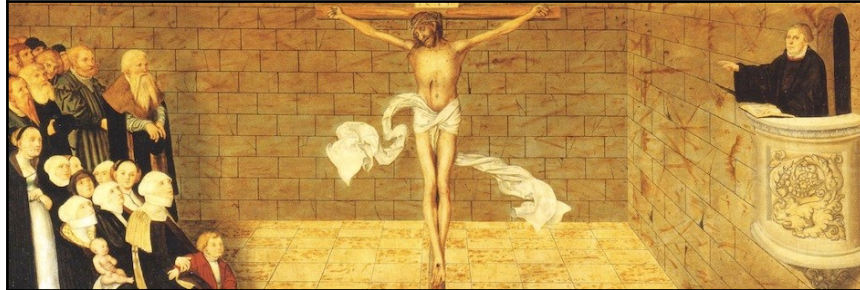


Session #11: – Worship

Read: Chapter 7, pp. 181-204
(also pp.205-218 if you wish)



Lucas Cranach the Elder, part of the Reformation Altar in Wittenberg, oil on panel, 1547.

Introduction

Though each step might come across as plain, where can we find the strength to keep all this straight? How can we fight this battle when it is against foes both outside of us (the devil and the sinful world) and within us (our own sinful nature)? Understanding the proper place of worship in the life of the believer provides a platform to answer all these questions. Besides, all that has been discussed so far seems centered primarily in the individual's faith. Where does the church fit in to all this? What is the proper role of the church in the life of the believer? Is it really necessary, or can we each worship God just as validly in our own way (i.e. by hiking in nature or listening to music or doing something we love)? A proper understanding of worship can direct us toward the Biblical answers to these questions.

Opening Prayer – Collect 109 (LSB 305)

Almighty and everlasting God, You would have all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. By Your almighty power and unsearchable wisdom break and hinder all the counsels of those who hate Your Word and who, by corrupt teaching, would destroy it. Enlighten them with the knowledge of Your glory that they may know the riches of Your heavenly grace and, in peace and righteousness, serve You, the only true God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Opening Hymn – LSB 905: Come, Thou Almighty King

Scripture – Hebrews 9:22-28:

²² Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. ²³ Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

Quotes and Questions from Veith:

“Lutheranism – the spirituality of the cross- is not just a set of ideas about religious topics. It is embodied and enacted in worship. On an ordinary Sunday morning, as ordinary folks sit in the ordinary pews, virtually everything we have been describing in this book comes together in a concrete way: Law and Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, justification by faith, the Word, Baptism, the body of Christ, the blood of Christ, Christology, God’s presence, God’s hiddenness, vocation, the two kingdoms... These all play out in what Lutherans call the Divine Service.” (181)

- How does this view of worship differ from that of other churches and theologies?
- Is it easy to maintain this perspective? Why or why not?

“Many people tease Lutherans – and Lutherans tease themselves – about not worshiping in an emotional way. Indeed, Lutheran worship has an objective quality about it, the sense that grace is actually operating outside of one’s own perceptions, that is very different from the more subjective styles favored by other theologies.” (191)

- No Christian church claims to have “human-centered” worship, but some recent worship movements have come close to using this terminology. What examples have you heard/seen?
- What are some less obvious ways that we tend toward being “human-centered” in our worship?

“When earthly kingdoms try to build a heaven on earth, as we have said the result is disaster; but the Church, as part of the same spiritual kingdom that exists on earth as it is in heaven, brings heaven to earth every Sunday. What we do in worship is what the saints do in heaven – namely, come into the presence of God.” (199-200)

- How does this view of worship shape and influence your own feelings regarding worship?
- In what ways is this easy to remember? In what ways is it difficult?

Connections with Small Catechism:

The Creed: Third Article I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

What does this mean? ...In the same way [the Holy Spirit] calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day, he will raise me and all the

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Pastor Rob Morris, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Summer 2023

dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

- Who is the source of the church?
- What is the primary purpose of the church as discussed here?
- How (by what means) is the church formed and does the church achieve its purpose?
- Can this purpose be thwarted?

Conclusion

“A spirituality in which God does everything for us may well seem too easy, too good to be true. There is, to be sure, nothing easy about being broken by the Law, struggling against one’s own nature, and fighting through trials and suffering. But, on another level, it is indeed easy, simply a matter of receiving Christ’s gifts. And the Gospel of forgiveness and grace in the cross is, as the catechism says, ‘most certainly true.’ This truth is no mere intellectual assertion, but a faith lived out in worship, in the inmost depths of heart, in love of others, in work, and in the day-to-day routines of ordinary life.”

Closing Prayer