

## Study Pages about the Service

### September 9

For further reflection: Worship Corner – Gathering

As we worship this fall, we reflect on why we do what we do in worship. Our participation in the four parts of the worship service (Gathering, Word, Meal/Thanksgiving, Sending) form the basis of worship. This month we'll focus on Gathering as we re-gather from the summer.

In Matthew 18:20 we learn where two or three are gathered in Jesus' name he is among them. Joel 2:15-17 tells us to blow a trumpet, call a solemn assembly and gather the people. The apostles were together on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

Who gathers us together as a people of God? What does it mean to be the body of Christ? How does singing together, making a gesture together, or saying "Amen" together help make us one people instead of a roomful of individuals?

### September 16

For further reflection: Gathering – Confession/Forgiveness, Thanksgiving for Baptism, Baptism

Sometimes when we gather we'll confess our sin and hear God's word of forgiveness; sometimes we give thanks for baptism or actually baptize a child. 1 John 1:8-9, Deuteronomy 32:18, and Psalm 27:1 come to mind.

In confession and forgiveness, the gathered people of God recall their sinful ways and a minister reminds the people of God's mercy and forgiveness offered to all. In baptismal rites, we proclaim that God alone washes away sin through the waters of the flood linked to the waters of our own baptism.

How does beginning the service with baptism or confession/forgiveness set the tone for the rest of worship? How would moving these parts of the service elsewhere say something different?

### September 23

For further reflection: Gathering – Gathering Song

Whenever we get together, we sing. In fact, the primary instrument on Sunday morning isn't the organ, the piano, or the choir. Rather, the most important music on Sunday morning is the music sung by the whole gathered people of God.

We sing hymns that give artful shape to prayer and praise. We sing prayers for all of God's people in the Kyrie (Luke 17:13). We sing "Glory to God" with the angels from Luke's gospel (Luke 2:14) or "This is the feast" using images and language from Revelation (Revelation 5:12-13).

How do these songs set after the message of grace received in baptism and confession/forgiveness turn our attention to God? How would the message of our gathering change if we sang these songs in a different part of the service?

## **September 30**

For further reflection: Gathering – Greeting and Prayer of the Day

In 2 Corinthians 13:13 Paul greets the people saying, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.” We say similar words and speak aloud (a loud), “And also with you!” This trinitarian greeting and the prayer of the day that follows begin a transition to the next section of worship.

The prayer of the day, found at the hinge between Gathering and Word, has been written specifically to prepare our hearts, minds, and spirits for the appointed readings for the day. It is placed at the end of our gathering rite, symbolizing that we have been gathered by the Holy Spirit into one body and are ready to hear the word of God.

How does the prayer of the day call us to action both on Sunday morning and during the remainder of the week? How is this prayer different from the prayers of intercession found later in the service?

## **October 7**

For further reflection: Worship Corner – Word

After we gather together as the people of God, God speaks to us in the Word section of worship. The stories we hear come from a three-year group of readings, called a lectionary. The first reading and gospel reading match thematically and the psalm becomes our response to the first reading. The second reading show us the early church grappling with realities of our God being made flesh, dwelling on earth, dying, and rising.

The sermon connects our stories today with the stories we just read. The hymn of the day further connects the gathered people to these stories as they proclaim them in song. The prayers and the peace draw us outward to live lives changed by the almighty power of God.

What would happen if we started worship with readings? Why is it important we read the bible when we gather? How does God continue to speak into our broken world today?

## **October 14**

For further reflection: Word – Readings

As we approach our yearly Reformation celebration focused on God’s saving word of grace, we turn our attention to the Word section of worship. God’s prophecy revealed in Isaiah 55:10-11 tells us: So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty.

Having gathered for worship, we hear *our* story as God speaks to us through the word. Yes, this part of the service is not only instruction *about* God, it is the word *of* God addressed to us *by* God. We connect these stories to our own stories today and they become part of God's lovingkindness and grace shared in our own community.

What does God accomplish in our sharing stories from the bible on Sunday morning? How can thinking about the readings as God speaking directly to us change how we worship? How can it change us? Are we ready to be changed when we listen to the readings on Sunday morning?

