

GRACE AND AWE

Sometimes we confuse worship with attending a pep rally. Sunday morning is not a time set aside to get the team fired up. It is not the job of the preacher, the musicians, or the congregation to get everyone in the mood. Getting fired up is like a drug. One needs ever greater doses to achieve the same effect. As the “production value” needs to increase, the whole experience becomes more professional and more like entertainment. Lutheran services can seem pretty bland when compared with the excitement a full production with lighting effects.

Lutheran worship can be very simple or include chamber orchestras, wonderful choirs and magnificent organs. What characterizes Lutheran worship is not its production value, but its content and purpose. Lutheran worship is an expression of Lutheran theology. That is why we tend to refer to it as the Divine Service. It is a translation of the German word, *Gottesdienst*. It is one of those words which has two meanings. Primary for Lutherans is the meaning of God serving us. Worship is foremost about what God brings out of His love for lost and hopeless sinners to the people He gathers around His Word and Sacraments. *In other words, what God is doing is more important than what we are doing.* We keep that in mind as we examine the shape of Lutheran worship.
(Read Matthew 20:28.)

CROSS-SHAPED EVERYTHING. Everywhere and every time you turn in Lutheran worship

you encounter the cross. From the crucifix on the altar to the shape of the building to gestures of the pastor to the words of the hymns and readings and to the words and flow of the liturgy, the Cross of Christ is expressed throughout.
(Read Galatians 6:14.)

THE PROPER SIDE OF WORSHIP. Some parts of Lutheran worship are the same every Sunday. Some things change: the prayers, the readings, the hymns, parts of the communion service. They are part of an ancient practice of focusing on the life of Christ for half of the year and the teaching of Christ for the other half. Together the readings, sermon, prayers, and hymns proclaim Christ. The practice of assigning readings for Sundays ensures that the whole witness of Scripture is allowed to speak. Usually pastors preach sermons based on one of the assigned readings. This helps keep pastors from preaching on their pet subjects. It keeps the life and words of Christ before the people.
(Read Psalm 119:105.)

YOU CAN COUNT ON IT. The parts of the service which are the same every Sunday are the anchor, foundation, and framework of Lutheran worship. Any sinner longing for forgiveness can lay them out in the confession and hear God’s gracious forgiveness in the absolution or declaration of grace. That same sinner can taste and see the goodness of the Lord in the Supper where forgiveness is not theoretical or a mental game, but a reality guaranteed by the Body and Blood of Christ. The person with a wavering or unsure faith can find content

and substance by joining in confessing the faith of the whole Church in the creed. The believer can be assured of God’s abiding presence through the words of the Nunc Dimittis and Benediction. Some things don’t change — and that’s a good thing.
(Read Hebrews 13:8.)

GET OUT OF THE WAY — GOD IS COMING. Sometimes people wonder why pastors wear robes, hide behind pulpits, and go by the book. The answer is simple: the service is not about the pastor. The robes cover the pastor and emphasize the office of a servant of the Word who proclaims Christ. The pulpit is a place from which God’s Word can be proclaimed to everyone without people having to keep up with the pastor like a bouncing ping-pong ball. (The pulpit and robe also keep people from seeing the pastor’s shaking knees as he proclaims the Word with fear and trembling.)
(Read John 3:28–31.)

LEARNING TO FEAR AND LOVE GOD. When Lutherans worship, God is shaping them and their lives. The service and the way it is conducted show respect and serves as an abiding reminder that we come as beggars before God. At the same time the service beckons sinners to receive the forgiveness freely offered. While some might find our worship stuffy, it is full of the intimacy and comfort of God’s presence in Christ. After all, His presence in the Sacrament is different than having a beer with a sports hero. A beer with a Packer is cool. Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ fills us with awe and grace.
(Read 1 Corinthians 10:16–17.)

God's Pottery Wheel
The Shape of Worship;
Worship that Shapes
June 2, 2009

7:00 Responsive Prayer 2
page 285

Reading:

Revelation 7:9–17

Hymn:

O Bless the Lord,
My Soul
LSB 814

7:10 Presentation:
God's Pottery Wheel

7:55 Questions and Answers

8:15 Compline
page 253
Office Hymn:
God, Who Made the Earth
and Heaven
LSB 877

I will also speak of
your testimonies
before kings and
shall not be put to
shame. Psalm 119:46

In the sight of God
and all
Christendom, we
want to testify to
those now living
and those who will
come after us.

Formula of Concord, Solid
Declaration, Conclusion

Being Lutheran –
Nothing to Be
Ashamed Of!

God's Pottery Wheel
The Shape of Worship;
Worship that Shapes



St. John's Riverside
Lutheran Church
LC-MS
5686 Highway 32 South
Gillett, Wisconsin
June 2, 2009