

Worship Matters: An Introduction to Worship

Week 1 - Why Do We Worship - WELCOME

This session explores the diverse reasons why Lutheran Christians gather together weekly to worship God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name.



Opening Prayer: Historical Prayer

*Lord, because you have made me, I owe you the whole of my love;
because you have redeemed me, I owe you the whole of myself;
because you have promised so much, I owe you my whole being.*

*Moreover, I owe you as much more love than myself as you are greater than I, for whom you gave
yourself and to whom you promised yourself.*

*I pray you, Lord, make me taste by love what I taste by knowledge; let me know by love what I know
by understanding.*

*I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of
it to you.*

Draw me to you, Lord, in the fullness of your love.

I am wholly yours by creation; make me all yours, too, in love.

Saint Anselm of Canterbury was a Benedictine monk, philosopher, and prelate of the Church, who held the office of Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109.

Early Pattern for Worship - Early Worship models

Nehemiah 8 - And all the people gathered as one man into the square ... they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. ... And he read from it ... from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people

answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also ... the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

And Nehemiah ... and Ezra ... and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep." ... Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for

this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” ... And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to

send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

Justin Martyr, also known as Saint Justin (c. 100 – 165 AD) The First Apology provides one of the most detailed accounts of contemporary Christian practice. 150AD - *On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then when the reader has ceased, the presider verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the presider, who succors [give assistance to] the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead.’*

Encountering God through our senses

How are we engaged and enlivened in worship through our 5 senses? Our senses are the doorway between what is inside of us and what is outside of us. It is up to us what we let through the door.

How are we engaged and enlivened in worship through our 5 senses?

- ❖ **Sight:** *“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.” – Matthew 6:22* The entire Liturgy itself is a symbolic representation of the life of Christ. So, when we see the different parts of the Liturgy taking place, these are visual cues to remind us of what Christ did on Earth, as well as what He is doing for us now.
- ❖ **Touch:** In our worship, our sense of touch is constantly engaged. ... We carry crosses in procession. We kneel for healing. We seal ourselves with the sign of the Cross. We are blessed with ashes. And so much more... Prayer Shawls for example
- ❖ **Sound:** *“He who has ears, let him hear.”* The most important thing we hear during the Liturgy is the Gospel. The hymns and litanies and prayers of our worship are to our ears what the visual symbols are to our eyes. They fill our mind and our heart with praise of God and remembrance of God's works. They reinforce our theology. But, we shouldn't just listen - we should sing and speak them together. In this way we imitate the Angels who ceaselessly sing hymns to God



- ❖ **Taste:** *“Take, eat. This is My Body, which is broken for you, for the forgiveness of sins,”* When we receive Holy Communion, our mouth is the gateway to the rest of our being. As soon as we taste of the Gift, our entire body and soul are saturated with Christ Himself.
- ❖ **Smell:** *“Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee.”* When we smell the burning wick and wax of candles we are reminded of the light that these produce and why we light them in the first place, as symbols of our faith. Also the smell of the bread and wine enable our whole body to participate in the act of Communion.

Worship and You - Top Ten Reasons Why We Worship

As you move through this list notice your reactions to each reason. Is this a reason you worship? Is this a reason you hadn't thought of before, or one that seems either completely obvious or impossibly far-fetched? Are there any reasons you expected to be on the list that aren't?

10. Because God created us to love and serve and worship God. In other words, worship is one of the ways that we both receive and return the deep love of God for the world. In worship, we get the opportunity together, as a body to pray, sing, listen, eat, lament, rejoice, and experience the good news of Jesus Christ.

9. Because worship is one of the places in which we reliably encounter God. Many of us long to experience the mystery of God, the power of the holy in our lives, and we look in many places to find it: relationships, mountaintop experiences, pilgrimages, retreats. We can forget that God promises to show up in ordinary places too; like our neighborhood churches, with real, fallible people, sacred stories, water, bread, and wine. God is with us doing good things for us when we gather together in Jesus' name.

8. Because worship is where the church comes into being. The church is a community of believers gathered around the word and the sacraments. We worship together because in doing so we become a visible sign of God's activity in the world.

7. Because God calls and leads us there. Lutheran Christians believe that God acts in our lives. Coming to worship is a sign that God is acting in your life! Lutheran Christians believe it is God who calls the assembly together through the Holy Spirit.

6. Because we are forgetful people. On Sunday, we get a chance to remember reality of our human brokenness and the remarkable forgiveness God pours into us and into our world. God forgives our sins in the healing waters of

baptism and in the meal of holy communion, and by the power of the Spirit, God continues to forgive us day after day.

5. Because God speaks to us. God speaks to us in worship through the Bible, through the words of the preacher, the words of a song, when we hear "peace be with you," or when we hear "the body of Christ, given for you." God speaks to us as individuals, but also as a gathered community.

4. Because God feeds us at Jesus' table with the body and blood of Christ. In Holy Communion, all are welcome to come, eat and drink, and be nourished in a meal that we share with the saints of every time and place. Through this meal God forgives us, renews us, strengthens us, binds us together with others. God fashions us in this meal into the body of Christ, so that God might use our hands and feet to do God's work of justice, mercy, and reconciliation in the world.

3. Because the weekly pattern helps us come to know who God is and who we are. Week after week, we participate in patterns that have been meaningful and helpful to Christians over time. When we commit to a weekly practice of worship, we enter into a deep tradition that aids us in our struggle with life's deepest and hardest questions. By committing to this practice with a group of people; like a congregation, we get to live and breathe these questions in the company and shared wisdom of others.

2. Because community helps. Christians worship *together* in an assembly. It is often intergenerational-including little children, teens, young adults, persons in the middle of life, and seniors. An intergenerational, diverse worshipping community can become deeply important to our

spiritual lives. In Christian assemblies, we also can find mentors, friends, and companions for our lives.

1. Because when we open ourselves to experience God's presence in worship, we also open ourselves to experience God's presence in our day-to-day lives. Worship awakens us to the God who is at work in our daily lives. God is at

work in the world of day-to-day work and play. God is at work in our communities-uncovering what has been hidden; restoring what is broken; healing what is sick; pouring out mercy where there is agony and need; raining down justice where there has been cruelty, prejudice, and bloodshed.

God created us to worship. We can trust God is there. It is where the Church comes into being. God calls us to worship. We are forgetful of our sin and God's forgiveness. God speaks to us. Weekly practice helps. Community helps open us to God's presence in the rest of our lives.

Try This: Next time you are in worship does our notice the bulletin cover, prayers, and projections. Do they relate? Does our worship reflect the basic pattern of worship? **Gather/Word/Meal/Thanksgiving/Send.** Are your **Five Senses** used in worship?

Sending Prayer - Nunc Dimittis - Song of Simeon - Luke 2:29-32

[From our Gospel reading today in worship - ...]



Let us pray.

Lord, now you let your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled. My eyes have seen the salvation You have prepared in the sight of every people, a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people, Israel.

Thank you all for your participation and interest in our worship together.