

# Service of Worship

## PRELUDE: *Preparing ourselves to Worship*

As our lives are often scattered and chaotic when we first approach God in worship, we should take a moment to prepare ourselves. We'd do so before meeting any person of we esteem or admire, wouldn't we? You might pray silently, take a minute to reflect on a Bible passages, song, or written prayer in your bulletin, or simply settle down in a moment of silence.

## CALLING OURSELVES TO WORSHIP

*Psalm 95.1-3, 6-7*

**Leader:** Oh come, let us sing to the LORD; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

**People:** Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

**Leader:** For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

**People:** Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

**ALL:** For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Worship always begins with an invitation from God—a reminder that we approach the God of the universe only because of his grace. We typically use an excerpt from the book of Psalms (a book of Old Testament songs and prayers). God reminds us why we ought to esteem him—calling our attention to who he is and what he's done for us.

## INVOCATION PRAYER: *Asking God to be with us*

As sinners who are inclined *not* to worship God, we need to ask for help. We "call upon" God to be present with us, acknowledging that we can approach him only through his Son, Jesus Christ, and asking that he send his Spirit, who gives us power to worship.

## SONG OF PRAISE

*God of Wonders*

Music has the unique capacity to communicate God's truth to us, and to express our hearts to God, in a way that words alone cannot. So we use a song to celebrate God's presence in our midst.

## READING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

*Psalm 51 (p. 474)*

**Reader:** This is the Word of the Lord

**People:** Thanks be to God!

Here we read a portion of the Bible, usually from the Old Testament at this point in our service. If you don't have a Bible of your own, you can borrow one from the table in the lobby (the "blue Bible"); the page number of the passage is listed in your bulletin. We finish each reading by reminding ourselves that the Bible is no ordinary book and thus demands our careful attention and obedient response ("This is the Word of the Lord"). We respond with gratitude ("Thanks be to God!"), acknowledging that our only hope for understand God, ourselves, and the world hinges on God's revealing himself to us.

## CONFESSION OF SIN: *Being honest with God*

*Heavenly Father, You promise to exalt the humble, but we are often slow to confess our need for Your mercy. Our thoughts and conversations are full of ourselves—our accomplishments and abilities. We live for the praise of our peers rather than the praise of God. Blind to our own unrighteousness, we are quick to criticize others. We quietly rejoice when the sins and failures of others are exposed—comparing ourselves with them rather than showing compassion to them. Gracious God, be merciful to us, sinners who need the cleansing blood of Jesus. Amen.*

The grace of God creates for us a relationship with Jesus in which radical honesty about our moral failures is welcome and safe. But our honest confession is also marked by radical hope, because God promises forgiveness through Christ and renewal through the Holy Spirit. God's Word helps us to recognize the ways we've failed to love God and our neighbor perfectly. We respond by confessing our sins both individually (in silent prayer) and corporately (reading the printed prayer in unison) because our sin affects not only our personal relationship with God but also our relationships with one another. If you're not sure how to pray during the time of silent confession, feel free to grab some of the words and themes from the printed prayer and use them as your own.

## HEARING & RECEIVING THE PARDON

*1 John 1:8-9*

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**People:** *We receive Your grace!*

God brings us low in repentance in order to lift us up with the gospel—the good news that in Christ we are forgiven! The announcement of this promise is one of the most beautiful and powerful moments in our worship. But hearing the pardon isn't enough; we need to believe it and receive it with humility. So this portion of our worship climaxes with a corporate shout of joy for all that God has been and done for us in Jesus: "We receive Your grace!"

## CONFESSING OUR FAITH

*The Apostles' Creed*

*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 Spirit, 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 is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic\* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.*

Occasionally we will respond to God's grace by rehearsing aloud the things we believe God and the gift of salvation we've received from his Son. Typically for this "confession of faith," we'll use an ancient summary of Christian beliefs, one that reminds us that we are connected to many generations of Christians from all over the world who have embraced the same message of Christ.

## SONG OF THANKS

*We Sing Your Mercies  
Jesus! What a Friend For Sinners!*

Having been assured that our sins are forgiven, we give thanks to God for his great mercy with two more songs.

## PRAYER OF INTERCESSION: *Praying for ourselves & the world*

Prayer—humbly asking God for things—is also part of our worship of God. How? When we pray expectantly, we show him to be great: a God who is near enough to know and care about our every need, yet powerful enough to help us. During this time, one person leads in prayer, but together we join our faith to ask for God to move in our community, our city, and our world.

## GIVING OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS: *Responding to the grace of God.*

We give our material possessions as an act of faith and a token of our giving of our entire lives to God. This offering is response of gratitude for the invaluable gift we've been given in Christ; therefore, if you're a visitor or someone who's just looking into Christianity, please don't feel obligated to participate!

