

# J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 159

Form: Arioso/Recit (B/A) - Aria/Choral (S/A) - Recit (T) - Aria (B) - Chorale.

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NBA I/8; BC A50

Estomihi (Quinquagesima) (BWV 23, 22, 127, 159)

Estomihi is the last Sunday before Lent during which no cantatas were performed.

\*1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (In praise of love)

\*Luke 18:31-43 (Jesus and the twelve go to Jerusalem, healing of a blind man)

Librettist: Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici). See note.

FP: Probably 27 February 1729

(Leipzig: St. Nicholas)

This cantata is part of the Picander cycle (see note).

It is noteworthy that Bach apparently declined to include Picander's recitative "Herr Jesu, dein

verdienstlich Leiden," which came after the bass aria, no. 4.

Alfred Dürr writes, "The text extracts from the Sunday Gospel only Jesus's decision to go to Jerusalem, where His Passion will be accomplished, a decision at first felt to be monstrous (no. 1), then as an incentive to follow Him (no. 2), as the motive for departing from the joys of this world (no. 3), and finally as an occasion for thanksgiving (nos. 4 and 5). The anticipated words from the Cross in the fourth movement, 'It is accomplished' (John 19:30), in fact refer to Jesus's words in the Sunday Gospel, 'And everything that is written by the prophets shall be accomplished' (Luke 18:31)."

See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 252.

J.S. Bach

## Cantata No. 159

### Sehet, wir gehn hinauf gen Jerusalem

A meditative cantata for the Sunday before Lent.

#### Recitativo-Arioso. (♩ = 60)

1. **Arioso.** • Dialogue regarding Jesus' plan to go to Jerusalem to his Passion (159/1).

\*Luke 18:31-34. Taking the twelve, [Jesus] said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise." But they understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

The long melisma, with its upward leaps seems to suggest that Jerusalem (situated on a hill) could be seen.

**Alto.**  
(Believing Disciple - see note.)

**Basso.**  
(Jesus)

Se - het, se -

Behold,

C minor (for significance see note) up 8va.

#### 4. Recitativo.

#### Arioso.

Komm, schau doch, mein Sinn, wo geht dein Je - sus hin?  
Come, see [ponder] - (O) my mind, where goes thy Jesus - ?

Reversing the procedure that he used in the St. Matthew Passion, Bach sets the words of Jesus as secco recitative (with a marching continuo line that shows determination) while the believer's questioning response is given a "halo" of strings. In this way, objective determination is contrasted with subjective response.

Strings -

C minor

iv6 V E-flat major  
Phrygian cadence, often used for questions.

7.

geh'n hin - auf, wir geh'n hin - auf, wir geh'n hin - auf, wir geh'n hin -  
are-going up, we are-going up, are-going up, are-going up,

Instrumentation:  
Oboe I, II  
Vln I, II  
Vla  
SATB  
Continuo

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Chromatic saturation in the vocal part is incomplete.

10. **Recit.** E-flat C F# D F G D-flat

O harter Gang! Hin - auf? O unge - heurer Berg, den meine Sün - den  
 O hard course! Up? O monstrous mountain, to-which my sins

auf  
 Strings

C minor F# dim.7 B dim.7 C7

13. **Arioso.**

zeigen! Wie sau - er wirst du müs - sen steigen!  
 point! How arduously wilt thou have to-climb!

gen Je - ru - sa - lem, se -  
 to Jerusalem,

F7 A dim.7 B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major

16.

- het, wir geh'n hin - auf, hin - auf, gen Je - ru - sa - lem, gen - Je -

E-flat 7 A-flat major F7 B-flat major G7

19.

ru - sa - lem, hin - auf gen Je - ru - sa - lem, wir geh'n hin - auf gen Je - ru - sa -

C minor B-flat 7 A-flat major B dim.7 G7 C minor

The continuo figure is now inverted, moving successively lower, the inversion perhaps alluding to Luther's Theology of the Cross (see note at no. 4).

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 7 mm.

23. **Recit.** G-flat E-flat C A B-flat D-flat F A-flat C-flat

Ach, gehe nicht! Dein Kreuz ist dir schon zuge-richt't, wo du dich sollst zu Tode  
 Ah, go not! Thy cross is for-thee already prepared, where thou - must to death

lem!

Strings

Extreme keys and unexpected, chromatic chord progressions color the text.

