

# **Lutheranism 101**

# **WORSHIP**

Written by  
Thomas M. Winger

General Editor  
Scot A. Kinnaman

## **Leader Guide**

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE • SAINT LOUIS



Copyright © 2017 Concordia Publishing House  
3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968  
1-800-325-3040 • [www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org)

All rights reserved. This downloadable resource is provided free of charge as a supplement to the publication *Lutheranism 101: Worship*. Usage other than downloading this resource for personal, Bible study, classroom, or congregational use is prohibited. No part of this material may be transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Concordia Publishing House.

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations from the Small Catechism are from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*, copyright © 1986, 1991 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

The quotations from the Lutheran Confessions in this publication are from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, second edition, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. All rights reserved.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

Introduction

## **God Calls Us to This Place**

# Study Questions

## 1. What makes a church building sacred or holy?

While the design of the building can (and should) make a church *feel* sacred, it's not really holy because of what we do to it. It's holy because God is truly present there. He speaks His Holy Word and distributes His holy gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.

## 2. Can we worship God anywhere? How do we know where to find Him?

Although we can offer prayer and praise to God anywhere, His saving gifts are offered only where His true Word is proclaimed. Through His name and His Word, God calls us to worship.

## 3. What does it mean to be "saints"? What is the "Church"?

Saints are simply "holy people"—not because they have done holy things, but because God has made them holy in Baptism. The Church is the gathering of saints to keep receiving God's holy things. Saints don't exist on their own. The church as a building gives them a common place to gather.

# Discussion Questions

1. What is the most impressive church building you have ever visited? Why did it affect you? What features of your own church building can help you be well prepared for worship?

Participants will have different experiences of churches in the old world or the new. Encourage them to discuss what aspects of church design can help them focus on the holiness of God, rather than on human performances. Your church may be more modest, but it may still have a design that helps to separate you from the world and focus on God's gifts. Consider the space(s), furnishings, and artwork.

2. How is the Divine Service like a family gathering? How is it different?

The holy triune name placed on us in Baptism incorporates us into God's family. The Divine Service is a gathering for God's children, the Body of Christ. Like an earthly family, we gather to share what we have in common and to love and support one another. We talk and eat together, just as the Divine Service centers on the Word and the Lord's Supper. Leaders should encourage discussion of how a typical family gathering may also have rather different goals that aren't focused on eternal things.

3. Read 1 Kings 8:1–10, 27–30. What made the temple a holy place? How and why did God dwell there?

God entered the new temple when the ark of the covenant was moved there from the tabernacle. He showed that He was present by filling the temple with a cloud. He gave the people access to His glory there through the use of His holy name. Even though the universe could not contain Him, God chose to dwell there so that Israel could call on His help and receive His forgiveness.

4. Discuss what you know about the temple in Old Testament worship. Read 1 Peter 2:1–10. How do you think the Christian church takes the place of the temple?

The details of temple worship will be explained later in this book, but participants may already know that psalms were sung and sacrifices and prayers were offered at the temple. Peter teaches that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of a new, spiritual temple, which has the apostles as its foundation and all Christians (Jews and Gentiles) as the stones in the walls. God has shown us mercy so that we can be His new worshipping people, a new priesthood. Our praises form the sacrifices of this new spiritual temple.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 1

# **God Called His People of Old**

# Study Questions

1. What was the main purpose of the tabernacle? What occurred in its daily services?

God spoke to Moses and Israel through the tabernacle. He was present in the midst of His people to lead them and protect them. Through the daily sacrifices at the tabernacle, He offered them forgiveness and received their prayers for help. See Exodus 29:38–46 for a summary.

2. What were the three major festivals of the Old Testament liturgical calendar? What three functions did they serve?

(1) Passover, (2) the Feast of Weeks, and (3) the seventh month (which included the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Booths). They (1) reminded Israel of God's great saving deeds in the past, (2) encouraged thankfulness for His ongoing gifts through the land, and (3) pointed forward to the coming Messiah.

3. What were God's people Israel supposed to do on the Sabbath?

They were to refrain from work and devote themselves to hearing God's Word and worshiping Him.

4. How did the synagogue originate? What did Israelites at the time of the New Testament do in the synagogue?

It originated as a place to carry out the purposes of the Sabbath (see previous question). It probably arose during the Babylonian exile (sixth century BC), when Jews were unable to carry out the liturgical services at the Jerusalem temple. It was a place of Bible study, preaching, prayer, and worship, though there were no sacrifices performed there.

# Discussion Questions

1. Review the layout of the tabernacle on page 18. What do you think God was teaching His people through its arrangement into various sections divided by walls and curtains?

God is a holy God. Sinful creatures cannot stand in His presence without being burned up. So God separated Himself from Israel with walls and curtains to protect them from His glory. But He provided access to His presence through sacrifices and the sprinkling of blood, which allowed the priests to move from the outer courtyard into the Holy Place and, once a year, into the Most Holy Place, where the ark of the covenant was found.

2. Read Hebrews 9:1–14 (and vv. 15–28, if you have time). What did Jesus do to make the divisions of the old tabernacle obsolete? What does Jesus still do for us?

Through His death on the cross, Jesus offered a sacrifice that gained Him access to the Mercy Seat of God once and for all. No animal sacrifices would ever be needed again. Through Him, we, too, have access to God's mercy. This was pictured when the curtain of the temple tore on Good Friday (Matthew 27:51). Jesus now stands in the Most Holy Place in heaven to make intercession for us with God permanently. In the Lord's Supper, He continues to sprinkle us with His blood to give us access to God's grace (Hebrews 9:14).

