

Worship is the gathering of God's people, the church. The church is the bride of Christ, the people of God. We gather together to worship and honor God. As the Catechism says, glorifying and enjoying Him. We do that with reverence, devotion, adoration, and praise with thanksgiving and on the Lord's Day.

Secondly, we looked at what is the object of our worship. Our object of our worship is God, the triune God. The God that the Catechism says is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, and is being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. We talked about we could look back to Hunter's series on the holiness of God, or Jamie had three years of the attributes of God, as we looked at who this great God is.

We also looked at Hebrews where he says that God is a consuming fire. This impacts the way we approach our God in worship. He is our Father, but He is also the Creator God. He is all-powerful, and He is holy. So we approach Him with reverence and awe, and that impacts how we approach Him.

So next, we talked about the regulative principle. which is God tells us how we are to worship him in his word. We're not to worship him according to our own imaginations, and what sounds good to us, we're to worship him the way he tells us to. He is good, God is good, and he tells us what pleases him. So as we gather to praise him and to honor him, we do it in a way that he finds honoring and pleasing to him. So this is the overarching principle.

We're also looking at the elements of worship in our worship. We next talked about prayer. Shorter Catechism says prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God in the name of Christ by the help of His Spirit with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies. Question 88 of the Shorter says that prayer is a means of grace. So prayer is a means of grace.

And we talked about the four prayers in our liturgy that we have. We first talked about the call to worship, which isn't a prayer. It is God calling us to himself, to come before him and worship him. And think about that. That's a pretty awesome thing that God would say, come worship me. Come to me. And so our response, we said, was praise and prayer. That first prayer is the invocation, where we're invoking God's name. What are we asking? We're asking for help. We need help in order to worship God aright. So we are asking for help in the invocation.

Our second prayer is the pastoral prayer. And I'm just going to read what Terry Johnson says because I think it's very succinct and clear. He says, the pastoral prayer is a prayer of confession of sin, thanksgiving for pardon, and intercession. And he explains the intercession is five-fold. We pray for the civil authorities, we pray for Christian ministry and mission, we pray for the salvation of all men, we pray for the sanctification of the saints, and we pray for the afflicted. So that's what we're supposed to be covering in the pastoral prayer, or what Mike's supposed to be covering in the pastoral prayer.

But then we have a prayer of thanksgiving. We said that we come to worship God with thanksgiving. Well, after our offertory, where we're worshiping God by giving a portion of His good gifts to us, we're thanking Him for the temporal and the mercy that He gives us, the grace that He gives us. We're being thankful to God in that prayer. It may be short, but that's to show God that we are thankful for His goodness and kindness to us. And then, as we approach the preaching of the Word, we have the prayer of the illumination because we're coming in submission to Him, we have recognized throughout that in order to worship God aright, we need to worship Him in spirit and in

truth. We have to worship Him through our mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. We're worshiping Him with the help of the Holy Spirit. So we need God's help that we've invoked Him to come and help us. We're going to worship Him. We're going to pray to Him. through our mediator, Jesus. And we need help to do that.

So Mack is again praying for help to help him proclaim and explain and apply the word to us. And we're also praying that he would help us to hear it and apply it in our lives. And then we talked about the benediction. Again, that's not a prayer. That is a wonderful thing. It is God proclaiming a blessing on his people as we leave. That's a wonderful thing.

So that's what we talked about in prayer. And then two weeks ago, we talked about reading God's word. Again, we said that we needed to do it, the reading of the word was we needed the mediator of the Lord Jesus Christ to help us. We needed the Holy Spirit help to enlighten us. We also looked at question 155, a larger catechism, of how is the word made effectual? And in that it says, the Spirit of God make us the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves and drawing them unto Christ, of conforming them to His image and subduing them to His will. of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions, of building them up in grace, and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

We looked at Hebrews 4.12. where we read the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joint and of marrow, and discerning thoughts and intentions of the heart. We see the power of the Word of God. And so as we read, we need to understand the Word of God is very powerful. It's powerful, it's effective unto salvation. We learn, why should we read? Well, we read because it is effectual salvation. We read God's Word because it directs us how we may glorify and enjoy Him. It's saving and it's sanctifying.

