

## *Our Worship: Why do we do what we do?*

Why do we do what we do when we gather as a congregation of Christ each Lord's Day?

I'm not asking why we gather to worship the Lord, or even why we meet on Sunday. I'm asking why we *worship* in the way that we worship – and why we worship differently than others worship.

It's important that we know. If we don't understand why we do what we do, then one of two things must be true: either we're worshipping this way simply because we've always done it this way – that is, because of *tradition* – or we *simply don't care* how we worship.

Neither option is healthy.

A major reason for the Reformation was the Roman Catholic reliance on tradition, in which they rested on the wisdom of men rather than seeking the cause of all that they did in Scripture alone. If we allow the practice of the past *alone* to dictate our worship, we are no different. To follow that course is to dethrone God in favor of *Tradition*, or *History*, or *Feelings*.

Nor are we in better shape when we don't care how the Church worships, for this attitude demonstrates a lack of concern for God, whom we worship. Let's say I ask you to supervise the construction of my house. If the carpenters, plumbers and electricians ask how you want it built, and you respond by shrugging and saying, "Whatever – just do it" ... well, that's going to say something to me about how much I mean to you, isn't it? And so too when we refuse to care about the calling God has given us to worship.

Yes, we must know why we do what we do when we gather in this place. We must understand that ours is a task given by God, directed by God, and aimed at God – first, last and always.

To that end, I've written the following (which originally appeared as pastor's pages in our weekly bulletin) to help us consider the worship of Christ's Church. First, we need to look at the *nature* of worship – what it is that we come here to do. Then we're going to walk through the liturgy, step-by-step, asking of each element *what* we are doing and *why* we do it. Finally, we will look at some matters that distinguish our worship

Let me emphasize that this is *not* a matter for "the other guy." *I myself* need to study worship and know how to answer visitors who question what we do. "Well of course," you might say. "You're the pastor." True. But I also need to know it simply because I'm a Christian, called to gather with God's people for worship.

Our youngest children also need to study it, so they will know why we come here. So do our teenagers, to keep them from being led astray

# What is Worship

*... and why do we worship the way we do?*

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by folks talking about “felt needs” – or by folks who seek nothing more than to entertain. And so must our adults study these matters, lest we lose our passion and begin to treat worship like we treat the day-to-day chores that fill so much of our week.

God’s honor is at stake. Our spiritual health, too, hangs in the balance.

Let us open our Bibles, then, and ask: *Why do we do what we do when we draw together before the Lord?*

## *What Is Christian Worship?*

So then – *what* are we doing when we come together as the Church each Sunday morning and evening?

Notice something: I’ve changed the question!

In the first section, I asked *why* we do what we do in worship. But before we can answer *why* we worship God in a certain way, we need to know something far more basic: *What is worship?*

At its most basic, worship is the honor given by a lesser being to a greater being. Every culture has some form of worship. In some, the people pay homage to nature for its superior power; in others, to the king for his surpassing wisdom. The greedy worship gold for its ability to influence their world, much as ancient cultures worshipped the sun and the rain for making their crops grow.

In this sense, worship is the recognition and confession of greatness by one who is inferior.

But while there are similarities, Christian worship is essentially different. For we worship One who is infinitely superior, yet we do not worship *selfishly*, seeking only our benefit (be it weather or wealth or peace). Instead, we worship the God who *calls* us to worship Him *interactively*, and we worship Him in *love*.

You see, Christian worship is a *dialogue* – a divine *conversation*, if you will, between God and His people.

Others seek to approach their gods on their own terms, hoping somehow to make themselves *worthy* of their god’s favor. But we come in response to the true God’s invitation, aware that His call is gracious – rooted in a love we could never earn, which is based on nothing we have done (Deut. 7:6 ff.).

Relying on God’s grace, we come as dependent creatures who are called to praise our omnipotent Maker (Psalm 148). We come as those redeemed from their sins, eager to worship the Redeemer who provided peace (Heb. 10:19-22). We come as paupers made to be priests; commoners who have been chosen; dwellers of darkness brought into the light to serve God (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Indeed, we come as the very bride of Christ (Eph. 5:31-32), eager to glorify and thank our Husband, who has received us despite our unfaithfulness (Hos. 2:16-23).

