

The Rhythm of Faith: Lutheran Worship

Introduction

1. What is worship?

a. The Natural perspective: what *we* do for *God*

[7] “Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.

[8] Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.

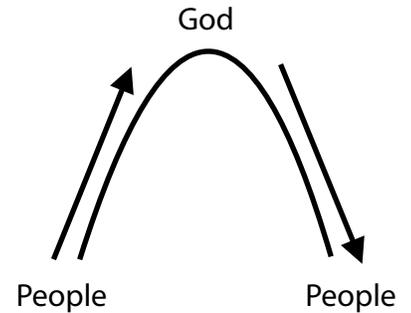
[9] I will not accept a bull from your house
or goats from your folds.

[10] For every beast of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.

[11] I know all the birds of the hills,
and all that moves in the field is mine.

[12] “If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and its fullness are mine.

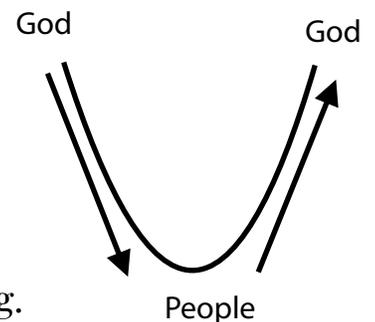
[13] Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats? (ESV)
- Psalm 50.7-13



b. The Biblical perspective: what *God* does for *us*

[38] Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. [39] And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

[40] But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.” [41] But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and



troubled about many things, [42] but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.” (ESV)

- Luke 10.38-42

The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

- Matthew 20.28

2. Worship is essentially (at its *essence*) about *receiving* God’s gifts.

[16] For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (ESV)

- John 1:16

[7] For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (ESV)

- 1 Corinthians 4:7

“The worship and divine service of the Gospel is to *receive* gifts from God.”

- Apology of the Augsburg Confession V.189

“This [orthodox evangelical] tradition of piety has deep biblical and theological roots. Its chief characteristic is reception from Christ, the exercise of faith in Him and reliance on Him for everything. This kind of receptive spirituality presupposes that Christ not only brings the Holy Spirit and all the Father’s gifts to us but also brings us with Him into the Father’s presence. The focus on reception as the foundation for Christian spirituality is Lutheran, with its emphasis on the Gospel and on our access to the grace of God the Father through faith in Christ. Yet it is also orthodox and catholic, for by

this reception of life from Christ we are drawn into the life of the Holy Trinity. Receptive spirituality embeds the life of the believer in the family of God and the Church.”

- John Kleinig, in *Grace Upon Grace*

3. Worship *forms us* in faith (for better or for worse).

[2] Why should the nations say,

“Where is their God?”

[3] Our God is in the heavens;

he does all that he pleases.

[4] Their idols are silver and gold,

the work of human hands.

[5] They have mouths, but do not speak;

eyes, but do not see.

[6] They have ears, but do not hear;

noses, but do not smell.

[7] They have hands, but do not feel;

feet, but do not walk;

and they do not make a sound in their throat.

[8] Those who make them become like them;

so do all who trust in them. (ESV)

- Psalm 115:2–8

[17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. [18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (ESV)

- 2 Corinthians 3:17–18

4. In Lutheran worship we are being formed in a rhythm of *receiving* & *responding*.

“Our Lord speaks and we listen. His Word bestows what it says. Faith that is born from what is heard acknowledges the gifts received with eager thankfulness and praise...

“The rhythm of our worship is from Him to us, and then from us back to Him. He gives His gifts, and together we receive and extol them. We build one another up as we speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Our Lord gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink. Finally His blessing moves us out into our calling, where His gifts have their fruition. How best to do this we may learn from His Word and from the way His Word has prompted His worship through the centuries. We are heirs of an astonishingly rich tradition. Each generation receives from those who went before and, in making that tradition of the Divine Service its own, adds what best may serve in its own day the living heritage and something new.”

- Norman Nagel, in *Lutheran Worship*

5. We *receive* from His fullness to *share* from His fullness.

Freely (Greek *dorean*) you have received, freely give.

- Matthew 10:8

You shall observe the worship day
That peace may fill your home, and pray,
And put aside the work you do,
So that God may work in you.

- “These Are the Holy Ten Commands,” *LSB* 581:4