We also talked about how in worship, worship is like a conversation. God calls us, we respond. Well, here is the response of God through the reading of His Word. He's bringing His Word, telling us who He is, what He does, and what He wants from us. We do that. It carries over into the preaching. They're very similar. Reading and preaching are similar, but they're different.

We also read God's Word because we see it being an example throughout the Bible in worship. We saw it in Exodus 24 where Moses on Mount Sinai read the Word to the people. of Israel. We saw it in Nehemiah where Ezra read the law to the people. And then we saw it wherein Jesus went into the synagogue and he read the word. We talked about how it should be read. The confession says to read it with godly fear. And the catechism gives us a lot of what that means with a high and reverent esteem, with a persuasion that they're the very word of God. goes on and how to do that. We said we need to read substantial sections. You may go to some churches and they'll read a little paragraph, maybe a memory verse type thing. That's not significant enough. We need to have sections that we can see what is the context that we're reading. of that chapter. We need it explained to us. It's not a sermon, but we do need to get a sense of what the Bible is saying in that section of Scripture. We also want to do it continuously. We talked about how we started in Genesis and we're into Psalms and Proverbs. We started in Matthew and we're in Acts now, aren't we? So we're reading continually through God's Word so we get the flow of Scripture. We get the whole counsel of God. We're not hiding anything from ourselves. We're seeing everything God would say to us.

Terry Johnson points to 1 Timothy 4.13. Paul tells Timothy, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, or preaching, and teaching. So we see it's commanded that Paul commanded his protege as he as he started churches and led them, that they should read the scriptures. So that's why we do it.

We also talked about who should read it. We said because, or I said because, that the word of God is powerful and it is authoritative. It is, it should be done by someone who is gifted and called. and that the Lord Jesus Christ gave gifts to the church. And so from that we derive that the minister, the teaching elder, the ruling elders are those who are called to read the word of God in worship. Everybody should be reading it on their own. We do believe in the priesthood of believers and we should all be reading your Bible, but in worship, as it's being proclaimed to the congregation, it's those who are called to that office. So we think it's official, and so we also make an exception for like Hunter who is studying for the gospel ministry. Those who are preparing for gospel ministry are allowed to do that because we want them to learn how to do that, and there's a purpose behind it.

Okay, so that gets us to today where we're gonna talk about the preached word. Again, I'm kinda following that same question of why do we preach the word? Why do we, we've read it, why do we need to preach it? We've even given a sense of it, why do we preach it?

Well, one reason is because of the example and command of scripture. And this is just a small section, I cut out a few because I thought I'd be overwhelming you. But Matthew three, verses one and two, we read that in those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. So we see John the Baptist preaching.

And then in Mark 139 we read, and he, Jesus, went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. So John the Baptist preached and Jesus preached.

And then in Acts 5.42, We read that every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease to teaching and preaching that Christ is Jesus. So the apostles, the disciples, went about preaching.

And then in Acts 6-2, we see where they commissioned deacons. One of the reasons they commissioned deacons was that, and the 12 summoned the full number of the disciples and said, it is not right that we should give up the preaching of the word to serve tables. They thought ministering and serving tables to the widows and the poor was important, but they saw that they were called to a different work. that was more important for them to do, and that was to preach the Word.

And then 2 Timothy 4-2, Paul commands Timothy, preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove rebuke and exhort with complete patience and teaching. So we see an example of what Jesus, the disciples, John the Baptist, and Paul did. We see Paul commanding Timothy to preach the word.

So we read in the larger catechism 155 again, How is the Word made effectual to salvation? This is probably the most important reason we preach, is that the Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the

Word in effectual means, of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners, of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ, of conforming them to His image, and subduing them to His will, of strengthening them against temptations and corruptions, of building them up in grace and establishing their hearts in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

So we have two reasons given to us. The first is preaching is the means of grace, but it's a means of evangelism. Preaching is evangelism. Preaching is a means to convince and convert sinners. We preach in public worship to save sinners. We preach about the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, there are many churches that do different things trying to do evangelism. We read in the Bible in the New Testament that when they wanted to make disciples, they preached. Preaching is the means of evangelism. That's why we preach.

We read in Romans 10, 14. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. But they have not all obeyed the gospel, For Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what He has heard from us? So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ. So we need to send preachers.