We come not as spectators, but as *participants* in the divine dialogue. God calls us to worship, and we receive that call with prayer for His blessing. We confess that our hope lies in Him, and He responds by declaring a blessing upon us, which we receive with a song of praise. So does the conversation move throughout our worship – God speaking by His Word and His prophet, and His people responding in turn.

As a result, several things happen in our service of worship.

First and foremost, if our worship is true, Christian worship, God is glorified. That's why we sing songs of *praise*. It's why we conclude our confession with a song *glorifying* God. It's why we conclude our worship by singing a *doxology* – a *word* (logos) testifying to God's *glory* (doxa).

Along with this, God's people are strengthened; the sheep of Christ are fed. It is by the preaching that God's people hear the voice of Christ (Rom. 10:14-15) – the voice of our *Shepherd* (John 10:14-16) – which is the abiding Word of God (1 Pet. 1:22-25). In this way, we are matured and equipped for service through the pastor-teachers God has given (Eph. 4:11-16), even as we encourage and build *each other* through our worship (Heb. 13:25).

And such a service – by which God is glorified and His people are built up – cannot help but to *delight* the Lord our God! And so we meet to worship in answer to God's call by Psalm 149: "Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise in the assembly of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. ... For the Lord takes delight in His people; He crowns the humble with salvation!"

God has so richly blessed us through Christ, and in response, we seek to please Him with our worship.

Thus, the worship of the Church. It is an *interaction* between the one, true, sovereign God and His people, called and redeemed in Christ. It is a *divine dialogue*, in which God is glorified, we His people are built up and encouraged, and our Lord takes delight in His people.

But we've still said little about the *actual act* of worship. How should this dialogue *look*? Says who?

Knowing what worship is *in concept*, then, is not enough. We need an objective standard or two that we can use to *evaluate* worship. In the next section, then, let us seek a few standards!

## *Seeking a Standard to Evaluate Worship*

*It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name,  
O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning  
and your faithfulness at night to the music of the ten-stringed lyre  
and the melody of the harp – Ps. 92:1-3.*

To worship the Lord is an amazing thing.

As we saw in the last section, to worship the Lord is to enter into a gracious dialogue with the One who made us, chose us, redeemed us and promises ever to bless us. Christian worship is a beautiful act that glorifies God, strengthens His people, and delights our Redeemer.

What a blessing to partake of such a powerful act!

And more than a blessing – to worship is a *necessity*! How often the Lord *commands* His people to sing to God and bless Him (Psalm 96); to worship and serve Him with thanksgiving and gladness (Psalm 100); to glorify His name (Psalm 148)! He calls on us to meet together for the good of the Church (Heb. 10:25), to join in rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving (Php. 4:4-7); to seek Him with repentance and in faith (Isa.55:6-7).

We *must* engage in this blessed act of worship. It is a *divine mandate*.

But not all worship is created equal. There's an immense difference between the worship *we* enjoy each week, versus the worship of Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Pentecostals, or "seeker-sensitive" mega-churches.

Which way is right? *Is there* truly a "right" way and a "wrong" way to worship? Does one way invoke God's pleasure, another His anger?

Those are questions we need to ask – each of us. And we need to be convinced of the answers at which we arrive – which means we must seek those answers carefully and prayerfully.

It comes as no surprise, I'm sure, that I believe *our* worship – historically Reformed worship – is the most faithful manner of worship. (Why would I seek to become the minister of a United Reformed Church if I thought the Pentecostals were the ones who really had it figured out?) But that judgment was formed over many years, through much examination. I was born into the Methodist tradition, raised in an area saturated with Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox congregations. My friends included those who were Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Lutheran and Bible-thumpin' Baptist.

How did I judge that Reformed worship was the most faithful of the bunch? How can *anyone* judge what is right or wrong in worship?

One way is simple preference. I like country music, so worship that features faded denim, a steel guitar and some country twang might just scratch my itch. That would base my decision on my personal tastes.

But there is a better way. And that better way is to recognize that what *I like* (or what you like, or what your children like, or ...) really has nothing to do with whether a particular form of worship is good or bad. Ultimately, worship is not about *us*. In the end, worship is about *God* – meaning we must ask first and foremost what pleases *Him* in worship.