3. Discuss the significance of the fact that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, died on the cross, and rose from the dead *during the Feast of Passover*.

Participants should see that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover lamb; that His blood shed on the cross and given in the Lord's Supper delivers us from death, just as the Passover lamb had done in Egypt; and that by His resurrection, He has brought us into the promised land of God's kingdom. Easter is a greater exodus. For more, refer to "1. Passover" in the Festivals section above.

4. Think about how the observance of Sunday as a day of rest has changed in your lifetime. Are the changes good or bad? What is the danger when Christians think of the “Sabbath” (whether Saturday or Sunday) simply as a day when they shouldn’t work? Review Luther’s explanation of the Third Commandment (*LSB*, p. 321).

Encourage participants to see both sides of the issue. On the one hand, a day of rest is good for people and gives us a time to gather for worship. On the other hand, the true fulfillment of the Third Commandment isn’t found in obeying a Law about not working. It is meant to lead us to hear God’s Word. An external legalistic fulfillment of the Sabbath can obscure the Gospel of Christ. Later in the study, we will see how Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath and why Christians began to worship on Sunday.

5. Review the description of worship in the synagogue. Compare it to the Service of the Word in one of the settings of the Divine Service in *Lutheran Service Book*. How do you think the synagogue affected Christian worship?

Participants may see connections in the use of psalms, Scripture readings, creeds, preaching, and prayers.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 2

# **God Called His New Testament People**

# Study Questions

1. When and how did Jesus participate in temple worship during His earthly ministry?

He was circumcised and presented there as a baby, He went up as a boy to observe Passover, and He continued to observe the major festivals at the temple as an adult. He also used the temple courts to teach. Spend a little time looking at when Jesus drove out the money-changers from the temple (Matthew 21:12–13; John 2:13–16). He re-emphasized that the temple was to be a place of prayer.

2. Read John 2:18–21. What was Jesus saying about the temple?

Jesus wasn't so much talking about the physical destruction of the temple (which the Romans carried out in AD 70) as He was talking about His own death and resurrection. He implied that His own body was the true temple. In Him, God was now dwelling in the midst of His people.

3. What are the privileges and responsibilities given to all Christians as God's *priestly* people?

Christians have access to the throne of God's grace through Jesus, the great High Priest. They are to offer up sacrifices of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving and give their very selves to God.

4. Did Jesus uphold, break, or fulfill the Sabbath?

In some senses, Jesus did all three! But "fulfillment" is the best way to think of His relationship to the day of rest. The Sabbath was pointing to Him as the one who would speak for God and bring us rest.

5. What did Jesus do in His own ministry that set a pattern for Christian worship?

He taught and prayed with His disciples. He prayed for His disciples and taught them how to pray. He forgave sinners and ate with them. He instituted the Means of Grace with His mandate to preach, forgive sins, baptize, and observe His Supper.

6. Why is it significant that the apostles carried on doing what Jesus gave them to do?

Jesus commanded them to do certain things. They didn't have the authority to make up their own forms of worship. Jesus attached His promises to the things He instituted and commanded the apostles to carry on doing them faithfully. So also, if we wish to receive Christ's promises, we must cling faithfully to the things that Jesus instituted for us to do.

# Discussion Questions

1. Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple, which took place in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Discuss what this did to Jewish worship and how God might have used it to drive people to Christ.

Without the temple, the Jews could no longer offer sacrifices. This points to the significance of Jesus' once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross. True worship can now only happen where Jesus is.

2. Read Hebrews 8:1–7. In what ways is Jesus' priesthood and sacrifice "better" than those in the Old Testament?

Jesus does not need to offer a sacrifice for His own sins, since He is sinless. He never needs to be replaced by another priest, since He lives eternally. So His sacrifice can be once and for all, for the sake of all of us and all our sins.

3. Read or sing *LSB* 530, "No Temple Now, No Gift of Price." Discuss how Jesus fulfilled and replaced every aspect of temple worship.

Jesus replaces the temple, its priesthood, and its sacrifices. By His death and through the power of His blood, He has opened heaven to us and given us access to God's Mercy Seat.

4. Read Mark 2:15–17. Discuss the deep significance of Jesus' meals with sinful people.

In the culture of the day, eating with people meant accepting them and entering into a close relationship with them. Jesus went even further and forgave these sinful people. This set the table, so to speak, for His later institution of the great Holy Meal, the Lord's Supper.

5. Read Exodus 24:1–11. In what ways does the Lord's Supper fulfill this great event? How do both meals point to the heavenly banquet?

In Exodus, Moses and the elders of Israel ate and drank in the very presence of God without being destroyed by His holiness. In the Lord's Supper, we eat and drink in the presence of God, as Jesus is our divine Host. We drink the blood of the covenant, which cleanses us from sins and allows us to enter God's presence. In this Sacrament, Jesus gives us a foretaste of the eternal heavenly banquet, where we will eat and drink forever in the presence of God.

6. Read Hebrews 12:22–24 and Revelation 5:11–14. Discuss the significance of the fact that heaven is pictured as a place of eternal *worship*. What does the Book of Hebrews imply when it says, “You have come to . . . the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven” (12:22–23)?

Hebrews teaches us that heaven isn’t something we merely wait for in the distant future. In the Divine Service, we already enter into the heavenly kingdom and join in the heavenly worship assembly, even though we can’t yet see it. Note that the opening words of the Preface, “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven . . . ,” teach and confess this truth. Since the essence of worship is to be in the presence of God Himself, heaven is really one perpetual Divine Service, as Revelation shows us.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 3

# **Understanding the Call to Worship**

# Study Questions

1. What does it mean that true Christian worship is “trinitarian” and “Christological”?

True Christian worship is trinitarian because the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is the only true God, whom we worship. The three persons of the Trinity are active in unique ways in worship: the Spirit leads us to Christ through the Word, and Christ leads us to the throne of the Father. It is Christological because Christ has not only opened the way to the Father but also continues to lead the worship of His Church.

