Nov. 17, 2019
The Sound of Silence
Isaiah 1:10-18
SOLAS:Vespers
St. John's College

WELCOME

Welcome to the third SOLAS:Vespers service of the year. My name is Yuri Hooker.

In every SOLAS:Vespers event, my goal is to put together a service of worship using the divinely inspired words of Scripture as my guide. I aspire to honour the Word of God by making every aspect of our time together, from the sermon that I preach, to the music I choose, to the form the evening takes, flow from the text so that each service is a kind of illuminated manuscript. My prayer is that you will leave this place not only staggered by the beauty of the biblical text, not only understanding a little bit more about it than when you came, but that you will be intrigued to know more about its author, that you will crave more and more of him.

Tonight we continue our long term study of one of the ancient world's most stirring poets, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah. In our first two services this year, we studied the first oracle of Isaiah from the first chapter of the book, a chapter that I described as

being a little like an opera overture in three parts, in which Isaiah introduces his broad themes which he will be seeking to deal with throughout the rest of his magnum opus. If you missed those services and would like to go back and read the sermons, you can find them all on the SOLAS:Vespers website: solasvespers.org. That first, dark oracle can be summarized this way: *rebellion against God inevitably brings desolation, but God will always preserve a remnant.*

Whether you are encountering Isaiah for the first time tonight or for the 100th time, the passage that we are considering tonight—the second oracle of Isaiah—is hard for us to relate to. Even those of us who are regular church goers may find it difficult to make the connection between the religious rites to which it refers and our normal way of doing things. For people who have little to no religious background, they would seem to carry even less significance—an esoteric historical footnote, and no more.

Even so, I believe that this passage, like all of Scripture, is timeless, and that it has a lot to teach us about how we relate to God, and about how we relate to one another in God's ordering of the universe. And it brings

us directly to the unexpectedly brilliant heart of the chapter, the glorious promise of reconciliation that Isaiah will continue to develop for the entire book.

So, I hope that you will bear with me as I seek—with God's help—to explain and expound this passage and to apply its truth of to our lives today.

Along the way you'll hear some music that you will likely find unusual, especially in a Christian service of worship. You've just encountered a bit of it, in Paul Simon's *The Sound of Silence.* This classic song evokes the pervading sense of alienation that we feel in the postmodern world, the distance that we feel from one another and also from God. Borrowing the language of worship it laments our replacement of real relationships with technology, how we have swapped transcendence for immediacy. It explores what it means, in the words of Israeli historian Yuval Harari, to have embraced the "bargain of modernity", exchanging "meaning for power".

You'll also hear a work by a contemporary Russian composer, Alfred Schnittke, who many consider to be the artistic successor to Dmitri Shostakovich (whose music some of you heard at our last service) and also

some music by Arvo Pärt, a living Estonian composer who writes music of rapturous simplicity.

Finally, because in the text we are studying tonight Isaiah challenges his contemporaries to consider afresh the meaning of true worship, I was inspired to go back to the basics too and incorporate the congregational singing of Psalms without accompanying instruments or harmony. For those of you from the Reformed tradition, this will probably not seem like such a foreign idea. But those of us from other traditions may find it a bit strange, or stark, perhaps even intimidating or oppressive. Still, as far we know, it is likely the way that the earliest church worshipped, and while I don't personally consider that factor to be of primary importance, since the New Testament doesn't give us the kind of explicit prescriptions for corporate worship that the Old Testament does, at the very least I hope that we will all find it an interesting and enlightening experiment, perhaps one that will even help you to focus your attention, to let any distractions fall away as we seek the object of our adoration: our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Some of you may find the evening somewhat disorienting. That is

somewhat intentional on my part. Whereas Isaiah's first oracle taught that rebellion against God brings *desolation,* tonight we will learn about how our self-centredness brings *delusion.* And we will end up synthesizing the two in this way: *Rebellion against God inevitably brings desolation* ***and delusion****, but through his unlikely remnant God graciously and unexpectedly* ***restores*** *us.*

Hymn: Psalm 50 (stanzas 3 & 4)

SERMON:

The Sound of Silence (part 1)

Perhaps it would be a good idea to start tonight's sermon with a question that confronts me whenever I read the book of Isaiah. And I expect it's probably something that bothers you too when you crack open Isaiah or some other biblical book of prophecy. Most people find these books very difficult to understand especially because they don't have a good strategy of how to answer it.

