is not shown .

= = Music = =

The cantata is symmetrically centred around the fourth movement on the words from the New Testament . Movements 1 and 7 are choral , movements 2 and 6 recitatives , 3 and 5 arias in two sections each , neither utilizing the da capo form .

The Old Testament text of the first movement is long and " multifaceted " . The opening chorus follows these words in a complex architecture of three sections , the first and the third section further composed of three parts . The first section begins with a two @-@ part ritornello and climaxes in a fugal exposition in all four voices . The second section starts with the shift to common time ; it is characterized by a full texture and fluid melody . The chorus then returns to triple meter for the final section , which includes two four @-@ part fugati . The movement combines elements of the motet which follows the text , with composition in polyphony , elaborating on its different ideas . Seth Lachterman explains the beginning of the movement :

The text of the movement is a paraphrase of Isaiah 58 : 7 ? 8 in which the giving of food , shelter , and clothing to the needy is seen as a divine , transforming act of charity ... The first section ... literally depicts the distribution of bread to the hungry by ' distributing ' staccato chords to differing musical forces (recorders , oboes , then strings) .

John Eliot Gardiner , who conducted the Bach Cantata Pilgrimage with the Monteverdi Choir in 2000 , notes : " The opening chorus is multi @-@ sectional and , at 218 bars , immense " . He continues :

After ninety @-@ three bars the time signature changes to common time : the basses begin unaccompanied , and are then answered by all voices and instruments very much in the old style of Bach 's Weimar cantatas , with a florid counter @-@ subject to suggest the ' clothing ' of the naked . At bar 106 the time changes of 3 / 8 (again a Weimar feature) and the tenors lead off in the first of two fugal expositions separated by an interlude with a coda . The sense of relief after the stifling pathos of the opening sections is palpable and comes to a sizzling homophonic conclusion with ' und deine Besserung wird schnell wachsen ' (' and thy health shall spring forth speedily ') . The

basses now instigate the second fugal exposition , ' the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward ' . After so much pathos , the final coda led by the sopranos ' und die Herrlichkeit des Herrn wird dich zu sich nehmen ' releases the pent @-@ up energy in an explosion of joy .

A secco bass recitative leads into the alto aria with obbligato oboe and violin that concludes Part I. The aria conveys three main images : " imitation , ultimate celestial ecstasy , and the scattering of fertile seeds " .

The fourth movement is sung by the bass , the vox Christi (voice of Jesus) , as if Jesus said the words himself which Paul wrote to the Hebrews : " Wohlzutun und mitzuteilen vergesst nicht " (To do good and to communicate forget not) . The style is typical for Bach 's treatment of such words , between arioso and aria . The accompaniment is asymmetrical and repetitive , almost a ground bass .

The soprano aria is accompanied by two unison obbligato recorders . The ritornello is simple and fluid , while the vocal line " has , at times , the quality of a folk song " . The penultimate movement , an alto recitative , is accompanied by dense chordal strings .

The closing choral , " Selig sind , die aus Erbarmen " (Blessed are those who , out of mercy) is a four @-@ part setting , " symmetrical and predictable until the last two phrases " of two @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half measures each .

Gardiner summarizes that all later movements are " dwarfed by the immensity , vigour , flexibility and imagination of the opening chorus , every phrase of its text translated into music of superb quality " .

= = Selected recordings = =

The sortable listing is taken from the selection provided by Aryeh Oron on the Bach @-@ Cantatas website . The type of choir and orchestra is roughly shown as a large group by red background , and as an ensemble with period instruments in historically informed performance by green background .