The Compass

Red Hill Lutheran Church

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Hope is Here!"
"The Church." Text(s): Various Texts.

☐ **Day #1—Monday, November 2nd. Read: Matthew 16.13-20; Deuteronomy 10:12-13. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

The Christian Church is Jesus' church! It is *His body* in the world. It is through the church, that God continues His saving work through Christ in our world today. The English word "Church," translates the Greek word, ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) which literally means, "To call out." This "calling out" has the associated purpose of assembling together. The church is a community of people "*called out*" of the world for the purpose of *assembling together*, only to be *sent back out into the world* to love and serve others in the name of Jesus!

One of the primary ministries of the church, as well as a primary spiritual discipline for Christians, is *worship*. The word "worship" derives from the Anglo-Saxon word, "*weorthscipe*" or "*worthship*," which implies the recognition of the intrinsic value or worth of a person or thing. Of course, in Christian worship, the church recognizes the worth and glory of the Triune God. Worship is what we do as a church. Worship is how we live as Christians.

Deuteronomy 10.12-13 is an introductory summary to the general exhortation found in verses 14-22. Having shown the impossibility of self-dependence (Deuteronomy 8) and the impossibility of spiritual pride in light of her rebellious history (Deuteronomy 9:1-10:11), Moses called Israel to exercise her only option for survival: total commitment to the LORD (Yahweh). This is seen in the several infinitives used to describe this commitment: to *fear*, *walk* . . . *love* . . . *serve*, and *observe*. Such commitments leads to a deepening of faith and love—love for God and others, rather than a self-centered, manipulative spirituality and lifestyle. True, biblical worship is a "reality check" against the other objects of worship…false gods, idols, and self-justification.

The same is true for us: Our commitment to God, expressed through our weekly worship, is a "check" against all the idols, false gods, and competing allegiances that surround us, asking for our commitment to them! Through worship, God invites us to "come home," to confess that our commitment to Him weakens as we struggle against sin, and that we need to be strengthened to follow another day…because He alone is worthy to be worshipped! God asks for our whole self—that we hold *nothing back* from Him. This divine invitation is reflected in Moses' rhetorical question: "What does the Lord your God ask of you…?

Consider/Reflect: Of the five responses (infinitives) that God wants from His people (*Deuteronomy 10.12-13*), how would you define each? What kind of relationship with God would these responses produce?

☐ **Day #2—Tuesday, November 3rd. Read: John 4.23-26.—Examine: The Text and its Message.**

As was mentioned yesterday, the word "worship" derives from the Anglo-Saxon word, "*weorthscipe*" or "*worthship*," which recognizes someone's (something's) value or worth. Everyone worships something or someone. We worship what we consider valuable. It becomes obvious what is valuable to us by how we live our life. God has made it clear in His Word how He wants to be worshipped...In spirit and truth! When we worship, we receive blessings from our Heavenly Father…Forgiveness, love, grace, and spiritual power and life!

According to *John 4:23*, what are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks?

- If to worship is **to declare worth or value**, what are some ways people commonly worship today?
- Why do you think it is important for believers to worship *in spirit* (i.e., from the depths of our being empowered by the Holy Spirit)?
- If truth is defined as real, sincere and biblical, how might believers worship *in truth*?

In worship, when we remember all the ways God has saved us, blessed us, forgiven us, and shown Himself merciful and kind to us, it changes the way we appreciate and serve Him. It makes us more reverent in our worship of Him. This worship is not simply a Sunday event, but a *daily habit* of practicing an authentic, inner humility.

- Take a moment and list several times you powerfully experienced unmerited grace, forgiveness, restoration or some other spiritual encounter in your life. How does this humble you and give you a sense of awe in his presence? How does this memory better prepare you for what you will have to face this week?

Consider/Reflect: "The hour was simultaneously coming and present, since Christ was in the midst of accomplishing everything the Father had sent Him to do…[True worship is in]…spirit and truth. Because God is spirit, proper worship is not a matter of geographical location. True worship receives its genuine character from the Holy Spirit's activity…God actively seeks people out to save them (cf Lk 19:10; 1Tm 2:4)."[1]

☐ **Day #3—Wednesday, November 4th. Read: Hebrews 10:24-25.–Explore: The background to this text(s).**
Scripture is very clear: we should meet together (Worship/Bible study/fellowship) because we not only praise God and receive His gifts of Word and Sacraments; we also love and support our fellow-worshipers as well. Today, I would like to offer some thoughts about worship, taken from a paper written by Dr. A.L. Barry, and presented at a Lutheran worship conference in 1998. I think the positions mentioned here are very profound and highlight the Lutheran distinctives when it comes to *meeting together* (corporate Worship). You can find this paper at www.lcms.org.

Thesis I: The Main Purpose of Lutheran Worship Is to Receive God's Gifts.
We Lutherans have a unique perspective on Worship. *We know that God's Word and His Holy Sacraments are His precious gifts to us. They are the tools the Holy Spirit uses to give us forgiveness, life and salvation.* The main purpose of Lutheran Worship is to receive these gifts from God. (*Italics* mine: Pastor Seth ☺)

Thesis II: Lutheran Worship Is Christ-Centered.
The focus of Lutheran worship is on Christ, not man. Therefore, Lutheran worship is always Christocentric (Christ-centered) and never anthropocentric (man-centered)…The Christ-centered nature of Lutheran worship has direct impact on every other aspect of our worship services. We hear His word read and preached. The hymns sung in our services give Him the glory, honor and praise. We spend a great deal of time singing His praises and less time singing about our own personal spiritual experiences. With the focus on Christ, we notice that even the art in the church portrays the great saving events of our Lord's life and ministry and the great events of God's saving work among His people. Lutheran worship takes our eyes and sets them firmly on the cross of Jesus Christ, for there the Lord of the Universe suffered and died for the sins of the world.