C minor A-flat 7 A-flat 7 F7 B-flat minor B-flat major

26. G E

bluten; hier sucht man Geisseln für, dort bind't man Ruthen; die Bande warten dein, ach, gehe  
 bleed; here seek they scourges -, there bind they rods; - Bonds await thee, ah, go

E-flat minor E-flat 7 C major F# dim.7

29. D

selber nicht hinein! Doch, bliebest du zu-rücke stehen, so müsst'ich selbst nicht  
 - not in! Yet, wouldst thou stay-back, then I-myself-would-be-forced not

D7 G minor E dim.(7) C7

32.

nach Je-ru-sa-lem. ach. (but) lei-der in die Hölle ge-hen!  
 to Jerusalem, ah, (but) alas (down) into - hell go!

The alto ends on C in the same octave as the bass's first note.

F minor B dim.7 C minor C minor

The pause appears to depict a dawning realization. Having stated that if Jesus were to forego traveling to Jerusalem, the disciple would himself be spared the danger, he realizes that avoiding the cross would mean eternal perdition.

The aria's euphonious harmonies coupled with an inexorable rhythm and a meandering melody projects sweet resignation.

## Aria mit Choral.

159/2. (Andante con moto  $\text{♩} = 66$ ) • Accompanying Christ through humiliation & death (159/2).

1. *Ritornello* derived from vocal theme. *mf* Continuo alone.

E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major (B-flat 7) E-flat major

### 5. Alto.

"Ich folge dir nach" ("I will follow you") is depicted with imitation between singer and continuo. A meandering melody illustrates a commitment to follow Christ in various circumstances, including "Speichel und Schmach" ("spittle and humiliation")—a reference to the events of Jesus' Passion.

Ich fol - ge dir nach, ich

E-major A-flat major E-flat major E-flat major

### 10. Soprano.

The 6th stanza of 10 in 1656 chorale "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" by Paul Gerhardt (1607–1676) provides an added layer of commentary. Its sedate rhythm serves to contrast stehen ("stand") with the steady, ascending figure in alto and continuo for "folgen" ("follow").

Stollen 1 of the chorale's bar form.

Ich will hier bei dir

fol - - - ge dir nach, - - - ich fol - - -

E-flat major

A meandering melody illustrates a commitment to follow Christ in various circumstances, including "Speichel und Schmach" ("spittle and humiliation")—a reference to the events of Jesus' Passion.

### 15.

ste - - - hen,

- - - ge, ich fol - ge dir nach, ich fol - ge dir nach durch Spei -

G7 C minor C minor C minor

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20. ver - ach - te mich — doch nicht!

-chel und Schmach, — ich fol - ge dir nach durch Spei - chel und Schmach.

C7 F major G7 C minor C7 F major F dim.7

25. ich fol - ge dir nach — durch Spei - chel und

B-flat 7 E-flat major G7 C minor B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major B-flat major

30. Schmach;

*mf* Ritornello

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major (F7) B-flat major

35. Von dir will ich nicht

am Kreuz — will ich dich noch um fan -

After an emphatic leap to "Kreuz" ("cross"), harmonized with a B-flat minor chord, the singer presents a winding melisma on "empfangen" ("to embrace") while the continuo persists with flowing 8ths to depict ongoing "Nachfolge" ("discipleship").

Stollen 2 has different accompanying lines.

B-flat minor E-flat 7 A-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major



40.

ge - - - hen,

- - - gen, am Kreuz - - - will ich dich noch um fan - - -

E-flat major G7 C minor C7 F7

45.

bis dir dein Her - ze bricht.

- - - gen, am Kreuz - - - will ich - - - dich noch um fan - - - gen, am Kreuz will

B-flat 7 G7 C minor D7 G7 A-flat major B-flat 7

50.

ich dich noch um fan - - - gen, am Kreuz - - - will ich dich - - - noch um fan -

E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major (G7) C minor C minor B-flat major E-flat major

55.

- - - gen, will ich dich - - - noch um fan - - - gen.

*mf* Ritornello

B dim.7 (C minor) C minor C7 F7

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60.

Abgesang of chorale's bar form.

Wenn dein Haupt wird er -  
Dich lass' ich nicht aus meiner Brust, dich lass' ich nicht aus meiner

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major

65.

blas - sen  
Brust, aus meiner Brust, dich lass' ich nicht aus mei - ner Brust, dich lass' ich

E-flat 7 A-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat 7 A-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major

70.

im letz - ten To - des - stoss,  
nicht aus meiner Brust, dich lass' ich nicht aus meiner Brust, -

E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major C7 F minor G major C minor

75.

