

SAINT THOMAS THE CARPENTER

a church opera for soloists, chorus, instrumentalists and the congregation

SAINT THOMAS THE CARPENTER presents the early legends of the Apostle Thomas who, obeying Christ's command given at the Great Commission, was the first to carry the Gospel to India.

The opera begins with a hymn sung by the entire congregation as the soloists process through the church to the playing area.

The apostles draw lots to determine which part of the world each will evangelize. Thomas is given India and is at first reluctant to go so far away from his homeland into a strange country. In a dream, though, the Lord assures Thomas that this is indeed the will of God. Besides, as an apostle Thomas is the servant of Christ, so when his Master bids him do something he really ought to obey. Still, Thomas tries to run away from his commission. But he meets a ship captain from India who has been sent by the Emperor of India to bring back a carpenter who can build the emperor the greatest mansion in the world. Thomas confesses to the ship captain that he is the disciple of the greatest of carpenters. Thomas goes with the captain to India.

The Emperor of India commands Thomas to build the greatest mansion any man has ever seen. Thomas agrees and is given vast sums of money by the emperor to cover the expenses of building so great a palace.

Thomas uses all of the money to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the ragged, medicine to the sick and shelter to the homeless. Each of these groups is played by children.

Finally the Emperor comes to see what progress Thomas has made on the mansion. When he finds that all of his money has been used for other purposes he throws Thomas in prison.

The Emperor's brother falls into a coma and is near death. The brother recovers and tells the emperor that while in a coma he was given a vision of heaven. There are countless beautiful dwellings in heaven but the brother sees one mansion that is more beautiful than all the rest. He asks if he can own that house and is told that it belongs to the Emperor of India because it was built by the acts of mercy and faith made possible by the Emperor's grant to Thomas.

During a hymn sung by the congregation, the different groups of children assemble a mansion.

The Emperor frees Thomas from prison, accepts Jesus as his Lord and works to alleviate suffering throughout his land for the rest of his life. And, indeed, at his death he finds a mansion reserved for him in Heaven more splendid than any the human eye can see.

The work ends with a hymn sung jointly by the players and the congregation.