

2/19/2021

Greetings Beloved!

Our 2021 Lenten study is going to be held using a Service/Study format on Zoom. We will be studying different aspects of Lutheran Worship, and hopefully deepening our spiritual practice of prayer and worship on our journey to Jerusalem with Jesus and one another over the next 6 weeks.

The materials are adapted from a study created by Pastor Mindy Roll from Zion Lutheran Church, in Houston Heights, Texas. Pastor Mindy has generously and freely shared the use of her study for all those who may be wondering “WHY DO WE DO THAT” ???

The study information will be available online at the church website clconyngham.org. You can also pick up a hard copy at the church in the Narthex during the week from 8:00am – 12:00pm.

Looking forward to Seeing you on Wednesday!

Your Sibling in Christ,

Pastor Deb

You are invited to a Zoom meeting at 6:30pm on Wednesdays during the Season of Lent.

Topic: Lenten Study

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting

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Lenten curriculum on Deepening worship
Why Do We Do That?

Welcome to this six-week study on Deepening Worship in the Lutheran tradition. Whether you are newer to the Lutheran church, considering joining, or a lifelong member, the hope from this six-week study is that you might begin to understand more clearly the “whys” of worship. Why *do* we do the things that we do in church?

In the Lutheran tradition, we trust that worship is primarily about the movement of God. In the time that we gather, we believe that God comes to us in a number of simple and mysterious ways: through the presence of one another, through water, through bread and wine, through prayer, through the Word, through the sharing of the peace, through song and music, through giving. In fact, we believe that God is continually coming to us during worship, feeding and renewing our spirits, then turning us outward to be Good News for the world. What an incredible thing to proclaim!

And yet, many of us never learn *how* to worship. As such, worship can become rote and dry, and we may find ourselves going through the motions or confused about why we do the things we do. Enter Lent! While many might associate Lent with the giving up of chocolate or sweets, in the ancient church, Lent was primarily a time of preparation for those seeking to be baptized. As we engage in this study, we return to a traditional understanding of Lent – a time to learn and deepen one’s understanding of faith.

In this six-week study, you will be invited to examine more closely various elements of worship. You will be encouraged to take part in discussion, and you will be given a challenge/homework at the end of each session. My hope is that by the end of these six weeks, you will be surprised by how deeply meaningful worship can be.

This curriculum is not comprehensive. There is much about worship that is not covered here. The Lutheran church is blessed with an abundance of liturgical scholars, which are teachers and thinkers whose work centers on the liturgy. Several of them are listed in the bibliography, and I encourage you to read more from them, if you would like. This is just a beginning.

Blessings on this time of learning and formation. May you have a holy Lent.

Peace,

Pastor Mindy Roll
Zion Lutheran Church – Houston Heights

**Week 1 – The Whys of Worship
Confession & Forgiveness**

WELCOME:

GREETING:

P: This is the day that the Lord has made.

C: Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

CALL TO WORSHIP

P: Get Ready! The Lord needs you.

C: We are ready to serve God.

P: Be available to serve in ministries with faith and
openness.

C: We are ready to serve God by loving and serving others.

P: Open our hearts, our souls, our minds to Your mercy and
love.

C: Equip us for service to you, O loving God.

Opening Prayer

Can you please put the prayer of the day in here for the first week of lent year B 2020/2021

Psalm 22:23-31

23 All of you who revere the Lord—praise him!

All of you who are Jacob's descendants—honor him!

All of you who are all Israel's offspring— stand in awe of him!

24 Because he didn't despise or detest
the suffering of the one who suffered—

he didn't hide his face from me.

No, he listened when I cried out to him for help.

25 I offer praise in the great congregation because of you;

I will fulfill my promises

in the presence of those who honor God.

26 Let all those who are suffering eat and be full!

Let all who seek the Lord praise him!

I pray your hearts live forever!

27 Every part of the earth will remember and come back to the Lord;

every family among all the nations will worship you.

28 Because the right to rule belongs to the Lord,

he rules all nations.

29 Indeed, all the earth's powerful will worship him;

all who are descending to the dust will kneel before him;

my being also lives for him.

