

Worship enrichment Sunday. **February 28, 2016.**

Service introduction: Have you ever wondered, “Where did our worship service come from? Why do we use a similar pattern of worship each week? Why do we worship the way we do?” Today’s service is going to be different, and I pray, special. At several points of the service, we’ll stop and answer those important questions by explaining parts of the service. We pray this will help you grow closer to Jesus each time you worship, better appreciate our order of service and understand why we use much the same pattern of worship every Sunday.

The basic order of service we use is called the Liturgy. Liturgy is a specific term that literally means, “the service of the people.” The Liturgy is a service of God to his people and the service of God’s people to God. We use the Liturgy for three main reasons. First and most importantly, the Liturgy is centered on Jesus. Second, the Liturgy allows the people to participate in worship instead of being mere spectators. Part of this is repetition, that ensures these key parts of worship will be well-known to all regular worshipers. Thirdly, the Liturgy honors the experience of the Christians before us. There are parts of the Liturgy that Christians have used to worship God for 2000 or even 3000 years. We use these same songs and prayers, humbly admitting that maybe those believers closer in time to Jesus had a better understanding of how Jesus wants us to worship. We use a version of the historic Liturgy just about every Sunday. The Common Service we use today closely reflects the Liturgy used by the early Christians. Each service has one main theme. Our theme today is turning from sin confident of the Lord’s forgiveness. We’ll see that theme as we sing our opening hymn, 302.

Invocation: The opening response is taken from Matthew 28:19, when Jesus instituted baptism. We begin the service by calling on God’s name and remembering we worship as his baptized children. The word, “Amen,” you see at many parts of the service comes from a Hebrew word that means, “Truth.” The word is spoken or sung as a way to say, “That’s the truth. I agree with it.”

Confession of sins: I John chapter 1 says, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Whenever we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.” Right away, God cleans our slates with him in worship as we confess our sins and hear the good news of his forgiveness. You will notice that pastor or vicar usually confess sins with the people on this floor level, showing, “I too am a sinner and I cannot enter God’s presence until sin is forgiven.” The words of the confession are taken from Romans 8, James 2 and Luke 18. The words from the absolution or announcement of forgiveness are taken from 1 John 2 and Matthew 28. The Lord have mercy, or Kyrie in Latin, is an ancient song of the Christian church. It is taken from the prayer of a tax collector in Luke 18. He was at God’s temple, but when he prayed he did not look up to heaven, but beat his chest and said, “Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.” That’s why we often bow our heads during this part of the service.

Glory be to God: This song of praise is taken from Luke 2, the words the angels sang announcing Jesus’ birth. So every Sunday remembers Christmas.

Prayer of the Day: By this time you might have noticed that pastor or vicar keeps turning around to face the altar and then face the people and back and forth. There’s a reason for this. When pastor is speaking for the people to God: confessing sins, praying, praising, pastor faces the altar. When pastor is speaking for God to the people, the announcement of forgiveness, reading or preaching God’s Word, pastor faces the people.

The prayer of the day is a prayer that reflects the theme of the service and helps us look ahead to the Scripture readings. Remember the theme of today’s worship is turning from sin confident of the Lord’s forgiveness.

Scripture Lessons: The particular Scripture lessons we use each week are carefully chosen to reflect the season of the year and to cover all the main teachings of the Bible. The Gospel reading determines the theme of the day and the other readings fit this theme. Usually the first lesson is from the Old Testament. It is often a promise of God which Jesus fulfills in the Gospel reading. The Psalms were the hymns of the Old Testament. We sing these songs that are in some cases 3000 years old to connect with these believers who lived on the promises, trusting in Jesus even before he was born on the earth. The second lesson is usually from one of the letters or epistles of the New Testament. Pastor or vicar almost always preaches the sermon from one of these three readings.

Gospel: We stand for the Gospel reading to show respect for the words and works of Jesus. The word Gospel means, "Good news." This good news is one of the high points of the service, so we sing or speak a response often both before and after the Gospel is read, to show our joy at hearing the very words of Jesus.

The Creeds: Creed is a word that means, "A statement of faith." The Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed have been used by Christians all over the world for centuries. The Nicene Creed dates back to the 300's AD and was written to defend the Bible's teaching that Jesus is true God. The we believe of the creed stresses the common faith we confess together, so we normally use this creed for Communion Sundays, like today. The Apostles' Creed was a simple statement of personal faith adults would speak before being baptized. Those being confirmed today still speak this creed as part of their confession of faith.

Hymn of the Day: The hymn of the day looks back at the Scripture lessons and supports the theme of the service. Remember the theme for today? Turning from sin confident of the Lord's forgiveness. Many of the hymns have words and phrases taken directly from all over the Bible. Many of these hymns have also been sung by Christians for hundreds of years. This doesn't make them old and out of date. Their age means they have stood the test of time in proclaiming Christ. When new hymns come forward that proclaim Christ, we use them as well. The Lutheran Church has been called the singing church because we let the people participate in songs, hymns and spiritual songs, as God urges us in Colossians 3. I fully understand that few people walk out of worship repeating a line from the sermon, but you just might walk out humming a line from a hymn.