It's a question I've alluded to before, but so far I haven't tackled it head on. The question is: How do you know where one section ends, and another begins? And how do you know how they all relate to one another?

These are good questions. And they're understandable, too. Ancient literature generally doesn't employ the conventions that we use nowadays to make written text easy to grasp. To make matters worse, often the authors change tack abruptly in ways that to us do not seem to make logical sense.

In the case of the prophets, as with all poets, I find it always helpful to bear in mind that this material was initially intended to be *listened to*. In fact, most reading, most intellectual activity in the ancient world for that matter, was done out loud. Written language was invented as an *aid to memory*, to help you remember the things that you had already learned.

So, literature was intended to be heard, and then memorized, and then meditated upon, either in one's mind or at least as often, out loud—the Hebrew word for meditation also means "to murmur". And this constant vocalization of important words that you had learned happened all the time: while you were walking somewhere, or working, or rearing your kids, or entertaining your friends. What we call "literature" was originally intended to be listened to and ruminated upon rather than merely consumed.

This had an enormous impact on the way that ancient texts, and especially works of poetry, were organized. They work more like a piece of music than like a dissertation, and when we listen to music what really sticks out to us are things like rhythm, and texture, and pattern. Of course, some of that gets lost when a work of literature is read in translation. But still, we will probably notice when there is an unexpected change of content. And even if we lose focus for a moment we will really sit up and pay attention when a significant phrase that we heard earlier gets repeated. And such striking phrase repetition can serve to *emphasize*, or *bridge* one section with another (that is, it can serve as a *connecting line,* or *tangent*). Or maybe a phrase will *frame* the beginning and the end of a passage. Or maybe it will do all these things, serving as a "red thread", a recurring *motif* that runs through many sections.

There is absolutely a logic to ancient poetry, but it is often an intuitive logic, a musical or poetic logic, a tangential logic. And while this poetry still does usually make sense in the linear way that we are accustomed to, it *always* makes sense tangentially, and recognizing and accepting that is often

the key to understanding the linear logic of a passage.

Close your eyes and just listen to a portion of the first chapter of Isaiah and you will start to notice some of these things.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 1:2-20

So…what did you hear? I'm guessing you heard the words: "Sodom" and "Gomorrah". Not only are we going to pick up on those words because they are very uncommon words and because they are each used twice in a short space, but also because most of us still have a strongly negative association with them.

How about the words "Hear" and "Give ear"? We heard them right at the beginning, and that will often cement them in our short term memory, and then we heard them again right after the first time we heard the words "Sodom" and "Gomorrah". Not only that, we heard them attached to those very words: "Hear…you rulers of Sodom…Give ear…you people of Gomorrah"! We should infer that we have arrived at an important junction.

How about the phrase: "says the LORD"? we heard it twice, right? Once shortly after the "Sodom and Gomorrah" part, and once just before

we stopped. And then there was a related phrase right at the end. It was a phrase that sounded very formal, majestic even: “For the mouth of the LORD has spoken”, it was very similar to a phrase right at the outset of the passage Shelly just read. It tells us the very reason we are to pay attention. We were called to listen in the first place primarily because it was “the LORD” who had spoken.

And of course, along the way, there were some changes in content. We started by hearing about domestic things: about wayward children, and oxen and donkeys, about sickness and infected wounds, about cities and lands, farms, and vineyards. Then there was Sodom and Gomorrah. And then we started hearing the language of ritual: about sacrifices, and Sabbaths, and new moons, and feasts, and prayers, and blood, and washing, and justice. And finally, blending run-of-the-mill and rite, there was the surprising language of miraculous transformation and hope: of red, and scarlet, and crimson, of white, and wool, and snow; there were *exhortation* and *warning*, the startling imagery of the land and of the sword, of eating and of being eaten.

It's a lot to pack in in 20 verses: less than 500 words in English, and half as many in Hebrew!

So, even without the rhythm and texture of the original language, we can certainly tell that there was at least one significant shift in subject matter, from home to temple, as it were, heralded by the repeated and ringing call to "Hear!", bridged by the desolation and delusion of a duet of doomed destinations, punctuated at important junctures with Isaiah's insistent reminder that his whole point is that this is all *God's* word, not his own.