## **October 21**

For further reflection: Word – Sermon/Hymn of the Day/Creed

We are instructed to “give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching” in Paul's first epistle to Timothy 4:13 and in Colossians we are encouraged to “sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”. After we have heard God speak to us in the readings for the day, our worship continues with a message delivered by one of our spiritual leaders.

These messages take a variety of forms, but all of them seek to connect the stories of our past with the stories of our present. The people respond in song with further connections drawn between the readings and our current realities. Finally, all the people join in the Creed, a statement of faith handed down from generation to generation.

What do you notice about the change in who is speaking during this section of worship? How many people deliver the word of God in the sermon, the hymn of the day, and the Creed? What might this say about our connection to the Christian faith and to God?

## **October 28**

For further reflection: Word – Prayers/Peace

The end of the Word section of worship has us praying on behalf of the needy across many pockets of life. Following Jesus's example in the garden and on the cross, we pray for the mission of the gospel, the well-being of creation, for peace and justice, for the sick and oppressed, and for our dearly departed ones.

Again, as Jesus stood among the disciples and said, “Peace be with you,” so we wish each other peace. Every time we wish peace to one another, Christ is among us wishing peace to us. Wishing peace to one another begins the difficult, but necessary work of reconciliation among God's people. The peace is our chance to put away differences and become the body of Christ.

Who do you need to share peace with and for what reason? Who would be the most difficult person for you to share the peace with and why? If the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, were to come among us today, what would that look like?

## **November 4**

For further reflection: Worship Corner – Meal/Thanksgiving

In the United States, this month is marked by a harvesting of the fields and a great thanksgiving for all that has been provided for us over the last year. Fitting then, that we reflect on the middle of our worship service when we give thanks to God for the good gifts we have received.

God sets the feast and becomes the feast of bread and wine and perhaps the most astonishing thing is it is freely offered to all. The Holy Spirit gathers us into one, divisions cease, and all are made equal. Even the saints attend this meal. Then, as one body, we all pray the prayer our Lord taught us, asking for daily bread, physical and spiritual.

In what ways do the actions and words surrounding Communion show the message of unbounded grace taught to us by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? How can we steward this meal set forth by God in ways that are faithful to the gospel?

### **November 11**

For further reflection: Meal/Thanksgiving – Offering

Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 25:35 “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Starting with a collection emphasizes that we offer the best of what we have to God, then take what we need ourselves. The message of stewardship, tithing, and giving to the church before giving to ourselves is built in to our weekly order of worship!

As the collection is taken, music is also offered back to God as it was offered as a gift to us. Returning this gift of song, backed by the dedication of time and energy by the singers, becomes part of our collected and collective offering. The focus is on God and not on those who are singing.

While we appreciate our musicians, how might applauding their efforts turn the focus away from God? In what ways can you give the first fruits of your time, treasure, and talents to God? Why do we gather together resources to help the needy?

### **November 18**

For further reflection: Meal/Thanksgiving – Thanksgiving for the Word/Thanksgiving at the Table

Lamentations 3:41 says “Let us lift up our hearts as well as our hands to God in heaven” and in Isaiah the seraphs “called to one another and [say]: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.’”

In the middle of the service we lift our hearts in thanksgiving. Whether it is giving thanks for the word of God or the Great Thanksgiving that leads to a celebration of communion, we show it is important to give thanks to God for these good gifts. The word Eucharist, another word used to describe the rite of communion, comes to us through a variety of languages and translates to ‘thanksgiving’; the two are linked.

Praising and thanking God are central to our Sunday morning worship services. How does each moment in worship build to this point? Where does God call us to go from here?

## **November 25**

For further reflection: Meal/Thanksgiving – Communion Words

The Lord's prayer comes to us in Matthew 6:9-13 and you may have noticed there are an abundance of words that get said around communion. It isn't the mere presence of bread and wine among the people or only words that make the sacrament, both are needed.

The proper preface ("It is indeed right our duty and our joy..."), prayer of thanksgiving, and words of institution are all part of the words we say around communion. When we are handed the bread and wine we hear, "The body of Christ, given for you" and "The blood of Christ, shed for you." We hear Jesus addressing us both as a gathered people and as individuals as God stoops down to our humanity in this moment.

How do the words surrounding communion turn ordinary bread and wine into this blessed feast? Whose words are these? Who is the primary actor at this point of our worship service?