2. How is Mark 10:45 a key Bible text in explaining what goes on in worship?

Jesus proclaims that He came to serve, not to be served. It points to His sacrificial death on our behalf and His delivery of its benefits in the Lord’s Supper. It reminds us that He is the chief actor in the liturgy; He is still with us as one who serves. “The whole liturgy is about the real presence of Jesus.”

3. What do we mean by “the rhythm of worship”?

Like the beat of a heart, in the Divine Service, God first “pumps out” His gifts and then “draws in” our thanks and praise. Review the quotation from *Lutheran Worship*, page 6.

4. What is the liturgical distinction between “sacramental” and “sacrificial”?

The acts of the liturgy in which God presents His gifts to us are called “sacramental” (this is not restricted to what we call “sacraments,” as it includes the spoken Word). Our responses in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving are called “sacrificial.”

5. What does the German word *Gottesdienst* mean?

Really it's the same as "Divine Service" and expresses the fact that in the liturgy, God serves us and we serve God—never one without the other. Lutheran theology emphasizes that God's service to us is always primary.

6. Does the word *liturgy* refer to an order of service, a kind of worship, "the work of the people," or what?

Fundamentally, the liturgy is not our work but God's service to us in Word and Sacrament. It can also be used to refer to the historic order of the Divine Service ("the Liturgy"). But it doesn't necessarily refer to one particular setting or style.

7. What is meant by the term *adiaphora*? How does a church decide what to do about ceremonies that God hasn't prescribed?

Adiaphora refers to things that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. Such ceremonial matters should be resolved not simply by whim or as if they didn't matter but by considering what best serves the Gospel and furthers the purposes of the liturgy.

# Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the many ways in which our Divine Service keeps the triune God at the center. Look through the setting of the Divine Service most familiar to you. Which parts are explicitly trinitarian?

The Invocation, the Absolution, the Gloria Patri (which is repeated after the Introit, Psalms, and canticles), the Gloria in Excelsis, the conclusion of the Collect of the Day and other prayers, the Creed, the Sanctus ("Holy, holy, holy"), the Benediction.

2. Discuss the four stories in Mark 10. How does each encounter with Jesus teach us something about worship?

Each story presents us with the question of whether we come to the Divine Service seeking to offer God something that makes us worthy of His attention, or whether we are simply blind beggars or little babes in need of His help.

3. Melancthon writes about the woman who washed Jesus' feet: "The woman came with the opinion that forgiveness of sins should be sought in Christ. This worship is the highest worship of Christ" (Ap V 33). Discuss how this definition of worship is so contrary to what we normally think.

We normally think of worship as stuff that we offer up to God: thanks, praise, adoration, offerings, and so on. But the Apology of the Augsburg Confession turns this around and says that true worship is whatever pleases God the most—and since He wants to forgive us in Christ, the highest worship is simply to seek this forgiveness in faith. Review the other quotations from Apology V in this section of the book.

4. Read the Introduction to *LSB*, pages viii–ix. Discuss how it explains and reinforces the theology of worship taught in this chapter.

The first three paragraphs are the key. The "rhythm of worship" is fleshed out here in a little more detail than the brief quotation from *Lutheran Worship* contained in the chapter above.

5. There was a significant change in the title of our Lutheran hymnal from *Lutheran Worship* to *Lutheran Service Book*. What is the danger in using the word *worship* to describe what happens in the Divine Service? How might it help to be careful in our choice of words?

Here note that *worship* isn't wrong but can be a little one-sided in describing what happens in the liturgy. "Divine Service" gives more prominence to God's work than ours. If we always talk about "worship," we may become focused on *our* actions rather than *God's* and give more prominence to our praise than to His Word and sacramental gifts.

6. Discuss the benefits of having one common "rite" (order) of the Divine Service in the Lutheran Church. How can it be helpful to distinguish the "rite" from the "ceremony" of the liturgy?

A common rite expresses and teaches the Church's common confession of faith and aids the unity of the Church. It allows Christians to move from place to place and immediately feel at home in the service. It connects the Lutheran Church to the historic Christian Church, particularly in the West. But since no two churches are completely alike, there will naturally be differences in "ceremony"—the way in which the rite is conducted, whether simply or elaborately, and so on. This can express a healthy freedom in the Gospel.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 4

# **The Story of the Divine Service**

# Study Questions

1. Which elements of our Divine Service were already present in the Early Apostolic Church, as we read in the New Testament?

See the bulleted list on pages 63–64. Note that the New Testament does not give an exact order of service, but that the elements are there in general terms.

2. What does “the breaking of the bread” mean in the New Testament and Early Church?

It refers to the gathering for the Lord’s Supper. “The breaking of the bread” is a figure of speech called synecdoche in which one part of the action (the first part) represents the whole thing.

3. Why did early Christians meet on Sunday evening for the liturgy?

They met on Sunday because it was a remembrance of Christ’s resurrection. They met in the evening because, at the time, it was a work day, and because they celebrated the Sacrament of the Altar in the context of an evening meal, as Jesus had first done on Holy Thursday.

