

J.S. Bach

Cantata No. 115

Mache dich, mein Geist, bereit

The chorale and cantata texts both emphasize spiritual wakefulness in view of the Last Judgment. The connection to the Gospel reading is tenuous but can be seen in movement no. 4, where two quoted lines from the chorale's 7th stanza allude to the indebted servant of Jesus' parable in the Gospel reading.

Alfred Dürr writes, "The text is based on the ten-verse hymn of 1695 by Johann Burchard Freystein, whose theme—a warning to be vigilant and to pray—is only loosely connected with the Sunday Gospel. It is not the kernel of the parable (the contrast between God's Grace and man's lack of mercy) that lies at the heart of this cantata text but rather a certain aspect of it: the king's demand for settlement catches the unfaithful servant unawares, which teaches us to be prepared when the Lord comes and demands settlement of us. Some such passage as Luke 21:36 perhaps suggested the choice of hymn for this Sunday: 'Thus watch and pray now always so that you may be accounted worthy of escaping all these things that shall come to pass . . .'. " See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, revised and translated by Richard Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 614–615. The cantata is dominated by two strikingly long arias.



Instrumentation

Corno
Flauto traverso (see note)
Ob d'amore
Vln I, II
Vla
Violoncello piccolo (see notes at no. 4)
SATB
Continuo



Concertante ritornello infuses the entire movement.

Duo: Unison Str + Continuo with "wake up" motive.

(Coro.)
115/1. (Allegro moderato $\text{♩} = 120$.) (Chorale Verse 1) • Prepare for judgment day: watch and pray! (115/1).

1. Strings unison

G major G7

The opening chorale fantasia is strikingly similar to that of BWV 114 (performed 5 weeks earlier). Both movements have a striding rhythm with figura corta in 6/4 meter. Both have an urgently insistent character as if exhorting the listener or pressing a point.



Figura corta (see note).

C major

G major

G major

8.

G major

G7

A minor

Fl plays nervous "tumult" motive (see strings, m. 54).

10.

D(7)

G major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

(Mel.: „Straf mich nicht in deinem Zorn.“)

12. Soprano. +Corno

Stollen 1 of chorale's bar form.

Chorale line 1.

For biblical background, see note.



(C O R O)

The syncopation on "mein" ("my") makes the emphasis subjective and personal. See Helmuth Rilling, *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), p. 23.

Ma - che dich, mein Geist, be - reit,
Come, my soul, thy - self pre - pare,

Mache dich, mein Geist, be -
Come, my soul, thy - self pre -

Tenore.

Wake up motive of 8va leaps in ascending order of entries.

Mache dich, mein Geist, be - reit, ma - che
Come, my soul, thy - self pre - pare, come, my

Basso.

Mache dich, mein Geist, be - reit, ma - che dich, mein Geist, be -
Come, my soul, thy - self pre - pare, come, my soul, thy - self pre -

G major

B7

E minor

14.

reit, mache dich, mein Geist, be - reit,
pare, come, my soul, thy - self pre - pare,

dich, mein Geist, dich, mein Geist, be - reit,
soul, thy - self, soul, thy - self pre - pare,

reit, mein Geist, be - reit,
pare, thy - self pre - pare,

Ritornello FI

E minor

D major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

Chorale line 2.

16.

wa - che, fleh' und
watch - ing, pray - ing,

wa - che, fleh'
watch - ing, pray -

wa - che, fleh' und
watch - ing, pray - ing,

wa - che, fleh' und
watch - ing, pray - ing,

G major B7 E minor E minor G major

18.