Breaks in the vocal line suggest the ebbing of life referenced in the text.

und wenn du end - lich scheiden musst, und wenn du end - lich scheiden

C minor D7 G minor G7 C minor

Herze, rein." Both texts see the heart as Christ's tomb (See *Bach-Kontext* 2:632). Alfred Dürr notes, "If [27 February 1729 for the performance of this cantata] is correct ... [it] would have been Bach's last cantata before the performance of the St Matthew Passion on Good Friday 1729; for during the intervening Lenten period there was no figural music in Leipzig." See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 252.

80.

NBA: als - - dann will ich dich  
 musst. - - und wenn du endlich scheiden musst, und wenn du end-

D7 G minor D7 G7 C minor F7 B-flat major

85.

fas - (rit) sen (a tempo)  
 lich schei - den musst, sollst du dein Grab in mir er - lan - gen, in

(rit.) (a tempo)

B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major

90.

Low note for "Grab" ("grave").  
 in mei - nen Arm und  
 mir dein Grab, dein Grab, sollst du in mir dein Grab er - lan - gen, und

E-flat major A-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major

95.

Schoss.  
 wenn du endlich scheiden musst, und wenn du endlich scheiden musst, sollst du in

E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major B-flat 7



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100. Low note for "Grab" ("grave").

mir dein Grab, in mir dein Grab erlan - gen.

E-flat major Ascending bass E-flat major Ritornello

105.

A-flat major (B-flat 7) E-flat major E-flat major

159/3. **Recitativo.** Mourning for Jesus; deferring pleasure till heaven (159/3).

Secco 1. Tenore.

Nun will ich mich, mein Je - su, ü - ber dich in  
Now would I -, my Jesus, for thee in

F major F7

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 7 mm.

Picander's libretto included another recitativo before the final chorale. Its omission in this transmission of the cantata creates a symmetrical structure in which no. 3 forms the center. Martin Petzoldt understands it as representative of Peter's conversion (see below).

3.

meinem Winkel grämen; die Welt mag immerhin das Gift der Wollust zu sich nehmen, ich  
my little-corner grieve; the world may evermore the poison of wantonness to itself take, I

F# dim.7 D7 (G major) C minor

Sharp dissonance for "poison."

6.

la - be mich an meinen Thränen und will mich e - her nicht nach ei - ner Freude  
refresh myself in my tears and would - ere-that not for any joy

C7 C# dim.7 A7

The tears here can perhaps be understood also as tears of repentance, reminiscent of Peter's tears of remorse after denying Jesus. They convert to healing tears after a look from Jesus (see note for biblical account).

8.

sehnen, bis dich mein An-ge-sicht wird in der Herrlichkeit er-blicken, bis ich durch  
yearn, till thee my countenance will in-glory see, till I through

D minor F(7) B-flat major

11.

dich er-lö-set bin; da will ich mich mit dir er-quicken.  
thee redeemed have-been; then will I myself with thee refresh.

B-flat 7 E-flat major F7 B-flat major B-flat major

**Aria.** Christ's passion now over and salvation accomplished (159/4).

159/4. (Adagio ma non troppo)  $\text{♩} = 60$

Oboe concertato  
Strings

Inversion

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major C7

Ritornello derived from vocal theme. "ny"  
For comments by Alfred Dürr and Konrad Küster, see note.

It possible that Bach used inversion here to symbolize Luther's Theology of the Cross. (see note for more).

5.

F major B-flat major

**Basso.** Text repetitions provide emphasis.

Bach gives the aria to the bass, presumably because it begins with Christ's last utterance on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

9.

Es ist voll-bracht, es ist voll-bracht, das Leid ist

Vox Christi

B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major A dim. B-flat (7) E dim.7 C7

13.

alle; wir sind von un - serm Sün - den - falle in Gott - ge - recht, ge - recht ge -

Ob & Vln I have sighs.

F major D7 G minor D7 G minor F7 B-flat major C major

17.

macht. in Gott ge - recht ge - macht, in Gott gerecht, wir sind von un - serm

Ob

F major C7 D minor (G7) C major C7 F major

21.

Sün - den - fal - le in Gott gerecht, in Gott gerecht ge - macht.