4. How did the conversion of Emperor Constantine affect Christian worship?

It brought Christianity into the open without fear of persecution. This allowed them to erect large public buildings (basilicas), which then brought an elaboration of ceremony to the liturgy. “So, while the content of the liturgy itself didn’t change, the Constantinian period brought increased beauty and movement to the ceremony, and the rite grew to accommodate it.”

5. What changes did Luther bring to the medieval Mass?

Note the five basic corruptions Luther wanted to fix (found on p. 70). Otherwise, he kept what was good in the Roman rite.

# Discussion Questions

1. Read the events of Easter evening from Luke 24:28–43. Discuss how Jesus sets the pattern for Christian worship immediately after His resurrection.

Jesus walks and talks with the Emmaus disciples and then reveals Himself to them in the breaking of the bread. This is the pattern of the Divine Service in Word and Sacrament. Again He shows Himself to the rest of the disciples. He comes into their midst, speaks peace to them, shows them His resurrected flesh, and eats with them. In verses 46–47, He then mandates them to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

2. Discuss the changes that came to the liturgy in the Middle Ages. In what way were they both good and bad? What sort of problems in the liturgy cried out for reform?

Here it's important to emphasize that not everything in the Middle Ages was bad. The liturgy attracted some helpful additions, particularly in the first part of the service (such as the Gloria in Excelsis and the Creed). But the decline in preaching and various abuses of the Lord's Supper and its theology (particularly the sacrifice of the Mass) needed to be addressed by the early Lutherans.

3. Why is it significant that Luther didn't throw out the entire Roman rite of the liturgy but merely purged it of abuses and corruptions? What was his principle for reform?

Luther saw the value in the traditional liturgy for preaching Christ and giving out His gifts. Luther didn't want anyone to think that he was creating a new church. He wanted to conserve what was good and simply remove what was contrary to the Gospel. This may prompt discussions of how radical we should be in liturgical change today and what is the reason for change.

4. Look through the setting of the Divine Service from *LSB* that is used most frequently in your church and compare it to the outline of Luther's Latin and German rites on page 72. In what ways is it the same or different?

The exercise should demonstrate that the differences are relatively minor: the presence or absence of the general Confession and Absolution, the Old Testament reading, the location of the Hymn of the Day, and the post-Communion canticle. The settings in *LSB* have more in common with Luther's Latin Mass than with his German Mass (except for Setting Five). The Lutheran approach to liturgical change has remained conservative over the past five hundred years.

*Visit [lutheranism101.com](http://lutheranism101.com) to download the free Leader's Guide.*

5. If you have used older Lutheran hymnals like *TLH* or *LW*, or even hymnals from another church body, discuss how *LSB* responded to the challenge of providing liturgical resources for twenty-first-century English-speaking Lutherans.

Answers will vary! *LSB* attempted to bring together the best of *TLH* and *LW*.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 5

# **A Bird's-Eye View of the Divine Service**

# Study Questions

1. What are the two major parts of the Divine Service? Within the two parts, what are the central elements?

The Service of the Word centers on the reading of the Holy Gospel and sermon. The Service of the Sacrament centers on the Lord's Supper itself, the body and blood of Christ given for us to eat and drink.

2. What do we mean by the distinction between "Ordinary" and "Propers" in the liturgy?

The Ordinary is the five key texts (Kyrie Eleison, Gloria in Excelsis, Nicene Creed, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei) that are "ordinarily" in the Divine Service and form its skeleton. The parts that change each week or seasonally are called "Propers" (Introit, Psalm, Collect of the Day, Scripture readings, Gradual, Verse); they put flesh on the skeleton.

# Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how the use of Ordinary and Propers in careful balance can give the liturgy both consistency and variety. What can go wrong when the liturgy has too much or too little change?

Too much change can lead to frustration, and it excludes children and the elderly who do not cope well with change. Too little change can lead to boredom and may lead worshipers to lose focus on God's wonderful gifts. The Ordinary provides us with the basic elements of the Christian faith in a form that we can commit to memory and carry with us from cradle to grave. The Propers give us the full breadth of God's counsel from Holy Scripture and teach us to praise Him with His own words.

2. Using the Scripture references next to each part of the liturgy in *LSB*, note how much of your usual setting of the Divine Service is taken straight from Scripture. Discuss the accusation we sometimes hear that the liturgy is "just man-made."

While the liturgy might not be 100 percent Scripture, it consists almost entirely of scriptural canticles and quotations (such as the Kyrie and Sanctus) or paraphrases of Scripture (including the Gloria in Excelsis and Nicene Creed). Churches that reject the historic liturgy as "man-made" or "just human tradition" often end up with a service consisting of far less Scripture.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 6

# **The Divine Service: The Path on the Ground**

# Study Questions

1. What aspects of the Preparation Rite remind us of our Baptism? Why is this a good way to enter into God's presence?

The triune name was placed on us at Baptism. Confession and Absolution return us to our Baptism, where the old Adam was first drowned. See Luther's explanation of Baptism in the Small Catechism, the fourth question, *LSB*, page 325. We enter God's house because we have been made His children. We must be cleansed before we can stand before a holy God.

2. Why do we use the Psalms in Christian worship? What is their relationship to Jesus?

They are the hymnal of the Old Testament. But they have a deeper meaning when we see them through Christ. Jesus, as the Son of David, claims them as His own. The Psalms prophesy about Him, and Jesus takes them up as His own prayers. In other words, Jesus prays them with us.

3. The Kyrie appears near the very beginning of the Divine Service. What does this say about our relationship to God?

We begin the service by admitting that we are little more than beggars in need of His help. We bring nothing to Him except our need for help. We cry "Lord, have mercy" to Jesus as a King who is really present with us.

