

series on worship, on corporate worship. We define that as it's a gathering of the body of Christ, the church, to worship and honor God, glorifying and enjoying him with reverence, devotion, adoration, and praise with thanksgiving on the Lord's Day.

We say that God is the object of our worship, that he is the infinite, eternal, unchangeable God in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is a triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and that we are to worship Him through Christ, our mediator, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

We talked about the regulative principle. Regulative principle is that God prescribes how we worship him. He is good to us. He tells us how he wants it to be done. So we only worship him in ways that he has told us in his word that he wants to be worshipped.

Then we talked about prayer. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God in the name of Christ by the help of the Spirit with confession of sins and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies. And the Catechism tells us it's a means of grace.

We talked about the prayers in our worship service. We first talked about the call to worship being God calls us to worship Him. He invites us. commands us to come and worship me. And so our first prayer is the invocation where we just cry out to God, help us. Here we come. We're coming to worship you. Help us do it according to your word.

And then we talked about the pastoral prayer being where it includes confession of sin, thanksgiving for our pardon, and then intercession for where we pray for civil authorities, Christian ministry and missions. We pray for the salvation of all men, sanctification of the saints, and we pray for the afflicted.

We also have a prayer of thanksgiving where we thank God for his blessings to us temporally and spiritually. because we're commanded to be a thankful people. So we have a prayer of thanksgiving. We also have a prayer of illumination before the preached word. So here we're praying for the preacher, that God would use him to proclaim the words of Christ to us. We're praying that he would help us to hear God's word being preached and understand it and hide it in our hearts and live by it.

And then we end their service with a benediction. The benediction is God's blessing on us. And that's amazing that God would call us to worship and then He would bless us as we leave. What a wonderful thing.

Then we talked about the reading of God's Word. And we saw, according to catechism, that the reading of God's Word makes it effectual to salvation. The reading of God's Word and the preaching of God's Word are very similar. We need to hear it read and then we need to have it preached to us.

Because the word of God is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him. So that's our only rule for faith and practice is the word of God. So we need to have it read to us in worship.

And then we talked about how in worship it's a conversation. God calls out to us, we respond in prayer and praise. He comes to us through the Word, through the Word read and through the Word preached. We confess our faith. We sing praises to Him. He comes with His Word back to us.

So that's a good way to understand how we are interacting with God in worship. So we talked about how the Word should be read with godly fear. We should understand whose Word it is, where it comes from, what it means. and that we should read substantial portions. We're not just wanting a little bite, a little taste of this or that. And we want to read through the Bible, so we get a flow of what God is telling us throughout the scriptures, and so that we could have the whole counsel of God.

And we talked about how it being an authoritative word. And because it's an authoritative word, it should come from the office that is called to read, which is an elder, mainly the teaching elder, we said ruling elders, and we make exceptions for those who are training to be pastors.

We talked next about the preaching, and we said it was commanded to be preaching. We saw examples of Jesus and John the Baptist, the disciples, all preaching, and Paul commanding Timothy to be ready in season out of season. We looked at the larger catechism. It says preaching of the word is especially a factual means of grace and evangelism and strengthening and encouraging and training Christians in faith.

So preaching is evangelism. If you want to see people come to Christ, they need to hear the word preached. That's why we support seminaries. We need more preachers. We have churches without preachers.

So preaching is evangelism and preaching is a primary means of gathering and protecting the elect. It's a means of sanctification. It's a means of making disciples, as you're being trained by the Word. Zach Bird says, Preaching is an act of the exalted Christ through His commissioned officers by His Spirit as a means of grace communicated to His particular people.

What we're saying is, what he's saying, what we're saying is that preaching the Word of God coming from Mac this morning, as long as he's preaching according to the Word, it is the actual words of Christ coming to us. We said that true preaching is both expository and it's with application. Expository means that we want it explained. We want to understand what was going on in Corinth when Paul was writing the letter to the Corinthians. What was he trying to say? And then what does it mean to us today? How do we apply those spiritual truths to ourselves?

So we need to understand what is being said in there. We talked about the larger catechism, about what is required of those who hear the word. So how are we to hear? We're to hear, we're supposed to attend upon it with diligence. with diligence. We need to be with preparation and prayer. We need to examine what we hear by the Scriptures. We

need to receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind as the Word of God. Meditate and confer with it. Hide it in our hearts and bring forth fruit of it in our lives.

So we're actively hearing. I was talking with a friend of mine this week, and he was talking about he was drawn to more liturgical worship because he wanted to be participating. We participate in worship when we hear the Word of God. We're participating. We're hearing it. We're wrestling with it. We're examining it. We're meditating on it. We're trying to digest it and understand it. That's our participation, one of the ways we participate in worship. So it is an active listening.