## **December 2**

For further reflection: Worship Corner – Sending

Blessings (Numbers 6:23-25) and commissions to go forth (The four gospels, Acts, etc.) abound in the bible. Similarly, we end worship with a section which seeks to deliberately send us out into the world. We say "Go in peace" and are told to "Serve the Lord", "Share the good news", or "Remember the poor."

In a way it is no surprise this section of worship is often the shortest. Having received God's word, the peace of Christ, fortification for the journey, and having been reminded of whose we are, we are sent out as quickly as possible to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:19) and live lives in response to the grace received through Christ Jesus (Romans 12:11). We simply cannot wait any longer to go spread the good news.

What can you do in your daily life to live as Jesus taught? What sacrifices can you make to benefit those less fortunate? Who is your needy neighbor and how can you help them? How does this life lived in service draw us back to God on Sunday morning?

## Hymn of the Day Blurbs

### **December 2 (Advent 1)**

Hymn of the Day: 436 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying

Jesus tells us to be alert at all times in today's gospel reading, and we sing Wake, Awake! We express our unbridled joy about Jesus breaking into our lives using the words of this 16<sup>th</sup>-century hymn by Philipp Nicolai.

### **December 9 (Advent 2)**

Hymn of the Day: 264 Prepare the Royal Highway

This year, we get a heavy dose of John the Baptist. We begin this week with the admonition to make a straight path for the Lord so that every valley shall be filled and the rough ways made smooth. We share the same news and continue singing, "All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing."

### **December 16 (Advent 3)**

Hymn of the Day: 256 Comfort, Comfort Now My People

John the Baptist's message becomes more difficult to hear this week with words of baptism by fire. We sing of comfort in today's hymn, trusting that God's ways are true and right. We sing, "Tell them that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever" in hope and expectation that God's will triumphs over all evil.

### **December 23 (Advent 4, only Luke 1:39-45)**

Hymn of the Day: 263 Savior of the Nations, Come

Like a pregnant mother who waits with long expectation, we too have been waiting hopefully for Jesus to break into our lives. Today we amplify the song of Mary, the Magnificat, singing "Not by human flesh and blood, but the mystic Breath of God, was the Word of God made flesh, fruit of woman, blossom fresh."

### **January 6 (Epiphany)**

Hymn of the Day: 302 As with Gladness Men of Old

As we celebrate Epiphany, the day Jesus is revealed as the Christ to all the nations. The Gospel today shows the Christchild revealed to the Magi, and we sing of their faithfulness in hopes that ours may be their equal, knowing that Jesus will "keep us in the narrow way" and "bring our ransomed souls at last where they need no star to guide."

### **January 13 (Baptism of Our Lord, Lectionary 1)**

Hymn of the Day: 581 You Are Mine

Today we commemorate Jesus' baptism and hear God claim Jesus as God's son. Being claimed in baptism and named as Christian brothers and sisters, our hymn of the day has us imagine the

words of God saying, "I have called you each by name. Come and follow me, I love you and you are mine."

### **January 20 (Lectionary 2)**

Hymn of the Day: 310 Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

Today's hymn of the day certainly has a lot to say about how Jesus is made manifest. Can you count the ways this hymn describes how Jesus demonstrates his power and relationship to God? Changing water into wine at the wedding at Cana is certainly one of the more ostentatious manifestations!

### **February 3 (Lectionary 4)**

Hymn of the Day: 737 He Comes to Us as One Unknown

As the crowd at the synagogue go from amazed at Jesus teachings to desiring of hurling him off a cliff, we sing of our Lord who comes to us in unexpected ways with unexpected messages. The Christ comes to us as one "in all the scriptures shown, as yet unseen, but not unknown."

### **February 10 (Lectionary 5)**

Hymn of the Day: 817 You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore

Jesus tells the disciples to let down their nets to catch the fish in today's Gospel and they are rewarded with an enormous harvest. We sing in today's hymn of the day of a God who needs our hands to spread love in this world.

### **February 24 (Lectionary 7)**

Hymn of the Day: 603 God, When Human Bonds Are Broken

Today's gospel has Jesus giving us a difficult teaching: love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you, treat others the way you want to be treated. Today's hymn of the day is a prayer to God to give us strength for these tasks.