PRAYER AND DISMISSAL OF CHILDREN

At this point in our service, our children (children up through 2nd grade) and their teachers depart for Children's Church, where they can learn more about Jesus in language they can comprehend. We dismiss them with a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing.

GREETING ONE ANOTHER

The gospel draws us into relationship with other people. So it's appropriate for us to extend a kind greeting to the people around us—reminding ourselves that we worship God not only as individuals but as a community. Spend a moment getting to know those around you; welcome newcomers and introducing yourself to them.

SONG OF PREPARATION

*God Be Merciful to Me (Psalm 51)*

We prepare our hearts to hear the preaching of God's Word with our "song of preparation."

READING FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

*Luke 18.9-14 (p. 877)*

Here we have a second reading from the Bible, on which the sermon will be based. As with the first reading, we should listen attentively, seeking to respond to God's Word obediently. Again, you may follow along in one of the "blue Bibles" if you didn't bring a Bible of your own.

**Reader:** This is the Word of the Lord  
**People:** Thanks be to God!

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION: *Asking for wisdom to understand God's Word*

The power of God's Word to save and change us comes not from the ink and paper of our Bibles, or from the eloquence of the preacher, but from the work of the Holy Spirit. So, we take a moment to ask for wisdom and understanding from God. This prayer is offered for both the preacher and the listener, for both the speaking and the hearing of the Word. Pray along with the preacher as he asks for God's help.

THE SERMON

*"Self-Righteousness"*

Learning from God is worship, too: careful attention to his Word. ~~It is an~~ appropriate response of obedience honor him. For 30 minutes or so, the preacher will explain the meaning of the passage, the way it reveals to us the grace of Jesus Christ, and its implication for our lives and the world around us. Though the preacher does most of the speaking, you can worship by listening *actively*—engaging with God personally and applying the message to your life!

## SIGN AND SEAL OF GOD'S GRACE: THE LORD'S SUPPER

### **Prayer for those Seeking**

*God, you promise that those who seek you will find you, and that you are found in Jesus Christ alone. Please honor my seeking and show me mercy; guide me, teach me, and lead me. Grant me your Spirit that I might not seek in vain, but have a true relationship with you.*

### **Prayer of Belief**

*Father, you have shown me that you are my Creator and that I owe everything to you. I confess that Jesus Christ is your unique and only Son, the God-Man full of grace and truth. Lord Jesus, I thank you for paying my debt of guilt, taking the full punishment for my sin upon the cross, and by your righteousness making me completely accepted and loved by God, freely by grace. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I receive you as my Lord and Savior and commit myself to live as your follower at all cost. Holy Spirit, I have grieved you by my selfishness and lack of love, I turn from my sin and ask you to fill me and create new life in me. O God, you are my God, and I will ever praise you.*

God knows it's difficult for weak and sinful people (like you and me) simply to hear and believe in his gospel promises. So he gives us a visual aid—a promise we can touch, taste, see, and smell. This is what the Lord's Supper (a.k.a "communion") is for us. Indeed, Jesus promises to be present with us in this spiritual meal, "feeding" our souls with the bread, which represents Jesus' broken body, and the wine, which represents his shed blood. You are welcome to take part in this meal if you have embraced Jesus Christ and his gospel, have demonstrated this faith publicly by receiving the sign of baptism, and have connected yourself to his Bride, the Church, through membership at any local church that proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. The very symbolism of this meal indicates that it is for those who have "taken in" God's grace. Therefore, if you're just looking into Christianity and you haven't yet trusted in Jesus Christ, we respectfully ask that you refrain from the Supper. But please stay and reflect upon the meaning of this meal, the sermon you just heard, or some of the prayers included in your bulletin. If you embrace the grace of Jesus, perhaps next week can be the first time you participate in this meal!

## COMMUNION HYMN

*Marvelous Grace of Our Loving Lord*

As people stand in line to receive the bread and the wine, we sing our "Communion Hymn." This song may help you reflect upon the meaning of the Table: the grace you've been given in Christ and the sin and wrath from which he's redeemed you.

## SONG OF FAITH

*He Is Exalted*

We complete the Lord's Supper with a prayer: we thank God for being present with us and feeding us through Christ. Then, in thanksgiving for all that God has done for us, we sing our final song of the evening, our "Song of Faith."

## MERCY MINISTRY OFFERING

Experiencing the riches of God's mercy throughout the service motivates us to be merciful towards those in need. On the fourth week of each month, during our Song of Faith we collect a special offering to be used to serve the physical and materials needs of individuals in our community.

## THE BENEDICTION: *Going with the Blessing of God*

*The LORD bless you and keep you;  
The LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.*

Our worship service concludes with a "benediction," a word of promise that God will go with us as we take the grace we've just experienced and extend it to our city and world. This is a blessing, not a prayer, so feel free to receive it with your eyes open, looking at the minister. Just as we began with God's gracious invitation, so we end with his gracious promise to be with us always.