In 1 Corinthians 1, 20-25, we read, Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where's the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of the world, the world did not know God through wisdom. It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God, for the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

You know, Paul talked to the Corinthians. They said, y'all, you're not a very good preacher. That's what they told him. This is what he's talking about to them. He says, I'm not preaching in the wisdom of man. I'm preaching Christ crucified. Yes, that's foolishness to man, but it's what brings salvation, is preaching of the word.

So we see preaching is evangelism, but also preaching is fundamental to sanctification. It's the primary means of gathering and perfecting the elect where Christ reigns, restrains, and defends His people. Romans 1, 16 and 17 says, For it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So as we grow in our faith, we learn how to live by faith, as we hear the word of God that is effectual for salvation. In Ephesians 4, as, among you, And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part working properly makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

He gave us apostles and prophets, evangelists and shepherds and teachers to equip the saints, to build us up in love. That's why we need preaching, to be built up in love and be equipped for ministry.

So what is preaching? Our friend Zach Bird down in Raymond, he 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. He's saying that it is the work, it is an act of the exalted Christ through His commissioned officers. It's the Word of God coming to us through the preacher. It is the Word of God coming to us as a means of grace communicated to His particular people.

Jonathan Landry Cruz similarly says, by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus speaks through His ordained servant, saving sinners by the spoken word to the glory of God. He says, think about that for a minute. I'm saying that in true preaching, Jesus Christ himself is the one who is actually speaking. If that is true, Can you imagine cutting the sermon short by 15 or 20 minutes or demanding an 18-minute cap? Can you imagine pulling out your smartphone and scrolling through social media to help the time go by? Can you imagine doing anything besides giving your full and undivided attention to the King of kings and the Lord of lords who is coming to your presence and is speaking directly to you

It might sound too miraculous, but this is truly what is going on during this portion of the worship service.

Thus, it is the preach word that consecrates or sets apart a people for God himself. It is the preaching of God's word through the power of the Holy Spirit that calls people out of their sins into salvation in Jesus Christ alone. Do you realize when we're in here and Mac gets up there to preach, it's not Mac talking to us, it is God talking to us. As long as he's bringing God's word to us, it is Christ's words and not Mac's words. That is amazing. So they're saying that it's the word of Christ coming to us.

Let's look at some passages that confirm that. In Ephesians 2, 17, Paul says, he, Christ, came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. Jesus never went to Ephesus, did he? What Paul's telling us is that as he preached Christ to them, it was Christ preaching himself. It was his word coming. It wasn't Paul's word. Paul was just the messenger. He was just the mouthpiece.

And then in 1 Peter 4, we read, whoever speaks as one who speaks the oracles of God. That's what the preacher is doing. The preacher is speaking the oracles of God to us. So we need to listen. Zach goes on and talks about, in his paper I read, that God is glorified not by the skill and work of the preacher, but through Jesus Christ. It's not the preacher's skill or ability or performance that brings God's Word to us. It's his faithfulness to give us God's Word with whatever skill that God has given him.

Al Muller wrote in a book for James Montgomery Boyce, it was called Give Praise to God, a Vision for Reforming Worship. He says, music is not the central act of Christian worship, nor is evangelism, nor even the ordinances or sacraments. The heart of Christian worship is the authentic preaching of the Word of God. Expository preaching is central, irreducible, and non-negotiable to the Bible's mission of authentic worship that pleases God.

He also says, expository preaching begins in the preacher's determination to present and explain the text of the Bible to his congregation. An application of biblical truth is necessary is a necessary task of expository preaching, but application must follow the diligent and disciplined task of explaining the text.

So what do we expect out of the preacher? We want him to explain the text. Tell us what the word says. Explain it to us. What did Paul mean by that when he was writing it? What does it mean? What is Christ telling us? And then it needs to be applied. What does that mean for me? How does that affect my life?

So, T.L. Parker, commenting on Calvin's work, says similarly, Expository preaching consists in the explanation and the application of a passage of Scripture. He says, without explanation it is not expository, and without application it's not preaching. So it can't be preaching unless it's applied to us. What does this mean for my life? Okay, I've heard God's Word, but how does that affect me? If you don't do that, you're not preaching. Explaining God's Word is not expository.