The sermon: While in common speech the word sermon means a long-winded and boring discourse, here in God's house, the sermon is a special opportunity to proclaim Christ. There won't be a full sermon today, but rather an explanation of what makes us treasure the sermon. Every sermon has a connection to daily life, specific law to show us our sins, specific Gospel to proclaim: Jesus lived, Jesus died, Jesus rose and a specific application of how we can put this part of God's Word into practice.

Take the sermon text for today, Exodus 3:10-15. Have you ever faced a really big task and didn't feel up to it? College, big project at work, home repair? Connection to daily life.

Was the project so big that you thought, "Even with God's help this can't be done. Lord, I know you promised to help me, but I'm not smart enough. I'm not good enough. Lord, why do you want me to do this?" Sinful thoughts from sinful people. Specific law.

But look at who God is. The LORD. He brought the Israelites out of slavery. He has brought you out of slavery to sin! He died on the cross. He baptized you! He gives you his body and blood to say, "I am with you, very personally and always. You can't do it on your own, but I am with you!" That's good news. That's specific Gospel.

Now, how do we respond? We trust in the LORD. We tackle every task knowing the LORD is with us. Yes, there are tasks too big for us alone. God is with us. Yes, not every Christian can handle every home repair, every project at

work. It's ok if not everyone has the gifts to go to college. But we know that with God, all things are possible. He led his people out of Egypt. He brought us out of sin. He will take us to heaven. Amen.

Maybe you were happy to have such a short sermon today. Maybe not. I pray you see today that our whole service is a sermon proclaiming Christ and that the sermon specifically makes a connection to daily life, proclaims specific law, specific Gospel and specific application.

Create in me: This song is taken from Psalm 51. We ask God for pure hearts to do what his Word has urged us in the sermon.

Offering: We gather the offering at this time not to pay the pastor for a good sermon, but to show our love to Jesus, to respond to his Word, to support the sharing of Jesus here and around the world and to have a few quieter moments to reflect on the sermon. The offering is also a good time to turn to page 156 in the front part of the hymnal and spiritually examine yourself if you are receiving Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper today.

The Prayer of the Church: The Church is the people who believe in Jesus as their Savior, so the prayer of the Church is the time we pray for people in various circumstances. We conclude with the Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus himself taught his followers almost 2000 years ago. The Lord's Prayer is found in Matthew 6.

The Sacrament: You'll notice pastor or vicar walks behind the altar for the Lord's Supper portion of the Liturgy. This is done to stand in the place of Christ as host at this holy meal and to be able to speak the words of Christ face to face and heart to heart with Christ's people. You'll also notice that this is the only time pastor or vicar stands behind the altar to show this is an extra special part of the service.

Holy, Holy, Holy: This song is taken from Isaiah 6. Isaiah saw a vision of angels and a glimpse of the glory of the LORD. Isaiah was terrified and felt ruined because of his sin. But an angel took a coal from the altar and touched his lips and said, "Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." What a perfect song for us to sing before receiving the Lord's Supper! We are about to taste and see the Lord himself. We approach feeling ruined because of our sins. But God's angel or messenger, our pastor, takes Christ's body and blood from the altar and touches our lips and says, "Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace." If you want to receive Christ's body directly on your lips as a reminder of this, please feel free. Vicar and I would be happy to accommodate you.

The Words of Institution: These words are found in four places in the Bible: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11. They are the words Jesus spoke when he first celebrated or instituted the Lord's Supper.

O Christ, Lamb of God: This song is taken from John 1:29. In the Old Testament, lambs were often sacrificed for the sins of the people. Christ is our perfect lamb, sacrificed one time for all our sins.

Song of Simeon: We stand, almost jump and down for joy, at receiving Christ's body and blood and sing this song from Luke 2. Simeon was a man who received a special promise from God that he would not die before he saw Jesus. He was in the temple when Mary and Joseph brought in the baby Jesus. Simeon saw Jesus and held him in his arms and sang this song, the song of a happy man, happy to see Jesus in the flesh on earth and ready to see God in the flesh in heaven. We sing this song as our parting prayer. We too have seen the body and blood of Jesus, been face to face with him. And now would be ready to see God face to face in heaven as well.

O give thanks to the Lord: This is taken from Psalm 118.

The benediction: The final part of the service is called the benediction. Benediction means to bless or wish well. These words are taken from Numbers 6. They are over 3500 years old. That's 35 centuries!! God himself spoke

these words to Aaron, the first high priest of Israel and said, "This is how you will dismiss the people, with my name and my blessing." In 3500 years, we haven't found a better way to dismiss God's people. Just think! Moses, David, Peter, Paul, believers for 3500 years have left God's house with the same blessing! We sing three amens because of the three part blessing and to remember the Triune God in whose name we began worship.

After worship: I realize this may have felt like taking a drink from a fire hose with all this information today. But I pray this will help you see Jesus better in our worship, participate more fully and honor the experience of those Christians who have gone before us.