Ultimately, three factors must come into play as we strive to judge whether a particular Church's worship is Godly. In order of priority, we must judge whether the worship is *Biblical*, whether it is *spiritual*, and whether it is *joyful*.

The first two are the most important. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Our worship must first of all be *true*. True, that is, to the wishes of God, whom we seek to honor. After all, who better to tell us what is honoring to God than God Himself? And He *has* told us – in His Word.

When they were preparing to enter into the land of Canaan, God warned His people not to adopt the worship practices of the pagan nations. Their forms of worship were an *abomination* to God – an *insult* that He would not tolerate from His people. Instead of this, God told them, "See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it" (Deut.12:32).

Of course, the Bible doesn't give us a blueprint for worship services. Instead, it offers four kinds of instruction. First, it *guides* us by giving specific commands to do specific things. For instance, we are told to pray together (1 Tim.2:1 ff.), to sing and use musical instruments (Psalm 150), to collect tithes and offerings (2 Corinthians 8-9).

And just as it *guides*, the Bible also *guards* by making known what God prohibits. So we are *not* to make images for worship (Ex. 20:4-6), nor are we to give up meeting together (Heb. 10:25) or to use the Lord's Supper as an excuse to selfishly gorge ourselves (1 Cor.11:20-22).

Then too, the Bible offers *examples* for us to follow – like the examples set by Ezra, Jesus and Paul in preaching the Word among the assembly of God's people (Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16 ff.; Acts 17:2).

And finally, the Bible gives us *principles* that point us in the right direction. Thus Paul teaches us that worship should be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor.14:40) – a principle which might, for example, lead us to question the unorganized worship of many Pentecostals.

Guide, guard, example and principle – thus does God reveal His desire for our worship. And having seen, He calls us to evaluate – determining whether the worship we see matches the standard He has revealed in His perfect Word.

In the next section, we'll consider the remaining two factors.

## *Called to Joyful, Spiritual Worship*

*A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth – John 4:23-24.*

What is required for worship to please the Lord our God?

Must we have a place of beauty, with expensive woodwork and a well-tuned organ? Must we have the perfect song book, or perhaps a proper pulpit? Or do the requirements of right worship lie elsewhere – perhaps in the solemnity of the words spoken, or the kind of people who populate the pews?

In truth, none of those is quite right.

Worship can be as acceptable to God in a gymnasium filled with chairs or a barn filled with hay bales as in a specially designed building with excellent acoustics. We can worship with or without an organ, a piano, a harp, a lyre. Godly worship is not dependent on tone of voice, nor on the demographics of those who come.

In the last section, I made the claim that our judgment concerning the faithfulness of a particular Church's worship ultimately must rest on three factors. In order of priority, we must judge whether a particular form of worship is *Biblical*, whether it is *spiritual*, and whether it is *joyful*.

We then examined at some length what is meant by "Biblical." Our worship must be *true* to the command of God, as He has recorded His commands in His Word. That means it must strive to do what God's Word calls us to do; to avoid what His Word calls us to avoid; to follow the examples He has set before us; and to embrace the Biblical principles given to guide us on a Godly path.

God has told us what pleases Him, and our calling is to obey.

But in the passage above, Jesus told the Samaritan woman that true worship involves not only *truth*, but also *Spirit*. "God is Spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth."

That means, first of all, that the Spirit must *lead* us to worship. I mean that in two senses. On the one hand, we won't *truly* worship without the leading of the Spirit. We might enter the building, read the bulletin, hold the Psalter Hymnal, even listen to the sermon. But that's not the same as *worshipping*.

Worshipping involves the *heart*. Always remember that worship is a matter of *dialogue* – a "conversation," if you will, with God. And the natural man simply has no *desire* for that. Only if we are chosen by God and led by the Spirit (John 6:44) will we come truly desiring to worship.

What's more, worship involves entering into the very presence of God – again, something we cannot do on our own. If this is to happen, the Spirit must *draw* those given to Christ into the presence of the Father (Eph.2:18).

That leads to a second point about spiritual worship: We must be *accompanied* by the Spirit. The psalmist reminds us that God is *near* to all who call on Him in truth (Ps.145:18), much as Jesus promises that by means of the Spirit, He will dwell with and in us at all times (John 14:23).