Well, expository preaching demands, requires exegesis. Exegesis is the critical explanation or interpretation of a text. That takes time. It takes time, energy, intellectual activity to actually understand the meaning of a text. So that's why we send preachers to seminary, to learn Hebrew and Greek. That's why we want them to have study times. We gave Michael a week off for study to help him. It wasn't necessarily a study for this particular sermon series. It was to broaden his understanding of God's Word and his knowledge base so that when he goes into a study each week to prepare, he can understand it through the original languages. He can read commentaries. He considers it and thinks about it. He applies it to his life.

So it affects him before he comes and proclaims it to us. And that's what we expect him to do, and he does. And we want him to do that, because how else can you preach unless it's been preached to yourself?

Well, all of this recurring thing is the preacher must depend on Christ and the Holy Spirit. He can't go in there and do it of his own accord. You've seen gifted men, they can come up here and they're gifted in public speaking and they can fake it. You know, they may be really good. But that's not what brings power. What brings power to the word preached is the Holy Spirit. when we come through Christ. And the Holy Spirit should work. That's where the power comes from.

Zach Bird says, the language of a poor sermon reflects more on the heart of the preacher than the sermon itself. I've heard men say they left the pulpit and thought that's the worst sermon I ever heard. And two months later, somebody came and said, I was saved under that sermon. It doesn't matter, even if it seems poor to the man. It may seem poor to you, but that's not the power. The power is in the Holy Spirit working through it.

It's true preaching if the preacher is accurately bringing God's word before you and explaining it. He may be stumbling, he may be bumbling like I am right now, but it's God working through Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit.

He says, the preacher has no need to repent. Well, let me back up. He says, Jesus Christ never preached a poor sermon in his humiliation or in his exaltation. The preacher has no need to repent of a sermon, for Christ himself has spoken. Christ himself. Think about it, he's talking about Jesus never preached a poor sermon in his exaltation. What does he mean there? He's exalted right now. It says he preaches through this morning Mack or Hunter or Guy Waters or Chad. It's Christ preaching, not the man.

We are too often man-centered and we give men credit. It is not man. It's the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. So that goes on to say, the preacher should never enter and exit the pulpit with the expectation... wait a minute, excuse me. The preacher should enter and exit the pulpit with the expectation that Christ will work through the least gifted of preachers.

To impress this upon our hearts, we must consistently, constantly look to Jesus to be reminded of the one who has graciously committed this work to men has not conditioned the results upon the performance of men. It's not the performance of men. It's the work of the Holy Spirit. This should lead us to a total dependence upon Christ and His Spirit. It should also lead us to not be so critical of preachers.

As with the reading the word, It's also good that we preach through the Bible. That's why we preach in the morning. We're preaching through Peter. In the evening, we're preaching through Zephaniah. We're trying to get the whole counsel of God. We want to hear all that God has to say to us, and not just the portions we think are favorite or easy to preach. We want to hear all of it. We want Christ to anoint the preaching and bring it with power.

Al Mohler says, the authentic expository preaching is marked by three distinct marks or characteristics, authority, reverence, and centrality. Expository preaching is authoritative because it stands upon the very authority of the Bible as the Word of God. Such preaching requires and reinforces a sense of reverent expectation on the part of God's people. Finally, expository preaching demands the central place in Christian worship and is respected as the event through which the living God speaks to His people.

The preached word has authority. We should receive it with reverence. and it should be the central part of our worship. So how should we hear this word that's preached? Well, larger catechism, question 1-6, he gives us that answer. It's a wonderful thing about the Westminster divines. They answered every question we could have. What is required of those that hear the word preached? It is required of those that hear the word preached that they attend upon it with diligence, preparation, and prayer. examine what they hear by the scriptures, receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind as the Word of God, meditate and confer of it, hide it in their hearts, and bring forth the fruit of it in their lives." I probably should have broken down each of those phrases, and we just did a study on it, but that would have taken too much time, and so I didn't.

As we hear about it, we're supposed to listen with diligence, preparation, and prayer. Do you prepare for hearing the God's Word? Do you pray for Mac? Do we examine, do we go home and think about, now what he preached, is that

consistent with Scripture? We're not to just be a lemming and take whatever you hear and believe it. We're not a cult. We want to be like the Bereans. We're not judging, we're not sitting over the preached word, but we are sitting under it. And we're going, now wait, how does this fit in with what the Bible says now as I understand it? Do I understand it correctly? Is he telling me the truth? It has no authority unless it's true. So we are to examine it.

