

Divine Service Commentary (by Reverend John T. Pless Follows)
Lutheran Worship hymnal (1982), page 158.

Commentary I: Introduction

St. John 4:20-26, Hebrew 8:1-6

The high and holy worship of God is faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is created and sustained by God's Service to us. In the Divine Service, the Lord comes to us in His Word and Sacrament to bless and enliven us with his gifts. This service is not something we do for God, but His service to us to be received in faith. The "liturgy" is God's work. He gives, we receive.

Commentary II: Hymn of Invocation

1 Kings 8:27-30

From God's Word, we know that wherever God puts His Name, there He is to bless. In the Old Testament, the Temple was the place where God graciously caused His Name to be present.

St. Matthew 28:18-20

God has put His Name-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on us in Holy Baptism. The Divine Service begins "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Every Divine Service is for the hallowing of the Lord's Name, which the Small Catechism reminds us is done "When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as the children of God, also lead a holy life according to it."

Commentary III: Confession and Absolution

1 John 1: 8-10

It is only through the forgiveness of sins that we enter into the life of heaven. To confess our sins is to speak the truth about our lives. God seeks that truth in the heart and on the lips. To confess our sin is to say "Amen" to God's just verdict that we have sinned against Him and so deserve only death and hell.

St. John 20:19-23

The truth of our sinfulness is answered by the truth of God's forgiveness for the sake of the suffering and death of His Son. From the lips of a man "called and ordained" as a servant of the Word, we hear God Himself speaking absolution, that is, the forgiveness of sins. To that forgiveness, faith says "Amen," that is "Truth." "Amen" is the great word of worship; it indicates that the gift has been received.

Commentary IV: Introit

Psalm 100

Having received the Lord's forgiveness, we are glad to enter in to His courts with praise and thanksgiving. This entrance is made in the Introit with the Lord's own words, most often drawn from the Psalms.

Commentary V: Kyrie, Hymn of Praise

St. Mark 10:49

Kyrie Eleison is a Greek phrase meaning "Lord, have mercy." In the Kyrie we come before

the King of Mercy with the prayer that was on the lips of Blind Bartimaeus, whom Jesus healed. We approach our Merciful Savior and King as citizens of heaven, seeking His mercy for our salvation, the peace of the whole world, the well-being of His Church, our Worship, and our everlasting defense.

St. Luke 2:14, Revelation 5:11-14

The Lord to whom we cry for mercy is the Savior who has come to us in the flesh. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth" echoes the hymn that the high angels of God sang to the shepherds at Bethlehem. In this hymn we acclaim and extol the Son of God who humbled Himself to be our Brother and now reigns over us as Savior from the right hand of His Father. An alternate to this hymn is "This is the Feast of Victory" taken from the Book of Revelation. This hymn proclaims the victory of the Lamb who was crucified for us. It is appropriately used at Easter.

Commentary VI: Salutation, Collect of the Day

II Timothy 4:22

The pastor stands in the congregation as Christ's servant. The vestments he wears indicated that he is not speaking on his own, but as one sent and authorized to represent Christ Jesus. As the authorized representative of the Lord he says "Lord be with you." The congregation responds "And also with you." Pastor and congregation are bound together in this salutation, or greeting as the pastor prays the Collect of the Day on behalf of the gathered congregation.

Philippians 4:6

The Collect is a short prayer that "collects" in one Short petition all it is that we are asking God to do for us on the basis of the Word which we are about to hear, read and preached.

Commentary VII: Old Testament Reading, Gradual, Epistle, Verse, Holy Gospel, Hymn of the Day, Sermon

Ephesians 4:11, Colossians 3:16, St. John 6:63, St. Luke 10:16

In Ephesians 4, the Apostle Paul tells us that the Ascended Christ gave gifts to His church: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Pastor-Teachers. These gifts are made manifest in the Divine Service as we hear God's Word read and proclaimed. First, we hear from a Prophet in the words of the Old Testament Reading. After the Deacon reads the Scripture, he proclaims "this is the Word of the Lord." The Lord's Word is embraced by the congregation's response of thanksgiving: "Thanks be to God." In this way, the church confesses Holy Scripture for what it is-the Word of God. The Gradual, selected verses of Scripture, is sung by the congregation. The Gradual is a "bridge of praise" that links the Old Testament with the New Testament. Second, we hear from an Apostle in the words of a New Testament Epistle. From the Apostle we are given the truth that is in Jesus for our faith and life. The "Alleluia Verse" is taken from St. John, Chapter Six. This Verse is our anticipation of the Lord who comes to us in His words, words which are spirit and life. Third, we hear from an Evangelist in the words of the Holy Gospel. In the words of the Evangelist we are given the Word of Life, Jesus Christ. The congregation acknowledges the Lord's presence in the His Gospel by standing and extolling His glory and praising Him. The praise continues in the Hymn of Day. As the Word of God dwells in us it calls forth songs of faith and love. This hymn reflects the particular them of Scripture Readings which we have heard. Fourth, in continuity with the Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists, our Pastor stand in our midst to deliver the Lord's Law

and Gospel in the sermon. He is God's mouth for the congregation as through him the Good Shepherd's voice sounds forth to call, gather, and enlighten His flock.