And then we talked about singing. We talked about how our culture's changed and nobody sings in public. It's very rare. And that we are commanded to sing to God, praises. We also said that we need to have our minds engaged. We don't just sit up here and sing the words that we've known to this song, this hymn, all our lives and we just sing it without our minds. We're supposed to be worshiping God with our minds through our songs. We talked about Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, saying that what we're to sing are psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. And the Confession says we're to sing with grace in our heart. Terry Johnson says, the Word of God is not only to be read, preached, and prayed, it is also to be sung. Congregations are to sing and the Bible is to supply the content. for their praise.

We talked about that we are definitely to sing psalms. There's no argument there. But we talked about hymns. Why do we sing hymns? Well, we sing hymns, A, as we say, psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. But we sing hymns so that we can praise Christ for His redeeming work. The psalms are looking forward to Christ, but with our hymns we can sing praises to His redeeming work in a real way from looking back to Christ.

We also see evidence that in the early church they were singing hymns that they'd written. We see that there are hymns and other spiritual songs in the scriptures themselves that we can sing. The proper use of the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs is one for praise. Hughes, Olaf, and Olds defines praise as a sense of awe and wonder we have when we enter the presence of God.

Songs and hymns and spiritual songs can be prayers. Jonathan Landon Cruz says, insofar as prayer is any type of direct address to God, corporate singing and worship falls under that category. There are prayers to God. It's a way of proclamation. It's primarily speaking to God, but Ephesians and Colossians talk about us admonishing one another. encouraging one another. So it's a way to encourage one another in song. We're singing to one another the praises of God and His great works and what He's done in our life. So we're doing that. It's in a way of expressing our love, awe, and joy to God and to one another.

Bonhoeffer says, the heart sings because it is overflowing with Christ. So that's why we sing.

Today we're going to talk about the sacraments and there's so much that I'm not going to talk about today about the sacraments. We're going to talk about it as a part of worship. We're going to talk about what sacraments are and a little bit about baptism in the Lord's Supper and how they are signs, how they are seals. The sacraments are visible, the visible Word to us. We see the Word in the sacraments. They're seals.

I'm not going to get into a discussion on why we baptize infants. We are covenantal theologians. We believe that our children are members of the covenant. I'm approaching it that way. If anybody wants to discuss why and the reasons, we can get into that privately. This is not a deep dive into either of the sacraments. Sacraments are a picture of the internal truth, not Sacraments do not save. The baptism does not save. It's a picture of an internal truth. It's a picture of what Christ does to the covenant people, to His covenant children. So keep that in mind. I'm gonna remind you a couple times because it's so easy. When we start talking about a seal, you start going, well, I just need to be baptized and I'm okay. That's not true. Okay, and I want to be careful of that.

You know, we don't observe the sacraments every worship service, but they're very important. And they're necessary in our true worship. We don't have, we haven't had a baptism since Emmy, I don't think. We may have had one other, I'm not sure. But we have that baptismal font to remind us about baptism. And it's important. That's one of the sad problems we have without having children or people coming to faith as adults that we need to baptize. We don't see it often enough. We can't do anything about that. Unless Hank and Elizabeth want to start over again, but. But it's important for us to remember baptism.

One of the important things to do with baptism, as they say, is to improve it. That means to make use of it. How are we using our baptism and what we learn about internal truths in baptism? And so we'll think through that.

We have the Lord's Supper once a month. There is debate over how often. We're just told to do it frequently. I'm very comfortable with once a month. There are some that do it every Sunday, and I can see some benefits to that. It's not wrong, but there's a danger in having it every Sunday, because one of the problems with the Roman Catholic Church, besides transubstantiation, is that some people just slipped in there to have the Mass, and once they had the Mass, that's all they needed.

And you cannot separate the sacraments with the Word. You have to have the preaching of the word come along with the sacraments. It's a visible word, but you need the word preached also. So you can't separate those two. And so it's a danger when people start saying, well, if I have the supper, I have all I need. It's not all you need. It's a beautiful gift from the Lord, from Christ. We need it. So anyway, let's get digging down a little bit more.

Question 161 of the larger catechism, how do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation? The sacraments become effectual means of salvation not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety or intention of him by whom they are administered, but only by the working of the Holy Ghost and the blessing of Christ by whom they are instituted."

There's a lot there, but it reiterates what I was trying to get at before. It's not, there's no power in themselves. There's no power in the preacher that's administering them. It's only by the working of the Holy Spirit. Think of John 3 and Jesus talking to Nicodemus and he was talking about how it's the work of the Spirit and the Spirit moves as He wills like the wind. We don't know what God's doing with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit works as He wills. But it's a blessing of Christ.