Not only does that mean that our worship occurs in the very *presence* of God – it also means that He is *sanctifying* our worship, making it pleasing to Him even as we do it. He is active in our singing, our praying, our listening, our giving. In every element, He is turning our hearts toward Him and cleansing our deeds from sin, that they might be holy and pleasing to Him.

And then third, the Spirit also is *growing* us through our worship. In John 16:13-15, Jesus tells His followers that the Holy Spirit will be with them *forever* – not only with the apostles, but with the Church of *all* ages – to guide them into all truth. He is with us to teach us, that God might be glorified. In this way the Spirit is *transforming* us – at all times, but *especially* during worship – into a holy temple, a dwelling place for God (Eph.2:22).

What a glorious calling! God Himself is *with* us, and He is using our worship to *grow* us into the people and the Church that will most glorify Him. Amazing!

And that reveals the final element of true worship: Joy.

I don't mean to say that every worship service is "happy" – for sometimes we gather to worship in seasons of sadness, our faces long and our hearts burdened. Hearing of the death of his children and the loss of his wealth, Job fell to the ground in *worship* – a worship filled with grief, but worship nonetheless.

Yet even in those times of grief, our worship is to be *joyful*.

It is to be joyful first because of the simple fact that we're *able* to worship. Consider how ugly your sins appear in God's sight. By rights, our holy and just God should strike each one of us dead for the crime of approaching Him with such guilt-stained hands! But by His grace, we come into His presence as those who have been *cleansed* of sin, having become both *righteous* and *holy* in His sight – because of Christ, our great High Priest (Heb.4:14-16). Can we recognize the grace that fills the *fact* of our worship and fail to rejoice?!?

Also the *act* of worship should be joy-filled. "Rejoice in the Lord *always*," Paul writes (Php.4:4). If such is to be our attitude in our day-to-

day work, how much *more* in our *worship*? If joy should characterize our *daily* demeanor, how much *greater* should be our joy on the *Sabbath*?

So there it is. Godly worship must be *true* according to God's Word; it must be *spiritual* through the work of the Holy Spirit; and it must be *joyful* at its heart.

Truly, to worship God is a privilege beyond compare. Let us never fail to rejoice in this service to which God has called us!

Next, we need to look at the various elements of our worship, considering why each is included and what they involve.

## *Why We Do the Things We Do*

Now, to this point, we've considered worship as a *concept* which we *must study* and *understand*. Otherwise, it's just "what we've always done" – an empty tradition that has no meaning for us and gives no glory to God.

At the outset, we saw that worship is a *dialogue* – a *conversation* between God and His people. Worship is not intended to be a spectator sport. It's an event in which we are called to actively respond to God.

The form and content of that dialogue are not random, nor are they left for each person to decide according to their tastes. Instead, God has given us instruction about the worship that pleases Him. So our worship must be *Biblical*. The Bible is a *guide* telling us what God wants us to do; a *guard* to keep us from that which would displease Him; a source of *examples* that demonstrate right worship; and a teacher of *principles* that point us in the right direction.

Guide, guard, compass and example – in all of these ways, God's Word is sufficient to reveal the kind of worship God would have us embrace.

With that, worship that is pleasing to God must be *spiritual*, in that it must be *led* by the Holy Spirit, *accompanied* by the Holy Spirit's presence, and involved in equipping God's people *through* the Holy Spirit. As well, *joy* must permeate every aspect of worship – joy in the fact that we're *able* to worship through Christ's gracious, cleansing work; and joy in the worship *itself*, reflecting our undying pleasure in worshipping the Lord our God.

That's the *foundation* that's been laid for our understanding of worship. But we've still not entered the sanctuary, bulletin in hand, to engage in this sacred act. How do the principles and ideals work out in real life? Why does this sort of theoretical worship *look* the way our worship looks?

First, we enter the sanctuary. "Sanctuary" means "holy place" – a name that speaks not of the room itself, but of the activity that happens there. When we enter into the sanctuary (which is just another room until God's people fill it), we enter with a sense of reverence and quietness. We calm our hearts, endeavoring to rid ourselves of the thoughts and distractions of everyday life. After all, we are preparing to enter the throne room of the King of Kings! We're preparing to meet the Maker of heaven and earth!!