4. What is the high point of the Service of the Word? What ceremonial words and actions highlight it?

The proclamation of Jesus' very words in the Holy Gospel is the high point. It's marked out with the Alleluia, acclamations of praise, standing up to hear it, and perhaps with a procession.

5. What is a "creed"? What is the origin of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds?

*Creed* comes from the Latin *credo*, meaning "I believe." Both creeds began as baptismal confessions of the faith. The Nicene Creed was adopted by the Nicene Council (AD 325) and the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) in response to the heresy of Arianism.

6. What is unique and useful about the Hymn of the Day?

Note the three points made in the text:

1. These hymns reinforce the message of the Holy Gospel and form the first “preaching” on it.
2. Churches that follow the list will learn the core hymns of Lutheranism.
3. The choir will have access to hundreds of years of resources written to go with these great Christian hymns.

7. How might both the Prayer of the Church and the offering be seen as responses to the proclamation of God’s Word?

We hear His promises and base our prayers on them. We ask for what He has promised to give. We give our offerings as a sacrifice of thanksgiving in response to hearing His Word. With our offerings, we support the preacher.

8. In what way do the Preface and Proper Preface follow Jesus’ own example and command?

We give thanks and praise to God before the Lord’s Supper just as Jesus did at the institution of the Sacrament. They are included in His command to us, “Do this.”

9. The Sanctus combines the texts of Isaiah 6:1–3 with Psalm 118:25–26 as sung by the crowds on Palm Sunday. What does the Sanctus teach us about the Lord’s Supper?

It confesses that Jesus comes to us in the Sacrament just as He came into Jerusalem. Through Him, we enter into the throne room of God, as Isaiah did. It also reminds us that the angels of heaven join us in the Divine Service.

10. What Old Testament ideas does the Agnus Dei apply to Jesus? What does the Book of Revelation say is going on in heavenly worship?

As the “Lamb of God,” Jesus fulfills the lambs sacrificed daily in the temple (Exodus 29:38–42), the lamb in the Passover feast (Exodus 12), and the suffering lamb prophesied in Isaiah 53. The sins of the world were laid on Jesus at His Baptism and carried to the cross in our place. The Book of Revelation describes heaven as “the marriage supper of the lamb” (19:9).

11. It is said of the Nunc Dimittis that it teaches us to go to the Sacrament as to our death, and to our death as to the Sacrament. How does the Nunc Dimittis do this?

We remember Simeon, who was ready to die after he had received Jesus in his arms. Like Simeon, when we have Jesus, we need not fear death. We look forward to the heavenly banquet. As we face our own earthly death, we trust that our bodies will rise again because the living body of Christ has been put into us.

12. What is the difference between a prayer and a blessing? What does the Benediction do?

A prayer asks for God's help; a blessing is given by God's appointed representatives. We can have confidence that God acts through His Word in the blessing to give us what the words promise.

# Discussion Questions

1. Read Revelation 1:1–3; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 1 Timothy 4:13; and Romans 10:17. Discuss how the reading of Scripture in the Divine Service (not just private reading) is important to the Christian faith.

The Scriptures are the very Word of God. When they are proclaimed, they create and strengthen faith. When they are read aloud by Christ's called representative (the pastor), we see and hear more clearly that Christ Himself is present and speaking to us. Not only does Paul command us to do this, but John also promises a divine blessing. In private reading, we may only read what we want to hear; but in the Divine Service, we hear "the whole counsel of God." God's Word comes to us from the outside as a prophetic Word.

2. Review Luther's explanation of the Lord's Supper in the Small Catechism, *LSB*, pages 326–27. What does the proclamation of the Words of Our Lord do? Why can they never be omitted from the liturgy?

Luther's four questions and answers can be boiled down to two main ideas: (1) Christ's words take hold of the bread and wine to make them His body and blood. This is called "consecration." (2) The words proclaim the benefits of the eating and drinking, so that faith may grasp hold of the gifts and receive them worthily. Without Christ's words, we have none of these things.

3. Discuss how the way we observe the Lord's Supper can help confess what is really going on. What practices (posture, gestures, actions) proclaim the real presence of Christ's body and blood?

This will vary according to local custom, but the following practices may help to proclaim the real presence: walking reverently, not hurriedly, to and from the altar; bowing toward the elements on the altar; kneeling to receive the gifts; making the sign of the cross; receiving the elements carefully, rather than snatching at them. The pastor may genuflect (kneel) at the consecration and hold up the elements toward the people as something holy and precious. The leftover elements are not put back with unconsecrated bread and wine but are consumed reverently or reserved for distribution to the sick. You may also wish to discuss practices that might seem to deny the real presence.

4. Which parts of the Divine Service teach us that we are joined to the worship of the heavenly hosts? Discuss how this insight can be meaningful and comforting to us living in this troubled world. Why is it important to remember that no single congregation worships alone?

The Gloria in Excelsis, This Is the Feast, and the Sanctus are angelic songs. The Proper Preface reminds us that we are giving thanks “with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven.” We sing biblical canticles that come from saints of old who are now with the Lord. Our worship is enhanced and made more joyful by the participation of the heavenly hosts. We are lifted above the troubles of this world by participating in the worship of heaven. We are united with our departed family and friends. If churches on earth are united with the worship of heaven, they are surely also united with one another. True worship always involves the whole Christian Church on earth.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 7 **The Church Year**

# Study Questions

1. What does every Sunday commemorate?

Every Sunday is a little Easter, recalling Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week. Sometimes we refer to it as the eighth day, to remind us that it is the beginning of a new creation (since God created the world in seven days).