Terry Johnson said the Reformers held that the sacraments are central but subordinate. They are a means of grace, but always and only if accompanied by the word of faith. We cannot separate the word and faith from the sacraments. The sacraments do not become effectual means of salvation by any power in them. However, they are, as with the rest of worship, they depend on the meditational work of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. That's one of the central themes of worship. We come through Christ with the help of the Spirit.

And we see this example of how the Spirit has to work. When you look at Acts 8, 13 and 23, Simon the sorcerer, he was a baptized man. He was baptized. However, Peter said, thou art in the gall of bitterness, in the bond of iniquity. If baptism saved individuals in and of itself, Simon would have been a new creature. He would not have been in the bond of iniquity. So we see here early on in Acts that baptism does not save. It is not a talisman. The efficacy of the sacraments do not depend on the piety or moral character of the minister or his intentions. And that's really getting back to, there's some people worried that they grew up in a church that may not have been as sound. And is my baptism effectual? It doesn't, that's not what counts. It's the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of Christ who instituted the sacraments.

Question 162. What is a sacrament? A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in His church to signify, seal, and exhibit unto those that are within the covenant of grace the benefits of His mediation to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces, to oblige them to obedience, to testify and cherish their love, and to commune one with another, and to distinguish them from those that are without.

It's for those inside the covenant of grace. It's for those in the church. It's not for those outside the church. It's an ordinance of Christ. Christ instituted the sacraments. And marriage is a holy ordinance, just like baptism and the Lord's Supper, but it's not a sacrament. Christ didn't institute it.

We see that baptism was instituted in Matthew 28, 19, the Great Commission. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Christ commanded us to baptize those who are disciples.

the Lord's Supper, we read in 1 Corinthians 11-23, Paul says, And also in Luke 22, we read, And when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. So we see Christ instituting these two as sacraments.

The Roman Catholic Church has seven sacraments. Most of those, all but two, were not instituted by Christ. These two we receive as instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ to do. All right, we see that they're instituted by Christ in His church. It's to be done in church. We see that in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul says, when you come into the church, when you gather at the church, when he starts correcting them about their misuse of the Lord's supper and instruct it, he said, when you come in the church, you're not supposed to do this, you're supposed to do that.

So the sacraments are for the church inside worship. Baptism is a sign of our entrance into the covenant of grace. It flows out of the sacrament of circumcision from the Old Testament. So in the New Covenant, it comes instead of circumcising, which Abraham was commanded to be circumcised and circumcise everybody in his troop. It wasn't just his children, it was his slaves. Everybody that lived with him were circumcised.

And so we come into the New Testament and we change from circumcision to baptism. So it's not just the males, it's everyone. We see in the New Testament it expands the gospel expands. So we have an expansion and it's a sign of entrance.

Hughes Oliphant Old says, baptism was a sign of a new covenant just as circumcision has been a sign of the old covenant. And Peter at Pentecost in Acts 2, 38, 39, Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you. in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." Everyone. Expansion of God's grace and mercy. We see the church expand.

The new covenant is an expansion of the old. We also see the Lord's Supper is a covenant meal. We view these as covenantal sacraments. The meal for the covenant community, the church. Old says, finally, for Paul, the dimension of the fellowship of the Christian community was extremely important. This is, after all, the main point of this passage in chapter 11. The celebration should express the mutual concern of the members of the church, one for another. It was important to discern the Lord's body and to wait for one another. It was not like eating in a cafeteria where each one has as much as one can pay for. Those who had plenty were to share with those who did not have enough. It was a covenantal meal wherein the individual entered into a covenant, not only with God, but with the total Christian community. It is a communal meal. We come together. to worship God together.

1 Corinthians 11, 17 through 22, but in the following instructions, I do not commend you. Because when you come together, it is not for the better, but for the worse. For in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. There's where Paul says, it's for the church. When you come together as a church, we're supposed to do this right, not for ourselves. It's for one another.

So sacraments are signs and seals or exhibits, or they apply the benefits of Christ's mediation. Williamson explains that in the shorter catechism, the word applied is used instead of exhibit. So the answer to the catechism can better be understood when read as sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ in his church to signify, seal, and apply. So it's a seal, it's a sign, it's a seal, and it's either to exhibit, show, or apply. that the graces are applied to you. You see them and they are applied to you. And it's for those within the covenant of grace. And what's being applied is the benefits of Christ's mediation.