30 Future descendants will serve him;

generations to come will be told about my Lord.

31 They will proclaim God's righteousness to those not yet born,

telling them what God has done. (Psalm 22:23-31, CEB)

“Why Do We Do That – Worship” - Week #1 – Confession and Forgiveness

Opening Exercise:

Maybe you find the Confession & Forgiveness to be a confusing way to begin worship (as one newcomer to the faith commented, “You begin worship by telling people how terrible they are? That’s your welcome?”) Others might find it deeply meaningful, a chance to review their week, speak aloud their brokenness, and hear God’s words of love and acceptance. Others might find it to be a time when they zone out, the words having become rote and memorized.

How might the Confession & Absolution become a more meaningful time in worship?

Write down as much as comes to mind in three minutes.

Rather than trying to compose a list of bad or wrong things I have done this week, consider and write in the space below:

How have I contributed to brokenness in relationships with God, self, others, the earth :

Now consider one of the traditional confessions in the Lutheran church:

Most merciful God, we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and

*lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.*¹

Question for Reflection: How might understanding sin as the breaking of relationship expand what happens in your heart and mind as you hear those words of confession?

Discussion on Question

Alongside confession in the Lutheran tradition is always Absolution, or hearing words of forgiveness. The words might sound like this:

*God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. Amen.*²

Consider these words from writer Tish Harrison Warren, in a book called *Liturgy of the Ordinary*. Warren writes,

“For some of us, the idea of repentance can bring to mind a particular emotional experience, or the minor-key songs of an altar call at a revival meeting. But repentance and faith are the constant, daily rhythms of the Christian life, our breathing out and breathing in. In these small moments that reveal my lostness and my brokenness, I need to develop the habit of admitting the truth of who I am—not running to justify myself or minimize my sin. And yet, in my brokenness and lostness, I also need to form the habit of letting God love me, trusting again in his mercy, and receiving again his words of forgiveness and absolution over me.”³

Warren continues:

Once a close friend visited my church, and she was concerned by this part of our service. She didn’t like that the priest pronounced absolution. She asked, “Don’t we receive forgiveness from God, not a priest?” Why use a go-between? I told her that forgiveness is from God, and yet I still need to be told. I need to

¹ *Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Pew Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 95.

² *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 96.

³ Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 56.

hear in a loud voice that I am forgiven and loved, a voice that is truer, louder, and more tangible than the accusing voices within and without that tell me I'm not.⁴

Question for Reflection: Is it harder for you to hear that God forgives and loves you, or is it harder for you to hear that God loves and forgives everyone around you? Which do you struggle with more? Why?

Homework: This week, try your hand at writing your own confession or your own words of absolution. What do you need to say, and what do you need to hear each week?

Fun Fact - Did you know? In the Lutheran tradition, we practice Confession & Forgiveness before the beginning of worship. We consider this preparation for worship, and as such, you might see your pastor lead this part of the service from the doors or entrance. Because confession is also part of our baptismal liturgy, you might also see your pastor lead this part of the service from the baptismal font.

Looking Ahead to Next Week: Next week, we will look at one of the other ways that we begin worship – through Thanksgiving for Baptism.

⁴ Ibid., 58.

CLOSING:

Prayer:

God our sustainer, we ask you to pour your powerful Spirit into all who are empty this day: Strengthen the faith and witness of those who are in the wilderness on this day. Fill the hearts of persons who are troubled. Fill the minds of men women and children who are confused. Fill the stomachs of children who are hungry. Fill the souls of people who are feeling lost. Fill the lives of all who need you, but do not know you. May your Spirit fill us all to overflowing, dear Lord, and may it inspire us to share our abundance with others, so that there will be no more empty hearts and minds, stomachs and souls. We pray all this in the name of Jesus Christ, who fills lives with your endless grace.

AMEN

BLESSING:

P: Go into the world in peace,

C: And take peace into a world that desperately needs it.

P: Go into the world in faith,

C: Trusting God to lead you, trusting people to receive you.

P: Go into the world with hope,

C: With God's presence before you and human dreams to carry you.

P: Go into the world with love,

C: Serving those in whom Christ lives, laboring for those for whom Christ died.

P: In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

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