

## Worship 101: The Divine Service

What we would like to do from time to time in the newsletter article is teach about our Lutheran form of worship. After all, unless you understand what's going on during worship, it probably isn't going to be all that meaningful to you. On the other hand, the more you know about our church service the more you will get out of it and thus the greater will be your appreciation of it.

The first topic we want to discuss is the name we Lutherans give for the church service which is "The Divine Service." We see this for example on page 151 of our Lutheran Service Book (LSB). At the top we have "Divine Service Setting One". What is the significance of the term Divine Service?

Well, sometimes what goes on at a church service is referred to as "worship." The word worship means "to ascribe worth or value to something or someone." In this case, the "someone" is God. Now there's nothing wrong with this word. It however is not found in the Bible, at least in the original languages. Sometimes the Bible speaks of bowing or prostrating oneself before God. This is oftentimes translated into English with the word worship.

Worship is not the best word to use when talking about a church service because it emphasizes what we are doing for God. The implication is that the most important thing is for the worshiper to be doing all the work. It's my job to praise and thank God for all He has done for me.

As Lutherans we prefer Divine Service to describe what happens in church. The word "divine" referring to God or "coming from God." Combining this with "service" means that when we gather for church most importantly it is God who is doing the work, not us. God (the Divine) is serving us. God is giving to us. The German word for this is Gottesdienst – God's Service. This is how Martin Luther would have defined worship in his day.

What does God give us? He gives us the gifts of His Word and the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Through these means or instruments God makes known to us all that He has done so that we might have a place there in heaven.

In the Divine Service God gives to us the forgiveness, life and salvation that He earned for us through the death and resurrection of His Son. How do we receive these gifts? By believing the promises that God has made to us. This is our response to God's love. We also, by faith in Christ, give God thanks and praise for His goodness to us in Christ. This is technically how we worship God. God however comes to us first. We then worship Him for all He has done for us.

And so when you see "Divine Service" in the hymnal, now you know what is meant. In church, God serves us first. After this, we serve Him. He serves us with His promise of life eternal through Christ. We serve Him with "thank you Lord for Your underserved love."

In Christ,  
Pastor Bloom