So what is a sign? What is a sign? G.I. Williamson says, it is in simplest terms a picture or a symbol. It is a visible representation of something we cannot see. For example, a road sign. You think of a road sign, there may be a big curve right over the hill, and so you have this sign that has a little curve area in it. Well, that's not the curve, but it tells you about the curve. It informs us. By looking at the sign we gain a true conception of something unseen. The sign is a true visible representation of a real but invisible situation. It is as much the same with the sacraments. The sacraments give us a picture of the work of Christ, of God's grace

But there's a difference, however. The sacraments are a motion picture. It's not just a static picture. We see the actions. We see the water being picked up and then poured out. We see the bread torn and handed out and the cup lifted up and shared. So we see a motion picture.

In baptism, the sign is the water being applied. to the recipient. The thing signified is the gospel and our ingrafting into Christ. Marion D. Clark says, baptism signifies the gospel. It communicates the atonement of Christ, our union with Him, the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, and the entrance into God's covenant. That is the sign. The sign is the water cleansing us. I forget the reference, but one reference, I think it's in Peter, where it's like burial and being pulled out of the water. And that represents new birth. So it's being born again. It communicates being washed, both the atonement of Christ. We're being brought into the covenant family. We're coming into a family, the family of God. So that's all the things that it signifies. In the Lord's Supper, the sign is the bread and the wine. The thing signified is Christ's body and His blood. We see Christ's atoning work on the cross. We see union with Christ. Both of them point us to being united to the Lord Jesus Christ, coming into Him by faith.

Rick Phillips says, the elements of the Lord's Supper present Christ's death to the senses of His people. but more significant, signified, but more is signified, excuse me, in its administration. The eating of the elements by believers signifies their participation in the crucified Christ. Birkhoff teaches they symbolically appropriate the benefits secured by the sacrificial death of Christ. Additionally, Partaking of the sacrament signifies the effect of Christ's death in giving life and strength to the soul. As food and drink sustains the body, Furthermore, just as the sacrament symbolizes the believer's union with Christ, it also places a visible difference between the members of Christ's church in the world, while signifying believers' communion one to another in Him.

I'm sorry, I read that stiltedly, but what he's saying is we see Christ's death for us. We see that we are secured with the benefits of his death. We see it giving us life and strength to our soul. It sustains our body. It symbolizes the believer's union to Christ. And it also marks us out as different from the world. We're members of the church, not of the world around us.

So what is a seal? We've seen the signs of what a sign is for baptism in the Lord's Supper, but what does it mean to be a seal? Van Dyck's horn says, seals were understood to be confirming tokens or authenticated symbols When that meaning was applied to sacraments, a seal was understood to protect a promise, emphasize an obligation, or solidify a covenant. Most basically, a seal validates something. Williamson said, the Catechism states that sacraments were instituted by Christ to seal the benefits of Christ's mediation to those that are within the covenant of grace, that is, to guarantee or legally to certify those benefits to those persons.

A seal, think about when, my mind just went blank, a seal on a letter. You pour wax and you put a seal, it authenticates that it's really from you or from the king. In Esther, when the king sent out a declaration, he gave the signet ring that sealed that it was true. That's what a seal is to us. Christ is sealing it to us and saying, these come from me. These are from Christ. So baptism seals us to God's love and faithfulness. We see God's love and faithfulness to us. He said, come to me by faith and I'll be your God.

Calvin says, in as much as it is given for the arousing, nourishing, and confirming of our faith, it is to be received as from the hand of the author himself. We ought to deem it certain and proved that it is he who speaks to us through the sign, that it is he who purifies and washes away sins. and wipes out the remembrance of them, that it is he who makes us sharers in his death, who deprives Satan of his rule, who weakens the power of our lust. Indeed, that it is he who comes into a unity with us so that, having put on Christ, we may be acknowledged God's children. These

things, he says, performs for our soul with an end as truly and surely as we see our body outwardly cleansed, submerged, and surrounded by water.

So when we're talking about baptism, in the seal of baptism, caution. We're not saying that baptism saves you in and of itself. I wanna remind us again that God saves sinners. We are, the efficacy of the sacrament are left to the work of the Holy Spirit. But God has given us baptism. He's commanded us to baptize those who have come to faith in Christ. We believe that God has told us that those who are in the covenant, that our children are in the covenant also. That's why we baptize them.

It's people, it is those who are in the covenant that receives the water of baptism, who receives the sacrament. is a sign of God's faithfulness trust. It is not a sign that they are saved. We think back to Simon the sorcerer. He came and proclaimed faith. It wasn't real because it was not an inworking of the Holy Spirit in his life. So it does not save in and of itself, but there is a sense in which there is a real seal to it. If you are in faith, you come by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, your baptism has been sealed to you. You have been washed, and you can have confidence, and you can be strengthened in that as you come by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Confession, chapter 27 and three reads, The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used is not confirmed by any power in them. Neither does the efficacy of the sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit and the word of institution which contains, together with the precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefits to worthy receivers. There is a promise of benefits to those who come by faith.