…

So, we have moved from the *desolation* of our home, to the *delusion* that can happen in our worship.

Over the past 50 years, church life has largely been preoccupied with have been called (with ironic overstatement) "The Worship Wars".

These sometimes sharp divisions have been provoked by a number of factors, but they all reflect the mind-boggling pace of change over the past century: technological change, cultural change, philosophical change, and, to a certain extent, theological change.

In the worship wars, two opposing priorities generally hold sway. Those of us who like things done in more traditional ways tend to appeal to propriety, to the "proper" way of doing things. If you're a cynic, this is often code for doing what's comfortable. Others, on the other hand, prize authenticity. This is often code for doing what you feel like. To be clear, I am first and foremost holding up the mirror to myself.

But even without this cynical view of the "worship wars", even when we encounter people who are thoughtful and look primarily to the Bible to determine what is proper or what is authentic, the tendency in our culture is to emphasize one over the other. This is itself a manifestation of the deep changes in the way we think. For us, either form trumps expression, or expression trumps form.

But course, neither is dispensable. No one who reads the Bible and takes it seriously can come away with the impression that the form of our corporate worship is a matter of indifference to God. On the other hand, no one could think that God will be satisfied with anyone who performs an otherwise perfect liturgy half-heartedly.

When you think about it, it is rare to come across someone in the Bible who doesn't care passionately about both the form *and* the expression of corporate worship. Everyone—even those who didn't worship Israel's God, or those who, like Isaiah's contemporary King Ahaz, supplemented the worship of YHWH with the worship of idols—was deeply concerned both with getting the form right and with being sincere in their public expression of devotion.

And this is what we find as we look at our text. It doesn't appear that either propriety or enthusiasm is in any way lacking. Isaiah talks about their "multitude of sacrifices", and specifically their excess of "burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts", likely referring to an enthusiastic adherence to the sacrificial system as outlined in the Law, especially in the book of Leviticus.

He refers repeatedly to their keeping of the Sabbath and their many prayers, to their new moon festivals, and their appointed feasts, all ordained by God in his instructions for public worship. He speaks even of convocations, observances called by the leadership when they felt supplemental

expressions of public worship were appropriate and necessary.

These were seriously religious people who were seriously invested, financially and emotionally, in the worship of their God.

And yet God is clearly unhappy with them and with their worship.

Despite the fact that he himself had ordained the religious festivals that marked the cycle of the year, he professes to hate their feasts to the depths of his soul (v14). That is, his very being is utterly opposed to their so-called worship. To say it makes him want to throw up is an understatement.

He dubs them “rulers of Sodom” and “people of Gomorrah”. He declares that their gatherings weigh him down and wear him out. He claims that what they have on offer is unappetizing.

These are vivid metaphors.

Imagine your guest of honour turning up for turkey dinner with this kind of attitude, and you can guess how Isaiah’s message would have gone over with his people.

“What do you mean he’d rather not show up!? We made all his favourites … we spent hours and hours slaving

away … doesn't he know we're doing all this for him??"

…

What's going on?

Is God ungrateful? Did he change his mind? Did he get bored? Did he just wake up one morning and decide that he'd really prefer not to bother with us humans?

No. Of course not.

Rather he says, "I cannot endure *iniquity* and solemn assembly" (v13). That is, he calls them on their hypocrisy. He calls them on the fact that they had entirely missed the point of the system that he devised for them to be able to approach him.

It seems that many of them had begun to believe that YHWH was just another god, like the gods of their neighbours, albeit more powerful, and that gods in general were kind of like us, only bigger. So sacrificing had something to do with satisfying the outsized appetite of their not-so-friendly neighborhood deity. In other words: the gods created humans in order to have *their needs* met. As long as people did that, *their needs* would be met in turn.

It stood to reason that the more they sacrificed, the more powerful their

god would become, and the more powerful their god became, the more successful they themselves would be. That is, as long as they kept YHWH's altar well stocked with fresh meat, he would bless them with abundance and protect them from hostile enemies and the alien gods they served.

The same idea is still around, though in more subtle forms. It's around in the popular notion of religion as a pitifully parochial endeavour that sets the deluded followers of one arbitrary, imaginary being against the deluded followers of other arbitrary, imaginary beings. Sadly, a similar idea also plagues evangelical churches, as we worry that our failure (or more often our church's failure to have all the latest, greatest stuff) will somehow injure God's cause in the world.