Thesis III: Lutheran Worship Is a Reflection of Lutheran Theology.
How a congregation conducts its worship service is a reflection of its theological convictions. Therefore, Lutheran worship must always be a clear reflection of Lutheran theology. This is a very important point…What does this mean for our worship services? It means that we will not go out of our way to discard the treasures of the Christian liturgical tradition, for we recognize that these are good forms that transcend time and culture. Because Lutheran worship reflects Lutheran theology, we notice a strong emphasis on the proclamation of God's Word, in both spoken and sung form. We notice a high regard for our Lord's presence in His Sacraments, with a particularly high regard for the Lord's Supper. Lutheran worship is shaped and molded by our firm belief that God the Holy Spirit is present and active in Word and Sacrament, creating a people for God and continually renewing the people of God.

Consider/Reflect: What of the above descriptions of Lutheran worship challenge/affirm your understanding of worship?

1 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

☐ **Day #4--Thursday, November 5th. Read: Exodus 3.15; Proverbs 18.10; Matthew 6.9; John 14.6; Acts 4.12; Revelation 1.8.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

God's *names* in Scripture reflect His character. His *name* describes not only *who* He is, but also *what* He does. All of our lives can be about walking in the light of God's presence and power if we trust Him in faith and love in all of our circumstances! Below is a short list of some of the names used to describe God in the Bible. You can find more as you read and study His Word.

As you read the texts appointed for today, select one word (or more) from the list below or one that you recall from the Bible that describes our Lord's character. Notice how these descriptions also reflect our needs before our Heavenly Father, and how we can call on the Lord in our time of need! Take time to pray, thanking God for what He has done for you in the past and asking Him, by the name you have selected, to go before you as you face your situation(s). Recall Jesus' words in John 4, God *seeks out worshippers*. If you call on His name, He will answer you. Pray in confidence that He is who He says He is and that He can do what His name says He can do. Then be prepared to receive the blessings that come from worshipping God in *spirit and truth*.

Savior	Deliverer	Protector
Redeemer	Counselor	Sustainer
Provider	Comforter	Restorer
Healer	Friend	Prince of Peace

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Consider/Reflect: Which of the names above that reflect God's character, speaks to you the most today? Why do you think this is so? Which name above surprises you? Do you view God in the ways above?

☐ **Day #5— Friday, November 6th. Read: Romans 12.1-2; Texts Below.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Today, some further thoughts and truths regarding worship from a Biblical and Lutheran Confessional expression. Taken from the document, "*Theses on Worship*," we can see how Biblical and theological truths shape both our understanding of worship and how we practice worship. Here is the "key" for the citations below: "AC" means the *Augsburg Confession*. "AP" means the *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*. "FC" means the *Formula of Concord*. All are found within our Lutheran Confessional document, *The Book of Concord,* Theodore G. Tappert, Ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959).

Theses: **The Highest Form of Worship is Faith.**

*Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (*John 6.29*)

*God wants us to believe him and to accept blessings from him; this he declares to be true worship. (AP IV, 228) (See also: AC XXVI, 4; AC XXI, 3-4, AP IV, 59).

Theses: The Scriptures and Confessions give the people of God considerable freedom in choosing those forms, rites, and ceremonies that aid the worship of God.

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (*Galatians 5.1)*

*. . . addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . (*Ephesians 5.19*)

*We further believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every place and at every time has the right, authority, and power to change, to reduce, or to increase ceremonies according to its circumstances, as long as it does so without frivolity and offense but in an orderly and appropriate way, as at any time may seem to be most profitable, beneficial, and salutary for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the edification of the church. (FC SD X, 9)

Question/Reflect: From the theses, Scriptures, and confessions above, what impacts you the most about the worship of Jesus Christ?

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, November 7th. Read: Psalm 70. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**
Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther's Small Catechism.* Read and mediate on Psalm 70 and:

> "[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
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> Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer:
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> *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*
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> *Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*
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> (Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):
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> (Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.
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> (Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.[2]

Consider/Reflect: "With the psalmist, we acknowledge our spiritual poverty before God. Part of that acknowledgment is being watchful, lest through pride or faithlessness we ourselves turn away from Him. We seek God in His Word and Sacraments; He remembers us by forgiving our sins (Mt 26:28; 1Co 11:25). In this way, He will provide deliverance—if not in this life, then certainly in the life to come. [Pray]: 'Make haste, O God, to deliver me!' (v 1). You are great in Your forgiveness. Amen."[3]

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow…
New Sermon Series Begins: "Hope is Here!" (The Mission of the Church)
Scripture Texts:
Psalm 146
Galatians 5.1, 13-25
John 17.1-5, 8-21.

2 Martin Luther. "*Luther's Small Catechism.*" Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible.* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

3 *The Lutheran Study Bible.*