Marian Clark says, the Reformers saw baptism with water as the outward sign of baptism with the Holy Spirit, which was the inward grace. The physical washing with water did not save those who were baptized, rather the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the baptized gave them faith, thereby cleansed them from their sins. For the reformers, it became very important then that at the time of baptism, the church should pray that the Holy Spirit accomplished inwardly the purification and sanctification that the outward sign of baptism, baptismal washing promised.

So we pray, we pray that these things are real, that they'd be applied to those who are baptized.

The Lord's Supper seals to us our union to Christ and His atoning work. Rick Phillips says, The Lord's Supper seals God's people by giving them a reliable attestation of their participation in Christ. It is Christ who thus identifies His own, stretches forth His hand to give them the bread and the cup of His covenantal meal. John Murray says, when we partake of the cup in faith, it is the Lord's own certification to us that all that the new covenant in His blood involves is ours. It is the seal of His grace and faithfulness.

Burkoff points out that this sealing assures us that we are the recipients of Christ's atoning work. The Lord's Supper seals to the participants the great love of Christ. It assures the believing participant that he was personally the object of that incomparable love. Furthermore, it confirms to the believer that all the promises of the covenant and all the blessings of salvation are his in actual possession. Finally, it is a reciprocal seal. whereby believers through participation profess their faith in Christ as Savior and their allegiance to Him as King, and they solemnly pledge a life of obedience to His divine commandments." So what are the benefits of Christ's mediation? Williamson says



those benefits include all that Christ has done, is doing, and will do in the future for his people. They include his work as our Redeemer and his three offices, prophet, priest, and king. We have all that Christ has done. His doings, his dyings on the cross, his being raised again from the dead, his intercessory work as he sits beside, on the right hand of God the Father, is all ours in him. Those are the benefits that we have as He is our prophet, our priest, and our king.

As we worship God with the Lord's Supper, it's important. One of the warnings is that we examine ourselves, that we come rightly. And that's not to run us off. Nobody's worthy of coming and feeding on Christ. Just examine ourselves. Am I looking at myself rightly? Do I see my need of Christ? Do you need Christ? Come and eat. Come and feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for you, but don't come thinking you don't need a Savior.

There are four functions of a sacrament, and then I'll wrap up. The sacraments were instituted by God to represent Christ and His benefits. When the baptism and the Lord's Supper, we are to see Christ and His benefits, His living for us perfectly, fulfilling the law, His dying for our penalty for our sin, and His raising from the dead that we might have new life, His intercession for us to the Father.

Secondly, sacraments confirm our interest in our Redeemer. They signify or point to our relationship with Jesus and seal or confirm that we belong to Him, that we're united to Him. Do you ever think about what it means to be united to Christ? We are told that we are united to Christ, that we are one with Jesus. that He belongs to us and we belong to Him. I can't get my mind around that. That He has given us His Holy Spirit to give us the power to defeat sin, to put sin to death. As I think about that, I'm ashamed at how little I've put to death. Because I have Christ and I have the Holy Spirit. We need to meditate on that more, and the sacraments show us that in a visible form, that we are united to Christ, that we're sealed to Him, and that there is power there.

The sacraments put a visible difference between those who belong to the church and the rest of the world. The sacraments belong only to those who are in the covenant of grace, not to those outside the church. We're not our own people. We don't belong to ourselves. I think that's why church membership's important. We're part of the visible church. Baptism brings you into the visible church. And so there ought to be membership of a local body. I mean, there's churches all over. You don't have to be church members here. You need to be a member of the visible church to participate in the sacraments. because you need to be a member of the covenant of grace. And the sacraments put a difference. We're not just like everybody else. We belong to God. We're part of His family.

Fourthly, the sacraments solemnly engage us to the service of God in Christ according to His Word. They still were confirmed that God's Word calls us to this service. They remind us that we cannot have it both ways. Our commitment is either to Christ or the devil, but not to ourselves. We are to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, obeying His commandments, and living for Him by faith.

Let's pray. O Lord, our great God and our Father, we do thank you for your kindness to us that you would give us a visible word, things we can taste, touch, and smell, and see, to teach us about the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and his desire to be united to us, that he has applied his death to us, that we might have life. We pray now as we get prepared to worship you this morning that you would bless Mac, and that you would speak through him to us, that we might hear your word and might obey it. In Jesus' name.