

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Sept. 1

The Collect: Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: Graft in our hearts the love of your Name; increase in us true religion; nourish us with all goodness; and bring forth in us the fruit of good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Track 1 Old Testament: Song of Solomon 2:8-13

Track 1 Psalm: Psalm 45:1-2, 7-10

Track 2 Old Testament: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

Track 2 Psalm: Psalm 15

Epistle: James 1:17-27

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

On September 4 we celebrate the life of Albert Schweitzer. From A Great Cloud of Witnesses.

Albert Schweitzer was an accomplished musician, an insightful theologian, a pioneering medical doctor, and noted humanitarian.

Schweitzer was born on January 14, 1875, in Kayserburg in the disputed Alsace-Lorraine region, the son of a Lutheran pastor. He began studying music at an early age, and took to the organ. At the age of 18, he began studying with the noted French organist Charles-Marie Widor, with whom he studied the music and theology of Johann Sebastian Bach (July 28). Widor and Schweitzer founded the Paris Bach Society in 1905 and laid the foundations for the Bach revival of the 20th century.

Schweitzer entered an almost unimaginably productive time of life between 1899 and 1912. Schweitzer earned three doctoral degrees from Strasbourg faculties: philosophy (1899), theology (1901), and medicine (1913). He served as a Lutheran pastor in St. Nicholas Church in Strasbourg, taught in the theology faculty, performed regular concerts for the Bach Society, and wrote many of his most important books. Schweitzer was a prolific author whose work included a pamphlet on the art of organ-building and playing that kicked off a sweeping reform of organ building practices, a two-volume work on J. S. Bach, a dissertation on Immanuel Kant's philosophy of religion, and two books that revolutionized the study of the New Testament: *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* and *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*.

Schweitzer's philosophical and theological study crystalized around the importance of ethics. Knowledge, in his view, was incomplete if it did not lead to direct action. As a result, Schweitzer decided to earn a medical degree in order to relieve human suffering. After receiving the M.D. degree in 1913, he travelled to Gabon and served as a medical doctor there as an embodiment of his commitment to follow Christ. He and his wife, physician and researcher Helene Bresslau, established a medical clinic in Lambarene, Gabon, in 1913, where he served the local population. When World War I broke out, Schweitzer and his wife were forced to leave the hospital and, after recuperating, continued fund-raising efforts to keep the hospital going. Even after returning in 1924, Schweitzer periodically raised money for the mission with organ recordings and concert tours throughout Europe and the United States. He served as chief doctor at Lambarene for almost fifty

years until his death there at the age of 90 on September 4, 1965.

He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952 for his “ethic of reverence for life.” He explained this ethic as “the universal, encompassing ethic of love. It is the perceived ethic of Jesus expressed in necessarily thoughtful form.” The chief calling of Christians was to work in the spirit of Jesus in order to make present the Kingdom of God. Schweitzer lived this understanding through his tireless efforts on behalf of his patients, in his public criticism of European colonialism in Africa, and in his appeals for the abolishment of nuclear tests and weapons.

Let us pray: O God, who endowed your servant Albert Schweitzer with a multitude of gifts for learning, beauty, and service: Inspire your Church that we, following his example, may be utterly dedicated to you, that all our works might be done to your glory and the welfare of your people; through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**