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using the QR code!*

Understanding Worship: How God Makes Us Christian

CLASS 6: How Our Worship Matures, pt. 1

What “pillars” in Scripture influence Christian liturgical *elements*?

How is the liturgy evangelistic?

How is the liturgy formational?

How do liturgical forms affirm or contradict a church’s theology?

What does it mean for God to be simple? And for the liturgy to be simple?

How is excellence and moderation evidenced in the liturgy?

How does ritual affirm our theology?

Glossary of terms:

Worship

Worship includes those acts performed out of duty in relation and response to God's inherent, infinite worth. From the Old English word meaning "worth ship"—the ascription of worth to someone or something. The word is used by Bible translators for the Hebrew words *shachah* (to bow) and *abad* (to serve), and the Greek words *proskuneo* (to kiss a master), *sebomai* (to serve a superior), *latreuo* (to wait upon menially). Since the definition of serving and worship are so closely tied, this is why the church has historically called the corporate gathering of the saints as a *service of worship*.

Liturgy

The liturgy is the ordered acts of worship within a public worship service. From the Greek word *leitourgia*, a compound of *leitos* (public) and *ergon* (work)—meaning the public work (or service) of the people.

Ritual

Similar (but not quite synonymous) to the word liturgy, ritual is the repetition of an order/sequence of activities. Thus, the liturgy is the order of worship acts, but the act of repeating those acts every Sunday is a ritual.

Liturgical Elements

Acts of regular corporate worship prescribed by God in the Bible. Includes: Reading Scripture, confession of sin, prayer, music-making, giving of tithes and offerings, preaching and hearing of the Word, sacrament of baptism, sacrament of communion.

Liturgical Forms

The modes of executing liturgical elements—modes not prescribed by God and left to the prudence of the ordained church officers to determine. For example, prayer is an element of public worship prescribed in the Scriptures—yet the Scriptures don't prescribe how prayer must be executed. Could it include everyone praying in unison a printed prayer, or a minister praying from a prayer he wrote down, or a minister prayer extemporaneously, or a time of corporate extemporaneous prayer where anyone can pray audibly? All of these are *forms* of prayer.

Liturgical Circumstances

Worship-adjacent situations or decisions that lack inherent moral qualities that are "common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence" (WCF 21.6). These might include things like the time of service, the length of the service, or choices about printing bulletins or projecting on screens, or using sound systems, etc.

Regulative Principle of Worship

A partial theology of liturgy which holds that God provides liturgical guidance in the Scriptures and that the Christian liturgy ought to include only those elements he prescribes. Leaders' faithful application

of this would consider the entire Bible for theological prescriptions and principles to guide the church's execution of the liturgy.

Normative Principle of Worship

A partial theology of liturgy (common to Lutherans and many broadly evangelical churches) which holds that God only provides liturgical guidance in the Scriptures when he specifically prohibits worship acts. Without a prohibition, God speaks in "silence" and permits all other "heartfelt, well intentioned" worship acts.

Mimetic

The quality or properties of imitating something. I.e. Music can't be happy, because music isn't alive. However, because our personal happiness might accompany energetic activity, when we hear pleasant, energetic music, we hear that music as mimicking our state of happiness.

Ex opere operato

The Roman Catholic doctrine meaning "by the work worked"—meaning that a spiritual effect (i.e. inner sanctification) is accomplished by the work of a priest in the liturgy.

Liturgical theology

Combining the words theology and liturgy brings us to apply doctrine to our acts. In this case, our knowledge of how God appointed corporate worship as his means to specially give of himself to his people and how he appointed his ordained leaders to formally order and execute that which occurs in public worship (the liturgy). That theology is subsequently applied by their choice of forms. A codified Reformed theology of liturgy:

God, in the Scriptures, institutes, defines, and regulates his worship. He ordinarily and principally sanctifies his people by the clerical ministry of the Word throughout the liturgy. Attentive to liberty of conscience, local church governments are to intentionally shepherd their congregations' worship by carefully overseeing and executing the liturgy. In light of Christ's fulfilment of the Law, officers first look to the New Testament for prescribed liturgical elements. Since God reveals himself in the entire Scriptures, they also look to both the Old and New Testaments for further discernment of liturgical circumstances. Thus equipped with God's full revelation, they determine liturgical forms and circumstances and extra-liturgical means to guide their local congregations toward mature worship—knowing that liturgy does not transmit faith and fully relying on God's Spirit to work true maturity in individuals' hearts.

John Calvin

Where is our recognition of God if our minds be fixed upon the splendor of our apparel? For many so enslave all their senses to delights that the mind lies overwhelmed. Many are so delighted with marble, gold, and pictures that they become marble, they turn, as it were, into metals and are like painted figures. The smell of the kitchen or the sweetness of its odors so stupefies others that they are unable to smell anything spiritual....Therefore, even though the freedom of believers in external matters is not to be restricted to a fixed formula, yet it is surely subject to this law: to indulge oneself as little as possible; But, on the contrary, with unflagging effort of mind ... diligently to guard against turning helps into hindrances. (*ICR*, book 3, chapter 10)