Israel had also begun to believe that their sins could be literally transferred to a sacrificial animal, and thus, as long as they could afford to "pay" for it, they could ignore God's moral and ethical instruction.

But while the sacrificial system as God had envisioned it used familiar Ancient Near Eastern sacrificial forms of worship, it used them not to appease a god, but to express the *consecration*, the setting apart, of the people of the *only true* God. The former slaves of

Egypt were to be reborn as a “kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6), fulfilling the promise that God had made to Abraham: that his descendants would bless all the nations of the world. In short, the religious life of Israel was intended to transform its people, from the leadership to the common folk, from “the soles of their feet to the top of their heads”. They were to showcase to the rest of the world what God could bring about in his people, and this in order to draw the rest of the nations to himself. The sacrificial system was to be a means by which a true alteration could take place. And among his transformed people, God personally dwelt in his Temple.

This is why theology is so important! To the outside observer, Israel looked like they were offering pretty well the same kinds of sacrifices as their neighbours did. But Israel was supposed to be different. They were not supposed to use their sacrifices to arbitrarily appease their god so that they could justify their behaviour, prop up their society, and advance their national prospects. Israel was supposed to see in their sacrifices that their sins brought about death, the destruction of God’s good Creation. All of them were supposed to consecrate

themselves so that the perfect, transcendent Creator could dwell in their midst.

But they had it all backwards:

They burned incense not to express gratitude to God, but to butter him up. He declared it an “abomination”. They tracked an endless stream of bulls and lambs, goats and rams into the Temple in a vain attempt to expiate their guilt and buy him off in a kind of divine protection racket.

He insisted that he had never “required this trampling of [his] courts”, and issued a “cease and desist” against tramping the blood of their “vain” (i.e false and utterly meaningless) offerings all over his house.

In a moment, we are going to join our voices in a psalm that expresses very much this line of thinking. As we sing without the softening effects of accompaniment or harmony, I pray that this will help you to focus on the words, God’s words, enhanced by the beautiful melody we have been learning at our last two services.

In the midst of our singing, you will hear a jarring juxtaposition. Alfred Schnittke, like his predecessor Shostakovich, like Isaiah before them, made art that challenged his people to

see through the polished façade, to question the accepted norms of his culture. His music is often hard to listen to, because he refused to write music that implied that everything was all right.

As you listen to this work, you will hear the cello busying itself alone, first scurrying one way, then another, ranging farther and farther from the starting pitch. You will hear the piano punctuate the cello's mumbling until both instruments grow to a full blown roar of ceaseless activity. While you're listening, use your imagination to picture the scuffling, the bleating and the lowing, the noise and confusion. Imagine that this is the cacophony that false worship is to God. This is what delusional worship is: the sound of a silent heart.

Hymn: Psalm 50 (stanzas 3 & 4)

Schnittke: Cello Sonata, mvt. II

Hymn: Psalm 50 (stanzas 5 & 7)

SERMON:

The Sound of Silence (part 2)

The logic of the contemporary church goes like this: if both the form and the expression of our worship is intact, that is, if we are attempting to worship him strictly in the way that he himself has outlined AND we're doing it with everything we've got, then God should

be happy. Or, to put it in crass terms, if we're *doing* it right and it *feels* right, then it should be "*all*-right" as far as God is concerned.

We hear this constantly in the way we describe our experience of worship. When we feel *moved* by a particular service or we're awed by a worship leader's skill, it seems obvious that "you can just feel the Spirit moving". If, on the other hand, we find ourselves bored, or annoyed, or embarrassed (which—if we're honest—is what many of us feel at least as often as we feel moved) it is clear to us that something must be wrong: that our leaders somehow "just don't get it", that by their ineptitude we were somehow impeded from "coming into God's presence".

In other words, the problem typically lies with someone else. But even if we push ourselves and examine our own motives, we will usually assume that the problem lies with our having "done it wrong"—that is that we have somehow missed the prescribed formula and so need to read a bunch of books to learn how to "do worship better", or that we have some sort of psychological, emotional or spiritual inadequacy that prevents from "entering in" to an authentic worship "experience".