be - te,
plead - ing,

und be - te,
ing, plead - ing,

be - te, fleh' und be - te,
plead - ing, pray - ing, plead - ing,

be - te, fleh' und be - te,
plead - ing, pray - ing, plead - ing,

C minor C minor G major

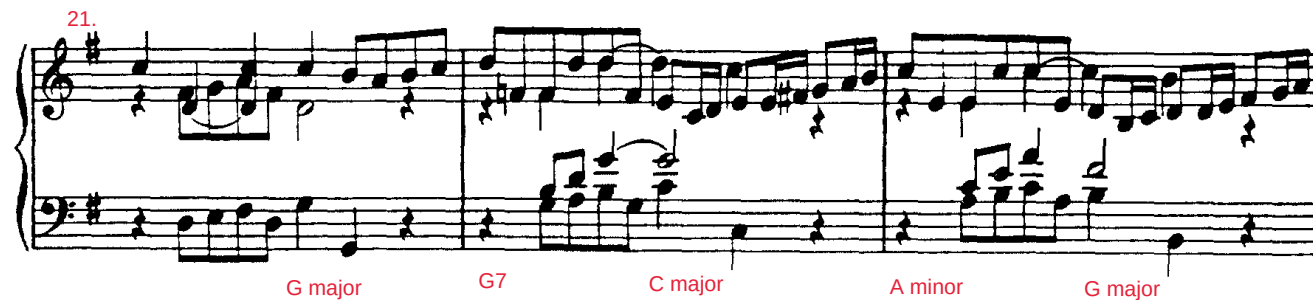
Stings unison

Ritornello

Expressive chromatic excursion to the distant key of C minor for "Wache, fleh und bete" ("Watch, implore, and pray"), while winds play 2-note sighs (see full score),

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

21.



G major G7 C major A minor G major

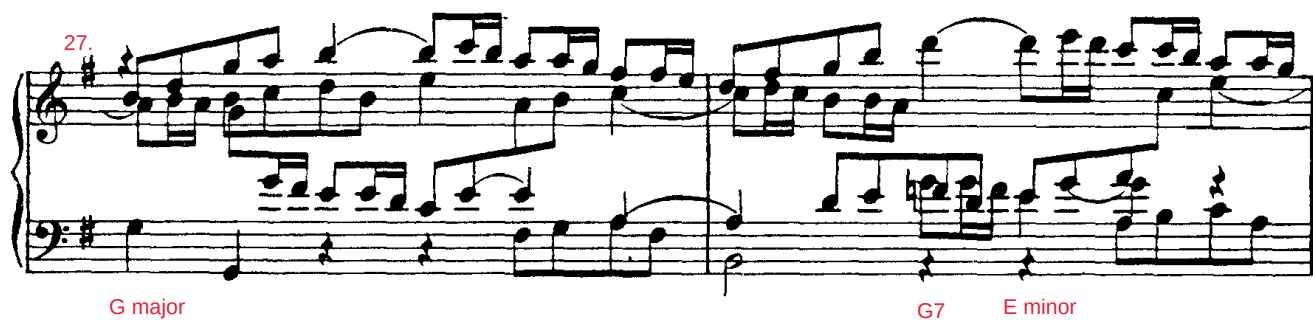
24.



Fl Str Ob d'am

G major

27.



G major G7 E minor

29.



D major G major D7

31. **A** Chorale line 3.

G major

B7 E minor

Str

Ritornello

E minor

D major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

35.

Chorale line 4.

un - ver - hofft be -
find thee all un -

G major B7 E minor E minor G major

37.

tre - te;
heed - ing.

tre - te, un-ver-hofft be - tre
heed - ing, find the all un - heed

C minor C minor

Excursion to the distant key of C minor (as in Stollen 1) for "daß dich nicht die böse Zeit unverhofft betrete" ("that the evil time doth not unexpectedly befall thee").

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

39.

te;
ing.

te;
ing.

te;
ing.

Ritornello

p

G major B7 E minor A7 D major G7 G# dim.7

41.

C major D7 G major G(7)

43.

C major C7 D minor

45.

G(7) C major E minor G(7)

47. **B** Chorale line 5.

denn es ist
Ah, be - ware,

denn es ist
Ah, be - ware,

denn es ist
Ah, be - ware,

denn es ist
Ah, be - ware,

B Ritornello

C major D7 G major

49. Chorale line 6.

Sa - - tans List
Sa - - tan's snare,

Sa - tans List
Sa - tan's snare,

Sa - tans List
Sa - tan's snare,

Sa - tans List
Sa - tan's snare,

Ritornello

G major E7 A major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

51. Chorale line 7.

ü - ber vie - le From
let him not dis - may

ü - ber vie - le From
let him not dis - may

ü - ber vie - le From - men, ü - ber vie - le
let him not dis - may thee, let him not dis -

ü - ber vie - le
let him not dis -

Ob d'am
8va up

A major A7 D major D(7) G major (A7) D major

53.

men
thee,

men, ü-ber vie-le From men
thee, let him not dis-may thee,

From men
may thee,

From men, ü-ber vie-le From men
may thee, let him not dis-may thee,

Str

Ritornello

B minor

A7

D major

In this ritornello statement, the 2 woodwinds play the opening of the ritornello in unison while the strings introduce the nervous "tumult" figure in unison, to represent the danger of Satan's attacks as referred in the text. See Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*,

In this ritornello statement, the 2 woodwinds play the opening of the ritornello in unison while the strings introduce the nervous "tumult" figure in unison, to represent the danger of Satan's attacks as referenced in the text. See Dürr, *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 615.