2. What is the highest festival of the Church Year? Why?

Again, it is Easter, since the death and resurrection of Jesus is the central message of the Christian Gospel.

3. What are the twin themes of Advent? What three comings of Christ does Advent proclaim?

The themes are hope and repentance. The season focuses on Christ's first coming at Christmas, His second coming on the Last Day, and His coming in between by Word and Sacrament.

4. What can the Christmas tree teach us?

The Christmas tree is an ancient symbol of Christ, who is the tree of life (Ezekiel 17:22; Revelation 22:2). In the Middle Ages, it was decorated with baubles to look like fruit and symbols made of dried bread to remind us that Christ feeds us with His body in the Lord's Supper.

5. What two main things are "revealed" in the Epiphany season?

Jesus is revealed to the Gentiles, as represented by the Magi, and Jesus is revealed as true God through His miracles.

6. How was Lent originally connected with Baptism? Why is it helpful for us to observe Lent today?

In ancient times, Lent was a forty-day period of preparation for Baptism at the Easter Vigil. We might use Lent as a time of spiritual renewal, focusing on the basics of the Christian faith through the catechism. It is also a time of repentance, which is a way of remembering our Baptism. Note that the Easter Vigil service, which brings Lent to an end, focuses particularly on Baptism, when we die with Christ and rise with Him.

7. What does the word *Pascha* mean? What does it tell us about Easter?

*Pascha* is the Greek word for Passover. When early Christians called Easter *Pascha*, they were confessing that Jesus was the true Passover/Paschal Lamb and that through His resurrection, He rescued us from slavery to sin, death, and the devil. The paschal candle is lit to remind us of Jesus' resurrection in this season.

8. In what way is Pentecost not only a festival of the Holy Spirit but also of Christ?

It remembers the miraculous coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples fifty days after Easter. But the Holy Spirit was promised and sent by Christ, and the Spirit's job is to point to Christ. So it's really the culmination of the Easter season, not something completely different.

9. What does the use of the color green during the Time of the Church teach us?

It represents Christian life and growth as the full teachings of Holy Scripture nourish us and give us growth.

10. Why is it helpful to use a lectionary rather than decide for ourselves what Scripture to read in church?

- It protects the church from the pastor's whims and failings.
- It stops us from choosing only the bits of God's Word we want to hear.
- It helps us hear the full counsel of God and the whole life of Christ.
- It highlights the central message of Scripture.
- It helps us find Christ in the Old Testament by connecting it to the Gospels.
- It unites Christians in the whole Church.
- It saves an enormous amount of time creating a scheme of our own!

# Discussion Questions

1. In chapter 3, we said that Christian worship is always both trinitarian and Christological. Discuss how the Church Year follows that same pattern. See *LSB*, page x, to understand better the organization of the Church Year.

*Trinitarian:* We might think of the Time of Christmas as highlighting the Father, who sent His Son into the world. The Time of Easter focuses on the saving work of Christ at the cross and empty tomb. And the Season after Pentecost, the Time of the Church, proclaims the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit. But, of course, the whole Trinity is at work in all these events. *Christological:* The Church Year is primarily about the life of Christ, His saving deeds, particularly in the “festival half.”

2. Discuss what the change of seasons is like in the part of the world where you live. What do the seasons mean to nature? How do they affect you? Now consider how the Church Year’s annual cycle with its change of seasons can be meaningful.

While the Christian Church Year is not based on the world’s seasons (which vary from place to place and are reversed in the southern hemisphere), the cycle of birth, growth, death, and renewal can be a meaningful way to look at the Church Year with its alternate moods of repentance and joy, birth, growth, death, and resurrection.

3. How has the celebration of Christmas changed in your own lifetime? What do we lose when it overruns Advent and then promptly fizzles out on December 26?

Answers will vary! But certainly we live in a society that (1) prefers celebration over sober repentance, and (2) is far more concerned with earthly treasures than heavenly blessings. Advent has its own message and blessings to give. Normally, the celebration begins *after* the baby is born. When the Christmas celebration ends so abruptly, perhaps we have lost the focus on the birth of the Christ Child. Discuss the benefits of observing the full twelve days of Christmas—or even remembering His birth throughout the forty days ending at His presentation at the temple (February 2).

4. Discuss the variety of observances that make up Holy Week and the Triduum. How might you give more prominence to Easter in your church by expanding or enriching your use of these services?

Use the *LSB Altar Book* to explain these available resources. Note Palm Sunday, the Propers for Monday through Wednesday in Holy Week, Holy Thursday, the various services for Good Friday (the Chief Service, Tre Ore, and Tenebrae), the Easter Vigil, the Propers available for more than one service on Easter Sunday, and Easter Monday through Wednesday. Be careful not to bite off too much at once. Consider adding just one thing to your church's practices this year, and discuss how to go about it.

5. Talk about the observance of saints' days in your church. Is there a "Lutheran" way to remember the saints? How is it different from the Roman Catholic cult of the saints, on the one hand, and Pentecostal-style "testimonies," on the other?

Note the three reasons why we observe saints' days from Ap XXI.

1. We don't pray to the saints or expect them to offer us more help than Jesus Himself.
2. We don't obscure their failings.
3. We focus on what God did for them and through them, rather than on their personal accomplishments.

It's worth considering what exactly is right or wrong about "testimonies" and whether they lead people away from the Gospel in a similar way to the cult of the saints. Note that the list of Commemorations (*LSB*, pp. xii–xiii) is not meant to be used extensively in public worship but is aimed more at private devotions.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 8

# **Signs and Ceremonies**

# Study Questions

## 1. Why is the crucifix a central element of Christian art?

Since the Son of God took on human flesh and showed us the very face of God (Colossians 1:15), we are both free and able to depict Christ in art. The crucifix displays Christ's body on the cross, proclaiming the Gospel (1 Corinthians 1:23) and reminding us that Christ is truly among us in the flesh.

