



The Gifts Christ Freely Gives

Text: Richard C. Resch (b. 1947)

Tune: John C. Dale (1842-1912)

The Lutheran Church has always been known as “the singing church” for her role in restoring singing to the congregation. Since the Reformation, faithful authors have taught the Faith in song. Church Music is not an “extra,” just there for entertainment, but is an extension of the Word of God and the preaching of it. The hymns we sing are to be catechetical.

One such catechetical hymn is a hymn written in 2001 by the Rev. Kantor Richard C. Resch, who teaches at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Kantor Resch is an accomplished musician, holding a Masters in Organ from the Eastman School of Music. He has taught hymnody and liturgics at the Seminary since 1978, in addition to directing the Seminary Schola Cantorum and the Seminary Kantorei. He also served on the LCMS Commission on Worship from 1992-2001, and served as that Commission’s Chairman from 1998-2001. In 2000 he co-founded the Seminary’s Good Shepherd Institute of Pastoral Theology and Sacred Music.

His hymn, “The Gifts Christ Freely Gives,” teaches about Christ’s gifts in the Divine Service. It teaches us that Christ loves to freely give His gifts to us. However, as we know from Holy Scripture, Christ works through means to give His gifts. These means are



Resch directing the Seminary Kantorei.

not hard to find. We have Christ’s promise that His Church is the place where He has chosen to give His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation. This hymn reinforces this teaching.



Stanzas 2-5 of this hymn teach the blessings given in the Means of Grace. The hymn rightly begins with Holy Baptism, for through this Sacrament we enter the Church and

“I place music next to theology, and give it the highest praise.”

-Martin Luther

first receive Christ’s forgiveness and are made His own. Christ has also promised to always forgive our sins, and because of this we hear of the gift of Holy Absolution where Christ, through His Pastor, speaks His Word of forgiveness. And these are not just the Pastor’s words, but “The Pastor’s words are Christ’s for us to trust and know.” Stanza four speaks of the Word of God as the Means of Grace that is with us each day in our homes and in the Divine Service. These Words of Holy Scripture are read every day because they are “blest words that give [us] life, restoring and refreshing [us] for this world’s strife.” Finally, Christ gives us His peace through Holy Communion where “beneath the bread and wine is Food from Calvary.” The very Body and Blood broken and shed on Calvary are present in this Supper to forgive us our sins, give us peace, and fulfill Christ’s promise to be with us always. The hymn closes with a doxological stanza praising the One who “lavishes such love.” For these gifts Christ loves to give we thank and praise Him.

This hymn is proof that the Church’s song is a living thing. The Church is given the job of preserving the best and most faithful song of the past while adding to it those hymns which speak faithfully to the truths of Holy Scripture and teach us of the Triune God’s great love for His creation. Thanks be to God for His faithful composers

past and present!



SDG—Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be the Glory. J.S. Bach wrote these letters on the end of each of his compositions.