Fl + Ob d'amore in unison (the only instance in the movement).

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

55.

A7 D major D7 G major

57.

E minor F# minor D major

59. Chorale line 8.

zur Ver -
lest his

zur Ver - su - chung kom - men,
lest his guile be - tray thee,

zur Ver - su - chung
lest his guile be -

zur Ver -
lest his

D major D major E7 A minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

61.

Text painting: Chromatic wandering for "zur Versuchung kommen" ([Satan's craftiness has] "come in temptation"),

su - chung kom - men.
guile be - tray thee.

zur Ver - su - chung kom -
lest his guile be - tray

kom - men, zur Ver - su - chung kom -
tray thee, leat his guile be - tray

su - chung, zur Ver - su - chung kom -
guile be - tray, his guile be - tray

E minor C minor G major C minor 6 A7 D major G7 C minor

63.

men.
thee.

men.
thee.

men.
thee.

Ritornello (the 2 sections are reversed)

Fl = m. 7

Str

Ob d'amore

C minor G major C minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

65. = m. 8 = m. 9

G major G7 C major

67. = m. 10 = m. 11

D(7) G major

69. = m. 1 + nervous "tumult" motive in flute + ob d'amore

D(7) G major

70. = m. 2 + nervous "tumult" in flute + ob d'amore = m. 3 + nervous "tumult" in flute + ob d'amore

G major G7 C major G major

72. = m. 4 + tumult motive in flute + ob d'amore = m. 5 + tumult motive in flute + ob d'amore

A minor B minor G major D7

74. = m. 6 + tumult motive in flute + ob d'amore

G major G major

Alfred Dürr writes, "The principal section [of the aria] is a melancholy siciliano, marked 'adagio'— apparently a lullaby of the 'slumbering soul'. The middle section contains an internal contrast: an allegro passage warns of sudden punishment, and then a return to the original adagio tempo reflects the 'sleep of eternal death.'" See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 616. The aria text changes the theological thrust of the chorale stanza on which it is based. See note at m. 110.

Aria.

115/2. **Adagio.** (♩ = 80.) (Based on Chorale Verse 2) • Sleeping still? Judgment will awaken you! (115/2).

Ob d'amore/Vln I 1.

The oboe d'amore often doubles Vln I, sometimes has concertante role.

Ritornello derived from vocal line.

The slumbering soul is represented with a siciliano rhythm in a languid tempo with throbbing bass suggesting torpor or, perhaps, imminent danger. 8.

E minor (for significance, see note). E pedal...

A minor

D# dim.

E minor

Ob d'amore plays a "warning" figure.

B7

E minor

E minor

The opening figure intensifies with higher range with modulation to brighter G major...

E minor

G major

D pedal...

G major

D7

B7

hemiola

E minor

G# dim.7

A minor

D# dim.7

E minor

32. **Alto.**

For biblical background, see note.

Ach, schläf-ri-ge See-le, wie? wie? ach, schläf-ri-ge See-le, wie?
Ah, slumb-er-ing spir-it, why? Why? Ah, slumb-er-ing spir-it, why?

Ob d'amore

E minor
E pedal...

G# dim.7

A minor

D# dim.7

E7
E minor

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

39.

ru-hest du noch? ach, schläf-ri-ge See-le, wie? ru-hest du noch? wie? wie?
tar - ri - est thou? Ah, slumb-er-ing spir - it, why tar - ri - est thou? Why? Why?

A minor E minor D# dim.7

46.

wie? ru - hest du noch? ach, schläf-ri-ge See-le, wie? ru - hest du
Why tar - ri - est thou? Ah, slumb - er-ing spir - it, why tar - ri - est

B7 E minor E minor

52.

noch?
thou?

Er-mun - tre dich doch, er-mun-tre dich doch, er -
Be - stir thy-self now, be - stir thy-self now, be -

At "ermuntre" ("bestir"), the music modulates to the brighter G major, and the bass line "pokes" the slumbering soul.

E minor G major G major

59.

mun - tre dich doch!
stir thy - self now!