This is why a cottage industry that seeks to "improve worship" has become such an enormous niche market.

But what we're seeing in our passage today is that, no, even at what seems like the best of times, when we are following God's instructions to the letter and doing it with gusto, God can still utterly reject our corporate worship efforts. We can *analyze* what we're doing and conclude that all is well, and we can *feel* that we are regularly "coming into God's presence". And we can be utterly delusional.

It is enough to drive us to despair. What does God want? What is the remedy?

A surface reading of our text would make it seem that the solution lies in a one-two punch of Ritual Cleansing and Ethical Behaviour.

"Your hands are filled with blood", God says, and thus "when you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you." And even more dismaying, "even if you make many prayers, I will not listen …" What does he tell us to do? "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean … " and also, "remove the evil of your deeds from before my

eyes … seek justice, correct oppression…”

Without a doubt, Isaiah is saying that unethical, sinful behaviour makes it impossible to worship God acceptably.

“Your hands are filled with blood”, God says, and presumably, since it’s unlikely that everyone in ancient Judah was a murderer or violent offender, he considered that injustice tainted the entire community. Not one of us is qualified to offer acceptable worship to God.

Isaiah knew that the string of commands that he fires off here neither would nor could ever happen. At least not in his lifetime. Not thoroughly. Was he really that unrealistic? Did he really just intend for his listeners to scurry about, occupying themselves with improving their society? Was Isaiah the original progressive?

Likely not. While the scope of Isaiah’s concern certainly includes ethics, if you read much of the book it is obviously far broader than that. This is because, as history has shown, when we seek to “correct oppression” on our own terms, all too often we harm more than we help. All we succeed in doing is to spread our misery around. We broadcast the contagion of our sin.

Isaiah may have already written these words by the time he wrote this first chapter: “all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (64:6). Isaiah knew that to “wash ourselves”, to “remove the evil of our deeds from before God’s eyes”, to “cease to do evil” is something that is completely, demonstrably, out of our reach.

And it is at this point of utter despair that God makes an unexpected promise: “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”. And this is the point: worship is, and always was, only made possible by God’s grace. Rebellion brings desolation. Rebellion brings delusion. But God promises restoration. Again, as I put it earlier: *Rebellion against God inevitably brings desolation and delusion, but through his unlikely remnant God graciously and unexpectedly restores us.*

How will this happen? Isaiah spent the whole of his ministry—he spends the rest of this book—fleshing it out.

Who is this remnant? The apostle Peter tells us that “the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully” for the answer (1Pet1:10). And later in his book, Isaiah will let us in on the secret. He tells us that it will be a remnant of one: God’s “servant …

formed from the womb … to bring Jacob back …" (49:5); He is the "servant … [who] will bring forth justice to the nations … [who] will not break … a bruised reed" nor extinguish "a faintly burning wick" but who "will faithfully bring forth justice", who will "establish justice in the earth" (42:1-4).

God tells his people in our passage to "seek justice". The Hebrew word is *mishpat*. It is this "justice", or rather, our misunderstanding of *mishpat* that often obscures our understanding of what Isaiah is suggesting as our remedy. When we think of "justice" we think inevitably of a courtroom, and of righting wrongs. And this is certainly included in the Hebrew concept of *mishpat.* But like so many other Hebrew words that serve as theological keystones, *mishpat* is not easily translatable into a single English word. As Isaiah scholar John Oswalt writes in his excellent commentary: "*mishpat* means more than legal judgment or justice. It is in fact the creation order, both physically and spiritually." It is a set of "principles," Oswalt continues, "upon which life depends and which, if followed will lead to life." (p523)

In the words of yet another (and my favourite) Isaiah scholar, Alec Motyer,

"*mishpat* is used…to express the sum total of what the Lord has adjudged to be right, in a word, the will of God."

So: to "seek justice", is another way of saying that we are to "learn to do good". But sadly we are unable to do either. Therefore we desperately need the One who will "establish justice in the earth."

In the passage that is key to understanding his whole message, chapter 53, Isaiah drives the message home: we need the One whose soul will "make an offering for guilt", the One who will "make many to be accounted righteous" (53:10-11). We need Jesus.

Washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, we are a "royal priesthood", we are "living stones" in the Temple in which Christ himself is all: Great High Priest, Perfect Sacrifice and the chief Cornerstone. (Rom13:14; 1Pet2:4-9; Heb9:11-14)

And thus, worship is not merely what we do when we gather together as a community of believers. Worship is a total life orientation. Worship is, to use Paul's phrase, "to present ourselves as a living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1). This is only made possible through God's mercy, through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Anything else is a “trampling of God’s courts”.

Of course, it’s all well and good to call worship a “total life orientation”, but without an adequate understanding of just who this God is that we are centering our lives upon, what he is like, and what he has done, without accurate information on what he desires for us, and on how he has ordered his Creation; that is, if we don’t care to know what “seeking *mishpat*” means to *him*, our worship will still be self-serving, false, and meaningless. This is why he calls us from the outset of this passage to “Hear the word of the LORD”, and to “listen to the teaching of our God”, and then reminds us three times that it is the LORD, YHWH, who is speaking. To put it pointedly, if we ignore God’s revealed Word, it is foolish to think that we are worshipping him.

We cannot simply perform a polished liturgy or cook up a feeling of religious ecstasy and pretend that what we are doing at church is pleasing to God. We need the Bible. Without it, the conviction that we are following Jesus is a delusion. Without the Bible, the conviction that we are doing anything that is ultimately worthwhile is a delusion.

But with the Bible, with the Spirit of the Living God making our very bodies his Temple—consecrated and holy ground—every action has the potential to be both sanctified and sanctifying, a "sweet smelling aroma" to God. "Correcting oppression", "pleading the widow's cause", "bringing justice to the fatherless" will indeed be sweet to him and to us. Our hands will no longer be blood-stained, but pure as wool shorn from God's own Spotless Lamb.

I'll give the next to last word to an Australian Anglican, David Peterson, who has written very helpfully on the subject of biblical worship. He writes:

Throughout the Bible, acceptable worship means approaching or engaging with God on the terms he proposes and in the manner that he makes possible. It involves honouring, serving, and respecting him, abandoning any loyalty or devotion that hinders an exclusive relationship with him…

…worship is…faith expressing itself in obedience and adoration…a personal and moral fellowship with God relevant to every sphere of life…

…humanly devised religion receives God's condemnation in Scripture. It cannot bring people into a right relationship with God or enable them

to please him. God must rescue them from…ignorance and…sin…if they are to worship him acceptably…

…Israel could only draw near to the LORD because of his gracious initiative and provision. He uniquely revealed his character and will to them…Revelation and redemption are the basis of acceptable worship…(p283-284)

We are now going to learn a new Psalm together, after which Darryl and I will play, rather than speak, a benediction.

If you remember, I spoke of how the piece by Schnittke started on one note, then tore one way and then the next, gradually moving farther and farther away from that first note, which was a *Bb*. After I had programmed tonight's service, I realized that this last piece we will play does something very similar. But it goes in the opposite direction. Each phrase is brought back to a central pitch. And each phrase is actually part of a pair, that is, every second phrase is the mirror image of the phrase that precedes it. So it starts from one direction, and then the other, but no matter the direction it goes, it is always drawn back. Every successive pair of phrases strains farther away from the central pitch, but is always

graciously shepherded back to the centre. That central pitch in this case is not *Bb*, but the one closest to it, an *A*, the note that we traditionally use to tune instruments.

In other words, these works follow very similar rules and start in almost exactly the same place. But as you'll hear, the end result could hardly be more different. For me, these very small differences represent the often imperceptible line between true and false worship. Since the fall of humanity, since Cain and Abel, false worship has sprung up right alongside true worship. They start by looking practically identical. But false worship starts from a faulty premise—that worship is for our benefit—and it always interprets the rules backward, again, turning our gaze inward instead of God-ward. The end of that trajectory is, as Paul Simon put it, "talking without speaking…hearing without listening…" Delusion. The sound of silence.

As I said, I didn't intend for this to happen. I thought I was just programming a chaotic piece and a peaceful piece. But the potent metaphor that these two pieces by Schnittke and Part represent is for me a devastating illustration, a gift from God.

I hope that you will also find them so, and you may find joy in the knowledge that if you know God's Son, if you rest in him and trust that by his grace and the power of his Spirit you are being continually brought back to the Father as a living sacrifice, that you will experience the silence of a sound—not a deluded—heart and soul.