At the appointed hour, the office-bearers enter – first the minister, who has been called and ordained as an ambassador to convey the very words of God; then the elders, charged by God to protect, feed and

tend His sheep. Finally the deacons enter, having been called to meet the needs of God's people.

The minister stands before all, God's Word open in his hand. From that Word, he reads a call to worship – a Scripture passage that calls the Church to enter into God's presence with worship and praise. In recognition of our continuing struggle with sin, we answer God's call to worship with a moment of silent prayer, as each member asks God to turn his heart and mind toward Him and to make their worship holy by means of His Spirit.

Next come two events described by a pair of strange-sounding words: *votum*, and *salutation*. In the *votum*, the minister calls the people to confess (or confesses on their behalf) that their help comes from the one, true, sovereign God. This is our official response to the call to worship, and God – speaking through the minister – answers it with the *salutation*: a greeting, assuring the congregation of God's blessing upon them. God's people receive this with a song of praise, expressing their heartfelt joy at hearing such gracious words.

From where does all of this come? The Bible.

The call to worship typically is the start of a psalm used by God for millennia in calling His people to worship Him. The *votum* is an affirmation of our faith – a casting of our *vote*, if you will – in the true and living God. This is something God often calls us to acknowledge (e.g., Deut. 6:4-9 and Matt. 10:32-33). The *salutation*, too, is often witnessed in Scripture. Look at the start of any of the epistles for an example of how God's servant begins addressing the Church by assuring them of God's love, grace and peace. And it is only natural for God's people to respond by declaring to God and to one another how excellent He is – Eph. 5:18b-20.

Next, our worship turns us to face our sins – and our purity in Christ – so that we might draw even nearer to God!

That this is the proper order of our worship is shown by the tabernacle God commanded Israel to build. First the priest addressed the people, standing in the courtyard. Then a sacrificial animal was killed, its blood shed and its body broken on the altar. Only then, after atonement for sin was obtained, could the priest enter the Holy Place. There, he would minister at the altar of incense – a place for offering prayers of intercession for God's people. Finally, on the Day of Atonement, the priest would enter into the Holy of Holies, where God might speak to him over the mercy seat, giving him words to share with God's people.

Of course, we no longer have an altar. Christ, our *true* sacrificial Lamb, has completely atoned for our sin with the blood He shed on he

cross. But still we are commanded to *confess* our sins (Lev. 26:40 ff.; Ps. 32; 1 John 1:9). This we do after we hear a reading of God's Law as a reminder of His requirements upon His people – a practice encouraged throughout Scripture (e.g., Deut. 31:11; Neh. 8) – and after we receive His assurance of pardon upon the people who turn to Him in repentance and faith (Deut. 30:1 ff.; 2 Cor. 5:17-21).

Having heard these words from God of warning and of hope, we turn to Him as a united people, confessing our sin (Jas. 5:16) and praying for the Church, the world and one another, as God commands in passages like 1 Tim. 2 and Matt. 6.

Having sought God in prayer and received His pardon, we declare our love for Him once more in song, then sit quietly to hear a reading of God's Word by the minister. This prepares us to hear the preaching of the Word, which is the very voice of Christ (Rom. 10:14), by which God manifests to us His own, abiding truth (Titus 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

Having heard God's Word, we again respond with prayer, another song of response (see Psalm 47 and Psalm 81), and our tithes and offerings – the latter being a response God has commanded time and again in His Word (Mal. 3:8-12; Lev. 27:30; Deut. 26; 2 Cor. 8-9.). Finally, we conclude our part of the worship by singing a doxology – a song expressing our devotion to God and pleading for His blessing. He answers our plea in the benediction, as the minister raises his hands and speaks God's own word of blessing upon His people (Num. 6:23-27; cf. 2 Cor. 13:14 and the end of most of the New Testament letters).

In every aspect, our worship is grounded upon God's Word – sometimes in explicit commands; sometimes in general principles; and sometimes in examples displayed by God's people. The order of worship derives largely from the temple, reflected later in the synagogue and the early Church as a faithful means of ordering our worship. And the content is Biblical through and through, as God's people hear the commands and blessings of God given in His Word and spoken by His chosen minister; and as they respond by singing and speaking words drawn from Scripture or reflecting the truths of God's Word.