Ach, schläfr-ige Seele, wie? ru - hest du
Ah, slumb - er-ing spir-it, why tar - ri - est

Ob d'am/Vln I

D7 D# dim.7 E minor E7 A minor A pedal...

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

66.

noch? wie? ru-hest du noch? Er - mun - tre dich doch. ermun -
thou? Why tar - ri - est thou? Be - stir thy - self now, be-stir

A minor D# dim.7 E minor

73.

- tre dich doch, er - mun-tre dich doch, er- mun - tre dich doch!
- thy-self now, be - stir thy-self now, be - stir thy - self now!

E minor E minor E pedal... Ritornello

79.

E minor E minor

87.

E minor E minor

93.

E minor G major G major D pedal...

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

100.

crp sc.

D7 B7 E minor G# dim.7 A minor D# dim.7

Martin Petzoldt argues that the cantata text revises the chorale's Pietistic view of spiritual sleepiness as negligence resulting in unexpected sinful actions that cause sorrow to a more orthodox/biblical understanding that sin leads to the sleep of eternal death. The alteration results in a clear allusion to Lamentations 1:14 (Luther 1545: "Meine schweren Sünden sind durch seine Strafe erwacht") ("My grave sins are awakened by his punishment"). See *Bach-Kommentar* 1:618, 622–624. Note: English bibles have a very different translation of the Greek original. See the note for a comparison of the chorale and cantata texts.

108.

Allegro. (♩ = 60.)

The Allegro describes the sudden waking when punishment arrives.

Es möch-te die Stra-fe dich plötz-lich er-
Lest pun-ish-ment come of a sud-den-to

hemiola

E minor E minor E minor D major

114.

Text painting: Energetic coloratura to describe the imperative to awaken.

wek-ken und, wo du nicht wachest, und, wo du nicht wa-
wake thee and, dur-ing thy slumb-er, and, dur-ing thy slumb-

Possible allusion to Revelation 3:3 [Christ]: "If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you."

A minor G major B7 E minor

Text painting: The singer's coloratura is interrupted three times with the "poking, wake up" motive. Compare comments in Helmuth Rilling, *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), pp. 34–35.

120.

E# dim.7 F#(7) B minor D major A major

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

126.

D major F#7 B minor D# dim.7

132.

Adagio. (Tempo I.)

3 sighing appoggiaturas in the voice.

Appoggiaturas on the beat (see full score).

Text painting: A wide range is used to depict the extent of eternal death.

The siciliano rhythm and adagio tempo return, this time depicting the "sleep of eternal death."

Ritornello

chest, er, im Schla-fe des e-wi-gen the an-gel of death, un-a-

E minor B minor B minor

138.

To-des be-dek-ken, im Schla-fe des ware, o-ver take thee, the an-gel of

B minor

144.

e-wi-gen To-des be-dek-ken. death un-a-ware o-ver take thee.

B minor E# dim.7 B minor Da Capo.

Recitativo.115/3. **Basso.** (Based on Chorale Vv. 3–6) • God keeps watch, hates dark, desires enlightenment (115/3).

For biblical background, see note.



1.

Bass is often the voice of authority.

Gott, so für dei-ne See-le wacht, hat Abscheu an der Sünden
God, who is watch-ing us so well, ab-hors the ways of sin and

NBA: vor

Secco

D major D7 G major G# dim.7

3.

Nacht; er sendet dir sein Gna-den - licht und will für die-se
hell, and thru His grace our souls up - lifts. The on - ly com - pen -

NBA: vor

A minor G major

5.

Gaben, die er so reichlich dir verspricht, nur offne Geistesau - gen haben. Des Satans
sa-tion He asks for His a-bun-dant gifts is in our spir-it's con-se-cra-tion. The de-vil's

Here there is a connection the to Gospel reading: The unforgiving servant did not appreciate the enormity of the debt forgiven him—he needed spiritual enlightenment ("offne Geistesaugen").

Tritone

G7 C major C major G minor 6

8.

List ist oh-ne Grund, die Sünder zu be-strik-ken, brichst du nun selbst den Gnaden -
guile is o-cean deep, in sin would he en-snare us, and if the faith we fail to

Tritone

Chromaticism (with tritones) colors the description of Satan's cunning and later the flattery sought from the hypocritical world. The tritone was historically associated with the devil (see note). Here the singer goes below the foundational continuo line on the word "Grund" (foundation/reason).

