

# All-Congregation Bible Study Lutheran Worship as Divine Service

## — *handout 2* —

### The Sacramental Character of the Divine Service

1. In the context of the debate on so-called "traditional" worship versus so-called "contemporary" worship, our District President, the Rev. Joel Hoelter, had this to say<sup>1</sup>:  
*Discussions about worship tend to revolve around the labels 'traditional' and 'contemporary.' Often they express preference and nothing else. The conference offered an additional description -- 'sacramental' and 'non-sacramental' -- to remind us that worship is something that includes both Word and Sacrament. This is more in keeping with our Lutheran confession of the Christian faith.*
2. First of all, what comes to mind when you hear the term "sacramental"?
3. Read and respond to the following definition<sup>2</sup> of "sacramental"  
*God gives. He gives in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism as the Holy Spirit works through water and the Word to create saving faith in the heart of the recipient. God gives in the Sacrament of the Altar as by His Word and Command we receive Jesus' body and blood in, with and under bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. God gives as the Scripture is read and expounded upon by the pastor in the sermon. Sacramental worship means God is the initiator and the gift giver.*
  1. What would occur if a congregation's worship was not sacramental?
4. Under the leadership of the apostles, the New Testament Church began in a sacramental manner. Read Peter's Pentecost sermon in **Acts 2:38–39**.
  1. Are Peter's actions and words sacramental? Why or why not?
  2. Is the response of the people sacramental? Why or why not?
  3. Why is sacramental worship of such great importance?
5. Read **Ephesians 2:8–10**. What does this teach about salvation?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=16485>

<sup>2</sup> Pittelki, p.13.

1. How might this verse apply to worship?
2. What key words in these verses make it clear that Jesus is the author of salvation and that we are saved by God's grace alone?

## The Lord Speaks to Us through His Word

One of the early Church Fathers, Celestine I is famed as the author of the following guiding principle for worship: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. Translated, it means "the rule of worship is the rule of faith. The importance of this principle is that it states the emphasis we Lutheran Christians place on what we believe—that which God has revealed to us in His Word— being clearly expressed in the Divine Service.

6. To put Celestine's quotation another way: "the way we pray and what we do and say in worship is the way that we express what we believe." Celestine's quotation can also be inverted: "What we believe drives the way we worship." Why is it so important that the Divine Service reflect what we believe?
7. Roger Pittelko summarizes what this means for Lutherans in understanding what worship is. Read the following statement<sup>3</sup> and respond:

*The Bible is the source and norm for what we as Christians believe and do. God in His Word reveals His plan of salvation. God speaks to us through His inspired Word. Scripture is the very God-breathed Word. If our Divine Service is to reflect what we believe, then the Divine Service must flow from the Bible. The Divine Service must have its origin in Scripture and be saturated with Scripture.*

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<sup>3</sup> Pittelko, p.22.