Only a few other matters remain to draw our attention. For the most part, these have to do with our second service – why we have it, and why that service is a bit different than our morning worship. We'll consider these matters next.

## *Our Reformed Worship – Final Questions*

Just a few questions remain to wrap up our brief study of worship. In the section above, I noted that there are just a few remaining matters that we should consider.

The first of these remaining questions is: Why two worship services? Is one not sufficient? And of course the answer is no, it's not. Our elders have thought it best to hold *two* services, and we should cheerfully submit to their command.

But we might persist, asking *why* they have felt the need for two services. And the answer lies in our view of the Lord's Day.

We do not view the Fourth Commandment as a burden, but as a joy. The Christian Sabbath is a time of celebration. Christ has established forgiveness, by which we enter into the very presence of our God! Now He commands us to set aside a portion of the week He has given – that our bodies might be rested, our souls refreshed, and our devotion to Him expressed.

Yes, this can be done in one worship service – but then how great is our temptation to misuse the remainder of the day! What harm, Satan whispers, in cutting the grass on such a beautiful Sunday? Or what foul in fleeing the kitchen and buying a meal from a pagan who would be working anyway?

Such temptations to compromise the Lord's Day often fall away when we surround ourselves with worship. We awake with joyful urgency, eager to join God's people in singing His praises. Returning home, we eat and rest, perhaps visiting with family or with others of God's people. Yet throughout the day, we look forward to again hearing God's voice, as he summons us to bow our knee and open our hearts before Him. And so we end the day as we began – in humble praise to God, who strengthens us for the challenges of the coming week.

Along with this second worship service, we notice that several elements occur in the evening worship that are not present in the morning. The first of these is the song service. Although not technically a part of the worship service, this time allows the congregation to enjoy a few extra songs, or perhaps a few selections from the choir, as a means of turning our hearts once more to the worship of the Lord. There is no command for this; it simply is a Godly way to call our hearts back together to the holy task of worshipping God.

Next, we notice the confession of faith in the evening service. Here we have another opportunity to declare that our help and our hope – like

that of the true Church throughout the ages and throughout the world – are found in the triune God who reveals Himself to us in Scripture.

Then there is the praise selection, which is both read and sung. This is an example of God's people speaking to one another in psalms (Col. 3:16-17), by which we are encouraged to hear the excellencies of God declared from His Word, which we then confess back to Him in song

One last matter that sometimes draws questions is the catechism sermon. Typically, one of the sermons each Lord's Day focuses not on the truths of a particular Scripture passage, but on the text of a Lord's Day in our Catechism or an article from our Confession of Faith. Why?

This practice developed during the time of the Reformation, initially as a means of teaching truths of the faith to the youth. More and more, however, our forefathers found that the adults benefited as much as the children from this practice, and therefore they called for all the congregations to adopt it.

There was a time when the practice made me uncomfortable. How dare we preach on anything other than the text of God's Word?

But we're not! We hold that our Three Forms of Unity are accurate summaries of the truths of Scripture – else we could never vow to confess, uphold and defend them! When I preach on a Lord's Day or an Article of the Confession, what I'm really doing is preaching on *many* Bible passages, rather than just one. Rather than preaching on the truth expressed, for instance, in Genesis 1, a sermon on BCF Art. 12 might express the truths of Genesis 1, Psalm 8, Romans 1, Luke 12 and Acts 14! Rather than *removing* our focus from God's Word, this practice actually ensures that the *complete* counsel of God's Word is regularly set before us.

Thus, then, our worship.

Done rightly, it is to be a Biblical, spiritual, joyful dialogue with the Lord our God. He calls us, blesses us, commands us, pardons us, teaches us and sends us forth with an assured blessing. We, meanwhile, respond to His call with confession, answer His command with admission of guilt, hear His pardon with praise, and accept His instruction with humble prayer. He speaks; we answer – for He is our God; we are His people.

May we ever approach this glorious service of worship eager to glorify God, serving Him wholeheartedly in a manner that reveals His glory to all who hear!