## 2. Why do we build churches with the altar in the east end, or at least act as if it is in the east?

The congregation faces east to await the coming of Christ on the Last Day, like the rising of the sun (Matthew 24:27).

## 3. Why do liturgical leaders wear *white* robes?

The white robe symbolizes the righteousness of Christ put on us in Holy Baptism (Luke 15:22–23; Galatians 3:27; Revelation 7:13–14). No one can stand before a holy God unless he has been made holy. Note that the word *alb* means “white.”

## 4. What was King David's central role in establishing the musical life of Old Testament worship?

He wrote many of the psalms, which were meant for singing in worship. He organized the Levitical choirs and instrumentalists.

## 5. Why is music so central to Christian worship?

Music helps the church to speak with one voice, which gives spectacular witness to the truth that our worship is given to the Father through Jesus Christ alone. Wherever God's people have gathered for worship, there has been music. Music has the power to lift up heart, mind, and soul to God, to stir the emotions toward joy or sorrow. Music is the greatest servant of God's Word. We do what God's people have always done and what we will do forever in heaven.

## 6. Is it the choir's job to entertain the congregation? If not, what is its role?

The choir doesn't entertain but serves the congregation in the liturgy by carrying out three functions noted in the text.

7. How can we express what's happening in the service by our bodily posture?

Kneeling, standing, and sitting express our appropriate attitude and response to God as we acknowledge that He is truly among us through His Word and Sacrament.

8. What does making the sign of the cross confess?

When you mark yourself with the sign of the cross, you are tracing over its invisible mark and recalling your Baptism. While some may see it as uniquely Roman Catholic, it is an ancient custom common to all Christians and encouraged by Luther in the Small Catechism (see Daily Prayer, *LSB*, p. 327).

# Discussion Questions

1. Look around your church. What pieces of furniture are used for the liturgy? What is the purpose of each one?

Discuss why each piece of furniture is designed the way it is. For example, is the pulpit elevated to make the preacher easy to see and hear? Is it decorated in a way that gives honor to the preaching of God's Word? Is it adorned with a crucifix to teach that "we preach Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23)? Go through this exercise with the altar (does it resemble a stone altar or a table? why?), the lectern (how does it compare to the pulpit? is this good or bad?), the baptismal font (how is it shaped? is there symbolic meaning?), the altar rail, and so on.

2. What kind of vestments does your pastor wear each Sunday? What message do you think the vestments proclaim to the gathered congregation? How and why might care for the pastor's vestments be a congregational responsibility?

Vestments cover up the individual man and highlight the office he exercises. Vestments are a visual reminder that the minister represents Christ and stands in the apostolic office. Differences in vestments can help worshipers understand who is doing what in the service. The Lutheran Reformation retained vestments as helpful for the Church and a mark of continuity with historic Christianity. (Note that what vestments are meant to symbolize and what people actually think may not line up!) It's a good idea if vestments belong to the congregation, not the pastor, so that when one man leaves and another comes, he still looks the same. The vestments can also match the paraments. The congregation might, therefore, purchase and clean the vestments, or help the pastor to do so. They show their love and care for the pastoral ministry when they dress their pastor well.

3. What are your favorite hymns? Why? Discuss the need to balance *likeability* with *suitability*. In other words, what makes a hymn different from a song? What makes a *good* hymn?

Use the bulleted lists of characteristics that make a good text and a good tune to examine people's favorite hymns. Respect individual likes and dislikes while also emphasizing objective qualities of good hymns.

4. Consider the kind of music used in the five settings of the Divine Service in *LSB*. In what way is church music distinct from the music of the world? Is this a good or a bad thing?

The question of whether the Church should borrow styles of music from the world or create its own style is very difficult. Broadly speaking, the musical style in *LSB* is distinctly churchly, but also clearly Western. In the discussion, it is important to note that the Church has always preferred to have a distinctive form of music, since what happens in church is heavenly and unique, not of this world. But the music must also be singable by God's people. Note also that "chant" is a distinctly churchly type of music.

5. What can your congregation do to provide suitable and useful instrumental accompaniment to the liturgy?

Consider the usefulness of the pipe organ and how you can care for and improve your instrument. Consider how you might help young people to train as organists. But also consider other instruments and instrumentalists that could be encouraged to lead congregational music. The question of what instruments are suitable for use in worship is related to the previous question, as instruments may have associations with church or world that are significant. But there are also practical considerations about which instruments actually do a good job in leading singing, rather than simply performing for the congregation.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 9 **Daily Prayer**

# Study Questions

1. How did Old Testament prayer times connect to the temple?

Morning and evening prayer took place at the same time as the temple sacrifices. God's people remembered that the sacrifices were being offered for them.

2. How can daily prayer help us to focus on the Passion of Christ?

We remember the hours that Jesus spent on the cross, the third, sixth, and ninth, and meditate on what He did for us. Even prayer at midnight and early morning (cockcrow) can remind us of events in Christ's Passion.

3. Why did morning and evening prayer become more important than the other five hours of prayer in the Early Church?

At those times, it was possible for the church to gather together, before and after people went to work. The two services became known as the "cathedral offices" or "people's offices."

4. How did medieval monks apply Psalm 119:62, 164 to their "canonical hours"?

They developed seven or eight daily hours of prayer in line with these words: "Seven times a day I praise You for Your righteous judgments" (Psalm 119:164) and "At midnight I rise to praise You" (Psalm 119:62). "Canonical" means "according to the [monastic] rule."

