

= Die Elenden sollen essen , BWV 75 =

Die Elenden sollen essen ( The miserable shall eat ) , BWV 75 , is a church cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach . He composed it for the first Sunday after Trinity and first performed it in Leipzig on 30 May 1723 . The complex work in two parts of seven movements each marks the beginning of his first annual cycle of cantatas .

Bach composed the cantata at a decisive turning point in his career . After various positions in churches and courts , he assumed his post of Thomaskantor in Leipzig on the first Sunday after Trinity , performing this cantata . He began the ambitious project of composing a new cantata for every occasion of the liturgical year .

The work is structured in an unusual layout of 14 movements in two symmetrical parts , to be performed before and after the sermon . The unknown poet begins his text with a quotation from Psalm 22 and departs from its ideas on wealth and poverty , rich and poor , and illustrates the contrasts . The focus of the second part is on being poor or rich in spirit . Both parts are concluded by a stanza of Samuel Rodigast 's hymn " Was Gott tut , das ist wohlgetan " .

= = Background = =

Johann Sebastian Bach had served in several churches as Kantor and organist , and at the courts of Weimar and Köthen , when he applied for the post of Thomaskantor in Leipzig . He was 38 years old and had a reputation as an organist and organ expert . He had composed church cantatas , notably the funeral cantata *Actus tragicus* around 1708 . In Weimar , he had begun a project to cover all occasions of the liturgical year by providing one cantata a month for four years , including works such as *Weinen , Klagen , Sorgen , Zagen* , BWV 12 , and *Erschallet , ihr Lieder* , BWV 172 .

= = History and words = =

Bach composed the cantata for the First Sunday after Trinity and first performed it in the service in the Nikolaikirche on 30 May 1723 , to take up his position as Thomaskantor . From then he was responsible for the education of the Thomanerchor , performances in the regular services in the Thomaskirche , the Nikolaikirche , Neue Kirche and Petrikerche . He started a 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 " .

The prescribed readings for the Sunday were from the First Epistle of John , " God is Love " ( 1 John 4 : 16 ? 21 ) , and from the Gospel of Luke , the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus ( Luke 16 : 19 ? 31 ) . An unknown poet begins the cantata with a verse from a psalm , Psalms 22 : 26 ( verse 27 in the Luther Bible ) , " The meek shall eat and be satisfied : they shall praise the Lord that seek him : your heart shall live for ever " , connecting the gospel to the Old Testament as a starting point . The later cantata for the same occasion , *Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot* , BWV 39 ( Break your bread for the hungry ) , begins similarly with a quotation from the Old Testament . The poet expands on the contrast of " Reichtum und Armut " ( wealth and poverty , rich and poor ) in fourteen elaborate movements , arranged in two parts to be performed before and after the sermon . The poet expands the contrast of " Reichtum und Armut " ( wealth and poverty , rich and poor ) Both parts are concluded by a stanza of Samuel Rodigast 's hymn " Was Gott tut , das ist wohlgetan " , stanza 2 in movement 7 , stanza 6 in movement 14 .

The autograph score is written neatly on non @-@ Leipzig paper , probably while Bach still lived in Köthen . A Leipzig chronicle , " *Acta Lipsiensium academica* " , reported the social event : " ... führte ... Hr. Joh . Sebastian Bach ... mit gutem applauso seine erste Music auf " ( ... performed ... with good applause his first music ) . " Good applause " means " great approval " rather than clapping of hands . A different translation renders the note as " ... the new Cantor and Director of the Collegium Musicum , Herr Johann Sebastian Bach , who has come hither from the Prince 's court of Cöthen , produced his first music here with great success . "

= = Scoring and structure = =

The cantata is structured in two parts of seven movements each , to be performed before and after the sermon . It is scored for four vocal soloists ( soprano ( S ) , alto ( A ) , tenor ( T ) and bass ( B ) ) , a four @-@ part choir SATB , trumpet ( Tr ) , two oboes ( Ob ) , oboe d 'amore ( Oa ) , two violins ( VI ) , viola ( Va ) , and basso continuo ( Bc ) including bassoon . The two parts of seven movements each are composed as the same arrangement of alternating recitatives and arias with a concluding chorale , only Part II is opened by a sinfonia instead of a chorus . The duration is given as 35 minutes .

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 = =

Bach marked the occasion , creating the opening chorus reminiscent of a French overture , with a slow first section in dotted rhythm and a fast fugue . He chose the same form one year later to begin his second annual cycle of chorale cantatas with O Ewigkeit , du Donnerwort , BWV 20 . The composition can also be seen as a prelude and fugue on a large scale . The prelude is again in two sections separated by a short interlude , in the way of a motet according to the different ideas of the text . In the fugue on the words " Euer Herz soll ewiglich leben " ( your heart shall live for ever ) , the subject is developed three times , again separated by interludes .

Four of the recitatives are " secco " , accompanied only by the continuo , but the first one of each part is " accompagnato " , brightened by the strings . In the arias , the voice and the instruments mostly share the themes . The arias can be considered as a suite of French dance movements , the tenor a Polonaise , the soprano aria a Minuet , the alto aria a Passepied and the bass aria a Gigue . In the last aria , the trumpet opens the setting and then accompanies the bass in virtuoso figuration , adding splendour to the words " Mein Herze glaubt und liebt " ( My heart believes and loves ) .

The music of the two stanzas of the chorale is identical . The tune is not a simple four @-@ part setting as in most of Bach 's later cantatas , but the voices are embedded in a concerto of the orchestra , led by violin I and oboe I. The instrumental theme is derived from the first line of the chorale tune .

The sinfonia beginning Part II , rare in Bach 's cantatas , is especially remarkable because it is a chorale fantasia on the same chorale melody . The tune is played by the trumpet which was silent throughout Part I , as the cantus firmus against a polyphonic string setting , emphasizing once more " Was Gott tut , das ist wohlgetan " ( What God does is well done ) .

= = Selected recordings = =

A list of recordings is 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 .