See full score for correct octave.

C# dim.7 D7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

10. tritone

bünd, wirst du die Hil-fe nie er-blicken. Die ganze Welt und ih-re Glieder sind
 keep, un-fit for grace will God de-clare us. Tho' vain the world andd all its fash-ions, our

G minor D minor (for significance, see note). G# dim.7

13. NBA: hiebei

nichts als falsche Brüder; doch macht dein Fleisch und Blut hier bei sich lauter Schmeichelei.
 flesh and mor-tal pas-sions, yet we of earth are well con-tent to heed their blan-dish-ment.

A minor A7 F#7 A# dim.7 B minor A# dim.7 B minor B minor

Chamber-like instrumentation.

Concerning the violoncello piccolo, see notes.

Aria. "Molto adagio" occurs seldom in Bach's music.

(Based on Chorale Verse 7) • Pray as you watch: beg for mercy on your debt (115/4).

115/4. **Molto adagio.** (♩ = 60.)



Ritornello informs the entire aria.

1. Theme a. Violoncello piccolo Theme b.

B minor Basso p E# dim.7 C# major

The ticking bass line suggests the passage of time, presumably related to the command to keep watch.

3. F# minor E minor 6. E minor DM C# dim.7 AM D major

E major A major A7 D major

8. F#7 B minor

The cantata's connection to the Gospel reading is seen here in an aria that begins with 2 lines from the chorale's 7th stanza, which allude to the indebted servant in Jesus' parable. However, Bach does not quote the chorale tune. Instead he creates a long lament of repentance with translucent texture. Instead of beginning with the instrumental theme, the soprano sings an imploring figure that begins off the beat, coming back to it repeatedly throughout the movement.

Soprano.

11.

Alfred Dürr notes the "rare instrumentation and its exploitation of a wide range of pitch—from the highest (flute) via treble (voice) and tenor (violin) to bass (continuo)," See *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach*, 616.

Be - te, be - te,
Pray ye, pray ye,

For biblical background, see note.

B minor

B minor

F#7

B minor

G major

E minor

A7

A long descent shows the range of the violoncello piccolo



13.

Theme a. be - te a - ber auch da - bei,
pray ye, ev - er watch and pray,

This type of aria is called a "Devisenarie" (a term coined by Hugo Riemann) or "motto aria." After the ritornello, the singer presents the first phrase of the aria as a kind of motto. This is followed by a short instrumental bridge before the aria proper begins. The motto sets the tone (and the literary perspective) for the movement.

D major

F#7

B minor

E7

15.

Interestingly, the libretto plays on the distinction between "anbeten" (to "worship") and bitten (to "ask"), derived from the Gospel passage: the first servant "worshipped" his lord, begging for patience, the second servant "asked" for leniency. In the cantata text, the A section employs "bete" (to pray, implying "anbeten," i.e., worship), the B section employs "bitte" (to ask [for patience, i.e., for forgiveness]). See Martin Petzoldt, *Bach-Kommentar* 1:620.

be - te a - ber auch da -
pray ye, ev - er watch and

A minor

D7

G major

E minor

B7

17.

bei, be - te, be - te,
pray pray ye, pray ye,

E minor

F#7

B minor

A7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

19.

be - - - te, be - te a - ber auch da - bei mit - ten
 pray ye, pray ye, ev - er watch and pray, pray ye -

D major F#7 F#7 B minor

22.

in dem Wa - - chen, mit ten in dem Wa - chen.
 with-out ceas - - ing, pray ye - with - out ceas - ing.

B minor

24.

Bit - - - te, bit - -
 Beg ye, beg -

In the B section the verb changes to "bitte" ("ask/request") but the pleading music continues.

B minor C#7 F# minor

27.

- - te, bit - te bei der grossen Schuld,
 ye, beg ye that the judge will view,

E major A major C#7 F# minor G#7

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

29.

bit - te, bit - te,
beg ye, beg

C# minor F#7 B minor E7 A major

32.

- te, bit - te bei der grossen Schuld dei - nen Richter um Ge
ye, beg ye that the judge will view pa - tient - ly the wrongs we

G#7 C# minor E7 A major Violoncello picc.

34.

duld, dei - nen Richter um Ge - duld, soll er dich von Sünden frei und gerei -
do, pa - tient - ly the wrongs we do, all our sins will wash a - way, make us clean

C#7 F# minor

37.