5. How did Luther reform the daily offices to make them more useful for the Christian congregation?

He focused on Matins and Vespers, rather than all seven hours. He simplified the services to focus on psalmody, Scripture, preaching, praise, and prayer. He got rid of readings from the saints and restored lengthy readings of Scripture. He emphasized catechetical preaching, using the services to prepare people for Communion.

# Discussion Questions

1. Look through *LSB*, pages 294–98. How might you use “Daily Prayer for Individuals and Families” in your home or at church?

These simplified versions of the daily office could be used for family devotions or at Bible studies or meetings at church. “Responsive Prayer 2” (*LSB*, pp. 285–86) provides a general pattern of daily prayer that can be used at any time. Note also the model prayers available on pages 305–18. And don’t forget that Luther’s Small Catechism includes orders for morning and evening prayer and table prayers (*LSB*, pp. 327–28).

2. Look at *LSB*, pages 299–304. What are the benefits of using a daily lectionary and table of psalms for your daily devotions?

Consider the benefits of the lectionary itself, discussed previously in chapter 7 (seven bullet points on p. 127). The daily lectionary takes you through the whole counsel of God in Scripture and, to some extent, fits your Bible reading into the Church Year. The Psalms can be more meaningful when they are matched to the time of day or season of the Church Year.

# Lutheranism 101: **WORSHIP**

## Chapter 10

# **Matins and Vespers**

# Study Questions

1. What are the distinct moods and themes of Matins and Vespers?

As the morning office, Matins is characterized by praise and joy (Psalm 59:16–17). Matins celebrates the dawn as a symbol of Christ's resurrection (Luke 1:78; Mark 16:2). Vespers is characterized by the peace that comes when we go to our rest in God's care (Psalm 4:8). Vespers gives thanks for evening as a promise of eternal rest in the face of death.

2. What are the five basic components of Matins and Vespers?

Psalms, Office Hymn, Readings and Responsory, Canticle, Prayers.

3. What is the role of psalms in the daily office?

The Psalms are God's Word to us—but they're not so much instruction or proclamation (like the other Scripture readings) as they are divinely given words of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Note also their Christological meaning. The Psalms are the central element of Matins and Vespers. We shouldn't be afraid to use more than one psalm.

4. What is the difference between how the Scriptures are read in the Divine Service and how they are read in the daily office?

The lectionary for the Divine Service provides an Old Testament Reading, Epistle, and Holy Gospel for each Sunday or festival, suited to the Church Year. The daily lectionary for daily prayer simply reads through the Scriptures continuously. We stand for the Gospel in the Divine Service because it is the highpoint of the Service of the Word; in the daily office, we simply sit to listen to all the readings.

5. What is a canticle? Where are the most important liturgical canticles found?

A canticle is a song taken from the Bible outside the Psalms. The three "Gospel canticles" from Luke chapters 1 and 2 (the Benedictus, Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis) are the most important in the daily offices.

6. What is the most important canticle that doesn't come straight out of the Bible? What is the legend of its origin?

The Te Deum (*LSB*, p. 223) is an early Christian hymn based on Scripture that has been used in the liturgy since the fifth century. According to legend, it was composed by Ambrose and Augustine when Bishop Ambrose baptized Augustine.

7. What did Mary probably use as the basis for composing her canticle, the Magnificat? Why is this important to note?

It's a paraphrase of the song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10), who received the child Samuel as a miraculous gift from the Lord. This shows how Mary was steeped in God's Word. She saw herself as a similar recipient of God's grace.

8. What is the pattern of prayer in the daily office? What can this pattern teach us?

The prayers in the daily office follow a simple pattern that moves us from the most general of prayerful requests to the most specific. We pray for others before we pray for ourselves. We submit ourselves to God's wisdom, saying simply, "Have mercy," before we tell Him what we think we need.

# Discussion Questions

1. Consider how you might make use of Matins and Vespers in your daily devotional life or in your congregation. What resources are available in the hymnal? What other helps are available?

Matins and Vespers can be prayed individually or in a family setting, perhaps between husband and wife. If you aren't musical, they can be spoken instead of sung. Psalms and readings can be taken from the daily lectionary or just read sequentially. Your pastor may wish to pray Matins and/or Vespers in the church's public space, inviting any members of the church who wish to join him. Even here, they can be spoken or sung, depending on resources and abilities. This is a good opportunity to pray for the needs of the congregation's members. Resources such as *Treasury of Daily Prayer* provide Scripture readings, hymns, prayers, and readings from the Church Fathers.

2. Read Psalm 141 as it appears at the beginning of Evening Prayer (*LSB*, pp. 245–47). Discuss what it means when *you* are the one praying it. Then consider how its meaning deepens when you think of it as *Jesus'* prayer.

This is a good example of how to read all psalms. We read Psalm 141 as a sacrifice of prayer and praise, asking God to receive our prayer and protect us from evil this night. But we also see an echo of Jesus' sacrificial self-offering as He lifted up His hands on the cross for us.

3. How might the opening confession in Compline be useful in your personal life?

See *LSB*, p. 254. This comes from a wise daily ritual in a monastic community: to confess the harm done to one another and be reconciled before going to sleep (Ephesians 4:26). The confession is mutual. This can be a healing custom in a marriage or family.

4. As you conclude this study of the liturgy, consider and discuss the many ways in which you might make better use of the hymnal in your devotional life, alone, with your family, and in your church activities.

This is a chance to bring together and highlight the resources that have been discovered, particularly in the last two chapters.