Commentary VIII: Nicene Creed

St. Matthew 10:32-33, Philippians 2:11

Having heard the Word of God, we confess our faith in His Name. The creed is our saying back to God what He has first said to us. In the Nicene Creed, we acclaim the truth of the Triune God and His work of salvation accomplished for us in His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.

The Ecumenical Creeds

Commentary IX: The Prayer of the Church

1 Timothy 2:1-6

God's Word is always primary in worship. We speak only as we are spoken to. Gathered in Jesus' name, we bring the petitions and thanksgivings before Him that grow out of His Word. This prayer is called the Prayers of the Church for in the royal Priesthood of All Believers does its priestly work of making "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings" for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way."

Commentary X: Offering

Psalm 116:12-14, 17-19

Having received from the generosity of the Father who is the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gifts, we now give of the gifts that we have been given. The offering is accompanied with and offertory from Psalm 116 which teaches us that the highest offering is simply to receive, in faith, the cup of salvation from the Lord's hand.

Commentary XI: Preface, Sanctus, Prayer, Our Father

Lamentations 3:41, St. Luke 01:28, Isaiah 6:3, St. Mark 11:9-10

Drawn toward the gifts of Jesus' body and blood, our hearts are lifted up in thanksgiving and praise as we anticipate the reception of the gifts that carry with them our redemption. The Sanctus brings together the song of heaven's angels in adoration of the Holy three-In-One and the acclamations of Palm Sunday: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." In the prayer, we give thanks to the Lord for the redemption which He has secured for us by His cross; we ask Him to prepare us to receive that redemption in living and joyful faith. The Our Father, the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples to pray, is the "table prayer" with which we come to the Lord's Table.

The Lord's Prayer

Commentary XII: Consecration, Pax domini, Agnus Dei, Distribution

1 Corinthians 11:23-26, St. John 20:21, St. John 1:29

The pastor speaks the Lord's own words; these words give and bestow what they declare, the Body and Blood of Christ. The Sacrament of Jesus' Body and Blood is the vehicle of peace. Showing them His wounds, the Risen Lord declared His peace to His disciples on Easter Evening. That same peace is given us with the Lord's body and Blood. By sharing the

"peace of the Lord" with each other, we lay aside all that stands in contradiction of the Lord's testament. With the words of John the Baptist, the Agnus Dei confessed the mercy and peace that we receive from the lamb of God in His Supper. We come to the Lord's Table hungry and thirsty and He feeds us with His Body and refreshes us with His Blood. It is the Lord's Supper. As Luther reminds us "Our Lord is at one and the same time chef, cook, butler, host, and food."

Fellowship in the Lord's Supper
The Sacrament of the Altar

Reflections on the Appropriate Vessels for Consecrating and Distributing the Precious Blood of Christ THE LORDS SUPPER Vol. IV Num 1 Epiphany/January 1995

Chalice (Common Cup) vs Individual Cups

Commentary XIII: Post-Communion Cantic, Prayer

St. Luke 2:29-32, 1 Chronicles 16:8-10

Having received the Lord's Body and blood for our salvation, like Simeon who held in his arms the Savior of the world, we go in peace and joy singing Simeon's Song from St. Luke, Chapter 2. Another song of thanksgiving based on 1 Chronicles 16:8-10 may be used instead. Before we leave the Lord's Table, we give thanks, asking that the salutary gift of Jesus' Body and Blood would have its way in our lives, strengthening us in faith toward God and fervent love toward one another. The Sacrament draw us outside of ourselves to live in Christ by faith and in the neighbor by love, to paraphrase Luther.

Commentary XIV: Benediction, Hymn

Numbers 6:22-27, Romans 12:1-2

The Name of the Lord is the beginning and the end of the Divine Service. We are now marked with the Lord's Name in the Benediction-that word of God's blessing from Numbers 6 in which He favors us with His grace and peace. With the Lord's Name given us in Holy Baptism we were drawn together. Now with that same Name, He sends us back into the world, to the places of our various callings to live by the mercy we have received as living sacrifices to the praise of His glory and the good of our neighbor.

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