- nigt ma - chen, von Sünden frei und ge - rei - nigt, und gereinigt ma - chen.
and spot - less, wash clean our sins, pu - ri - fy us, make us clean and spot - less.

F# minor Da Capo. The figured bass does not indicate a major chord.

J.S. Bach - Church Cantatas BWV 115

Secco

115/5. **Recitativo.** (Based on Chorale Vv. 8–9) • Lord hears our cry in Christ's name; wants to help (115/5).

Tenore.

Chromatic saturation in the vocal part in 6 mm.

With a move from minor to major, the recitative prepares the key of the closing chorale but also depicts the text's confidence in answered prayer.

For biblical background, see note.



1. F# C# A# D# A B C

Er sehnet sich nach unserm Schreien, er neigt sein gnädig Ohr hier.
The Lord will hear the faith - ful call - ing, and hith - er turn His gra - cious

Secco

F# major B7 D# dim.7

3. G F D E

auf; wenn Feinde sich auf unsern Schaden freu-en, so siegen wir in sei - ner
ear. When foes re - joice at ills to us be - fall - ing, with His sup - port we've naught to

E minor G7 C major

Arioso.
(♩ = 56.)

6. G#

Kraft: in-dem sein Sohn, in-dem wir be - ten, uns Muth und Kräfte schafft, und will als
fear. For hope and strength do we be-seech Him, we know that prayer sin - cere thru His be -

C major E major A minor

This passage alludes to passages such as John 14:13–14 15:16, and 16:23 (see note). The underlying 9th chorale stanza has "anflehen" ("implore") while the biblical passage has "bitten" ("ask"). Martin Petzoldt argues that this is a biblical correction of a Pietistic reading. See *Bach-Kommentar* 1:622.



The arioso ending underscores God's merciful response, represented by the forgiving master in the Gospel reading, The tenor's descending line (with cross figures) suggests the image of God coming down, while the walking bass illustrates the text: "He will step to us (i.e., to our side) as helper." See Helmuth Rilling, *The Oregon Bach Festival Master Class Lectures*, vol. 2 (Dayton, Ohio: Roger Dean Publishing, 2001), p. 40.

8.

Hel - fer zu uns tre - - - - - ten.
lov - ed Son will reach Him.

D7 G major

The vocal line forshadows the final line of the chorale. The first chorale phrase appearing here in the continuo realization is the editor's contribution.

The singer's melodic motion is continued in the continuo. G major

115/6. Choral. (Mel.: „Straf' mich nicht in deinem Zorn.“)

1/4. Soprano. (Verse 10) • Judgment Day is near so let us watch & pray (115/6).

+Corno
+Flute
+Ob d'amore
+Vln I

For biblical
background,
see note.

+Vln II

+Vla

Alto.

Tenore.

Basso.

Drum so lasst uns im - mer - dar wa - chen, fle - hen, be - - ten,
weil die Angst, Noth und Ge - fahr im - mer nä - her tre - - ten;
Bear we then, our woes and cares pen - i - tent and fear - - ing,
lest the day come, un - a - wares which is ev - er near - - ing;

Drum so lasst uns im - mer - dar wa - chen, fle - hen, be - - ten,
weil die Angst, Noth und Ge - fahr im - mer nä - her tre - - ten;
Bear we then, our woes and cares pen - i - tent and fear - - ing,
lest the day come, un - a - wares which is ev - er near - - ing;

The animated bass
line suggests the
perseverance
referenced in the text
"immerdar"
("evermore").

9. G major G major G major

denndie Zeit ist nicht weit, wo uns Gott wird rich - ten und die Welt ver - nich - ten.
watch and pray; comes the day when the whole world crash - es in - to dust and ash - es.

denndie Zeit ist nicht weit, wo uns Gott wird rich - ten und die Welt ver - nich - ten.
watch and pray; comes the day when the whole world crash - es in - to dust and ash - es.

denndie Zeit ist nicht weit, wo uns Gott wird rich - ten und die Welt ver - nich - ten.
watch and pray; comes the day when the whole world crash - es in - to dust and ash - es.

denndie Zeit ist nicht weit, wo uns Gott wird rich - ten und die Welt ver - nich - ten.
watch and pray; comes the day when the whole world crash - es in - to dust and ash - es.

The bass line
for the final phrase
inverts its line at
the beginning of the
chorale; it is also
reminiscent of the
beginning of no. 1.

G major E(7)

A major

D major

G major