Ob

Ritornello

F major F# dim.7 D7 G minor C7 F major F major F7 B-flat major

25.

F7 B-flat major G7 C minor C major C7 F major

29.

Alfred Dürr writes, "In the second half of the aria, the style of setting changes: at the words 'Now I will hasten...' semiquaver motion increases and violin I joins the oboe and bass voice in an imitative texture. At the final words 'Welt, gute Nacht!' ('World, good night!') a brief quasi-da capo is initiated by the resumption of the opening motive." See Alfred Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 253.

Es ist vollbracht, es

Ob

G# dim.7 A minor F major F major F major F7 B-flat major

As a transition to the B section of the aria, Bach interpolates the first line of text, "Es ist vollbracht." Here, too, it is repeated in inversion.

Word painting: A melisma introduced with 3 repeated 8th notes (suggesting determination) is followed by a coloratura for "eilen" ("hasten"). The line is imitated by oboe and violin I.

33.

ist vollbracht, nun will ich ei

Ob

Vln II & Vla tacet.

(C7) F major F7 D(7) G minor G minor

36.

len und mei nem Je su Dank er

Vln I

Ob

Ob

G major C minor

39.

thei len. Welt, gu te Nacht,

Strings

C minor C7 F minor B dim.

Quarter-note leaps with syllabic declamation ending on a sustained low note give emphatic syllabic declaration to "World, good night!"

42.

nun will ich ei

Ob

Vln II & Vla tacet...

C minor F# dim.7 D7 G minor E-flat major F7

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Quarter note leaps for the emphatic declaration, "World, good night!"

45.

- Vln - len und mei - nem Je - su - Dank er - thei - len,

Ob

Vln I

B-flat major B-flat 7 G7 C minor A7 D major

48.

Welt, gu - te Nacht, Welt, Welt,

Es ist voll - bracht, es ist voll - bracht.

Strings

G minor G7 C minor F# dim.(7) G minor E-flat 7

52.

gu - te Nacht. Welt, gu - te Nacht, es ist - voll -

Es ist voll - bracht

Quasi-da capo

A-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major E-flat major E-flat 7 A-flat major (B-flat 7) E-flat major

57.

bracht, es ist voll - bracht!

mf

b

E-flat major A dim.7 B-flat major B-flat 7 E-flat major F# dim.7 G minor B-flat 7

61.

E-flat major C7 F minor F7 B-flat major B-flat major



159/5. Choral. (Mel.: „Jesu Leiden, Pein und Tod“.)

1. Soprano.  
+Ob i  
Vln I  
Alto.  
+Vln II  
Tenore.  
Basso.

Je-su, dei-ne Pas-si-on ist mir lau-ter Freu-de, dei-ne Wunden,  
Je-su, dei-ne Pas-si-on ist mir lau-ter Freu-de, dei-ne Wunden,  
Je-su, dei-ne Pas-si-on ist mir lau-ter Freu-de, dei-ne Wunden,  
Je-su, dei-ne Pas-si-on ist mir lau-ter Freu-de, dei-ne Wun-

E-flat major D-flat major A-flat major E-flat major

The harmonization is unusual at times.

The bass lags as if pondering Jesus' "Wunden" ("wounds").

Chromaticism colors "Rosen," perhaps to indicate the thorns.

6.  
Kron' und Hohn mei-nes Herzens Wei-de; mei-ne Seel' auf Ro-sen geht,  
Kron' und Hohn mei-nes Herzens Wei-de; mei-ne Seel' auf Ro-sen geht,  
Kron' und Hohn mei-nes Herzens Wei-de; mei-ne Seel' auf Ro-sen geht,  
-den, Kron' und Hohn mei-nes Herzens Wei-de; mei-ne Seel' auf Ro-sen geht,

E-flat major C minor G major C minor E-flat major C minor C7 F minor C major

11.  
wenn ich d'ran ge-den-ke; in dem Himmel ei-ne Stätt' mir des-we-gen schen-ke!  
wenn ich d'ran ge-den-ke; in dem Himmel ei-ne Stätt' mir des-we-gen schen-ke!  
wenn ich d'ran ge-den-ke; in dem Himmel ei-ne Stätt' mir des-we-gen schen-ke!  
wenn ich d'ran ge-den-ke; in dem Himmel ei-ne Stätt' mir des-we-gen schen-ke!

F minor B-flat major E-flat major E-flat major B-flat major E-flat major