



Symphony No. 9 - Ludwig van Beethoven

So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. ¹³ He had also seven sons and three daughters Book of Job, Chapter 42

"It's a hymn of thanksgiving to God, for sparing me to finish my work. After the pianissimo, the canon resumes. First violin takes the theme. Viola, C to A. It's growing, gaining strength. Second violin, C to A, an octave higher. Then the struggle. First violin, C, up an octave, and then up to G. And the cello, down. Pulled down. Half notes, F, E, D. Pulled constantly down. And then, a voice, a single frail voice emerges, soaring above the sound. The striving continues, moving below the surface. Crescendo. First violin longing, pleading to God. And then, God answers. The clouds open. Loving hands reach down. We're raised up into heaven. Cello remains earthbound, but the other voices soar suspended, for an instant in which you can live forever. Earth does not exist. Time is timeless. And the hands that lifted you caress your face, mold them to the face of God. And you are at one. You are at peace. You're finally free." Ludwig van Beethoven (describing his Song of Thanks to God)

The great composer, Ludwig v. Beethoven, is possibly the greatest musical composer of all time (excepting my favorite Baruch composer, J.S. Bach). Yet, he met with many hardships and misfortunes in his lifetime that would have devastated one of lesser metal. The period between 1814 and 1824 were years of professional famine for Beethoven. Having lost the one gift that makes the joy of music so ebullient - his hearing - the man of joyful music also lost many of his friends as his financial fortunes took a serious plunge.

Ten years past between his last symphony, the Eighth, and his memorable Ninth Symphony in D minor. Imagine the despair of Beethoven as he attempted to write this masterpiece from 'imagined sound' since he was deaf.

The Ninth Symphony finally was completed and premiered in 1824, not long before its creator's death. On the night of the premier, Beethoven stood apprehensively as he conducted the last movement - in fact, he did not even realize that the last note had played as he stood before the lectern and continued directing being several

measures off due to his failure to hear. At the concluding notes of the final movement, 'Ode to Joy', the composer stood in forsaken silence certain his masterpiece had failed. He could not hear the thunderous standing ovation of the audience behind him. Suddenly, contralto artist, Caroline Unger, recognizing Beethoven's bewilderment, gently turned the musical genius around so he could witness the joyful and overflowing response of the audience. What overpowering joy must have entered his heart as he saw the awe-inspiring response. God had saved the best wine in Beethoven's life for last - and he gleefully took his bow.

When the wine had failed at the marriage at Cana of Galilee, Jesus turned six, large, stone vessels full of water into wine. He then directed: ***Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast.*** (John 2:8) Imagine the amazement of the governor of the feast when he tasted that fine wine! *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.* (John 2:9-10)

Just as Christ provided the best wine for the last at the marriage at Cana of Galilee, so God frequently saves the best wine for last in the lives of those whom He loves. Maybe He is saving YOUR best wine for last!

In the Ninth symphony, the deep emotion and great passion of this great composer is fully brought to light. It seems that he poured his heart and soul out among the notes of this great work.

The Ninth Symphony is the last one written by Beethoven, but it stands out as the shining Sun among all other such works and has endured the centuries, and will doubtless remain forever, as long as the Sun rises and sets, as the crowning achievement in musical beauty, harmony and simple grandeur.

The beauty of sound, technical merit, and popular appeal of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony remains today as one of the world's greatest masterpieces and sets a high standard for any aspiring composer whose hopes and ambitions are to achieve the heights through that kind inspiration that God placed in the heart of Beethoven.

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