

# The Lord nurtures and unites His people through His Divine service

## **Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it. Luther's Small Catechism

*Worship is like no place else in this world.*

*But there is one place that it does resemble, and that is heaven.*

Worship is like having one foot in heaven and one foot here on earth. This is dependent not on the elaborateness of the service or the sincerity of our devotion. **Rather, it is because of the One who is present in our worship** that we experience heaven on earth.

The Sabbath is a day of "rest". The true rest of God is waiting for us in heaven. But our gracious Lord allows us to experience a little bit of that rest while on earth by providing a special Holy Day for us each week.

Worship is a foretaste of the feast to come in heaven!

"No matter what other activities the church may engage in, public worship is essential to its life and mission. Common assembly and worship foster spiritual development and perpetuate the common faith". Luther Reed

Why worship? First, God acts. He enters into our world in love. Second, we have a need to respond to Him. Third, God commands that we worship Him. Fourth and finally, in obedience to God we worship. Dr. Timothy Maschke

## **INTRODUCTION TO WORSHIP**

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### **THE LITURGY OF WORSHIP**

Lutheran worship is structured in a particular way because we understand from the Bible that God is a God of order and not chaos (Genesis 1:1-2). In the New Testament, Paul encouraged the Corinthian congregation to do everything "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The English word *liturgy* comes from two Greek words from which we get laity (Greek *laos*) and energy (Greek *ergon*). Originally *leitourgia* referred to the political obligations performed by the citizens for the sake of the community (public service and taxes). When Christians adapted the word, they understood it in a positive sense of willing service to God because of what He had done for them first.

Liturgy is a vehicle for receiving God's beneficent aid, as well as for our expression of gratitude for His grace. In a sense, the liturgy can be compared to breathing: God's Spirit comes to us (we inhale) and we express our spiritual response back to God (we exhale).

The style of liturgy is not ours alone to do our own thing; it traces its roots through a history of Christian expression. Frank C. Senn writes: "Christian liturgy retains traces of the various cultures through which it has passed and to which it has been adapted. We chant a Hebrew "Amen," sing Greek canticles, pray the rhythms of Latin rhetoric, assemble in Gothic buildings, listen to German chorale preludes, and extend an American handshake at the greeting of peace."

### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE SERVICE**

Traditionally, there are two major parts of a Christian order of service. The early Jerusalem type of worship emphasized Scripture and sacrifice. A decade or two after the Christian church began, the Gentile type of worship, which emphasized Message and Meal, grew in significance. Through the means of grace, believers receive God's gracious forgiveness and the strength for continuing one's Christian vocation.

### **WHAT IS LUTHERAN LITURGY?** It is:

**Trinitarian** - We gather in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Christological** - Jesus is the center and object of our worship.

**Evangelical** - Gospel centered

**Catholic or Ecumenical** - Reaches out to the whole world

**Historical** - Lutherans revere the past

**Liturgical** - We follow an established order

**Traditional** - Lutheran worship follows the tradition of the church as expressed in the Apostle's Creed

**Contemporary** - Though our eyes are on the past and the future, we worship in the present.

Various excerpts from "Gathered Guests" by Dr. Timothy Maschke