But we're also to receive it. We're supposed to receive the truth with faith, love, meekness, and readiness of mind. as if it's the Word of God, because that's exactly what it is. It is the Word of God. We also... there's something about hearing. The common refrain in the Old and New Testament is to hear. In Deuteronomy 6.3, we hear the Shema, hear O Israel. And then in 1 Peter 1.25, let me find that. But the word of the Lord remains forever, and this word is the good news that was preached to you." We should hear it. I'm not sure where I got that from. Hebrews 3-7. Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts," as in rebellion. God continually tells us to hear. Hear, hear, hear. So we need to listen. We need to hear the Word.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ. Romans 10, 17 again. Van Dyck's horn says, but it's also important how we listen to preaching. We must listen in a conscientious way, that is, a careful, conscientious manner. We need to listen obediently, not being hearers only, but doers of the word, and our hearing will only benefit us if it is united in faith. We need to listen consciously, we want to be doers, and we can only do that united in faith, trusting in Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 66 says, all these things in my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look, he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. Do we tremble at God's word? Do we understand that the creator of all things The God of Gods, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings is speaking to us when we come here and hear the preaching of the Word. That's pretty amazing. Do we tremble at God's Word? Do we take it seriously?

Well, if we're going to benefit from preaching, we need to hear, but we need to love preaching. As a congregation, we need to love the preaching of the Word, and we need to expect that we're going to hear it, that we're going to hear the Word of Christ. We have a faithful minister who brings us the Word faithfully week in and week out. It's here. Do we prepare ourselves to hear and to apply? Do you pray for Mac? Do you pray for yourself? I don't know about you, I have a hard time paying attention. I'll hear something he says and next thing I know I'm across the country somewhere doing something, following some rabbit trail I got lost on and then I have to bring myself back and I've missed who knows how long. It's not easy to listen and to hear in a conscientious way. It's hard to listen diligently for 20 or 30 minutes. That's not easy, especially when we're used to cell phones and this and reading little quips and quotes. It takes effort. I fail at it every week. And I repent and ask God to help me every week. Because I don't do it very well. And I'm sure I'm not the only one in here that struggles.

So we need to pray for the preacher that he has had a good study week. You know what? Things happen in his life. I bet he gets sick children. I bet sometimes his wife had a bad day. And he may get distracted by things in his life. He may have had a lot of calls out to go visit people that had problems in their life, and he gets weighed down with the problems of the congregation. And that can distract him from his study and preparation. So we need to pray for him that he can focus when he's there, that he can understand the text. He can't understand it on his own. He needs the help of the Holy Spirit. And then he needs help up there. It's scary climbing up in there and standing behind that pulpit and knowing that you're about to preach God's Word to these people. That's a scary thing. That's heavy. We

need to pray for him that as he does that, we don't want him getting too comfortable, but we want him to be bold. So we need to pray for him that.

We need to pray for ourselves that we would hear and that we would have understanding. There again, we're relying on our mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of God's elect. In the invocation, we're praying for God's Holy Spirit to come down with us and help us. We need to prepare better, I do. And then we need the desire to repent of our sins and that we might see the beauty of Christ and that we might be encouraged to live a more holy life. It's easy to live as a Christian in this society, but are we living for Christ?

Jonathan Cruz says, this means we must strive to hear Jesus when we listen to the preacher speaking. We are not claiming that a preacher de facto of his office preaches the very words of God every time he enters the pulpit. But scripture tells us that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the scriptures of old illuminates the preachers of today and those who hear them. It is when the Holy Spirit is at work that we will receive Christ himself. We need the Holy Spirit, and we need Jesus if we're going to worship Him in spirit and truth. So let's pray as we get prepared to hear God's Word proclaimed to us.

Father, we do thank you again for the Lord's Day. We thank you that you give us a day of rest and worship that we can rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh Lord God, I thank you for this people and for this church. I thank you for Max Strawbridge being our pastor. I pray for him that this morning that you would have encouraged him this week that he has come prepared. and strengthened by the Holy Spirit to come before us to proclaim Christ to us. Oh, Lord God, I pray that you would help him through that as he does this difficult task. Oh, Lord God, I pray for us that we would have ears to hear and hearts to understand. Oh, Lord God, that we might love the Lord Jesus Christ more and that we would see that as we love one another more. In Jesus' name, amen.