

# **The Service of the Word and Sacrament: GOD IS PRESENT SERVING HIS PEOPLE WITH THE GIFTS OF HEAVEN**

(This outlined study of THE LITURGY is based on TLH p.15 – the Order of Holy Communion)

## **Introduction**

In Genesis 28, while on a journey Jacob lies down to sleep. He dreams a dream wherein he sees a ladder extending from earth to heaven with angels of God ascending and descending upon it. From above, stands the LORD delivering His Word of promise that no matter where Jacob goes, He will be with him, blessing him, protecting his ways, and keeping His promise to provide the world with a Savior. Jacob names this place “Bethel,” meaning, “house of God.” It is here where Jacob recognized the presence of God among men – an intrusion of heaven itself on earth. As he says, “This is none other than the gate of heaven.”

As an assembly gathered around God’s Word, we receive the same – yet not a vision, this is reality. In a much more real and palpable sense, this is the gate to heaven. Not the building, or pews, or altar and pulpit, but rather this presence of God comes in the gathering around the preaching of the gospel. Jesus promised in Matthew 18, “where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Within Lutheranism, we sometimes refer to this as “the Real Presence.” We believe, as the Bible teaches, that Christ is really and truly present among us both in the hearing of His Word and the reception of His Sacraments. In a sense, this is the stairway to heaven. This is the place where God bridges the gap from earth to heaven, because this is the place where Christ is found. For without Christ there remains an endless separation between man and God. Without Christ we cannot enter God’s holy presence without being destroyed.

But through faith in Jesus Christ, we now draw near this holy space. This is why, when asked how He would make Himself known to His people, Jesus responds, “If anyone loves Me, he will treasure and protect My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him.” (John 14:23)

This Word we treasure brings us into the dwelling place of God. It brings the gifts of heaven to us. The word “Liturgy” means “service.” “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. It is this Service of the Word wherein God is serving us with the gifts of heaven.

With Jacob we likewise respond, “This is none other than the gate to heaven.” Here is the place where God gives Himself to us. Here is where He cleanses, creates, and consecrates. The Word gives; we receive; we respond. Here is where angels and archangels ascend and descend singing with us the praises of God’s redemption. In the Word, in bread and wine, earth and heaven are one; the presence of Christ is joined to us as He gives heavenly gifts in the service of the Word.

## We Assemble in the Presence of God

### OPENING PRAYER AND HYMN

Hence we begin in prayer and song where in we declare this truth – “we are assembled in Your presence...” Let us pray,

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

*Minister (M): O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Your presence to hear Your Holy Word. We pray You to open our hearts by Your Holy Spirit that by the preaching of Your Word we may be brought to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and to grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ’s sake. Amen.*

#### **OPENING HYMN**

Calling God into our presence, we use the Baptismal entrance of invocation. This reflects our baptismal entrance into God’s kingdom. As we have become one with Christ dwelling in us through baptism, so we become one with Christ dwelling among us now. Therefore we gather around His Word and Sacrament ...

*Minister (M): In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.  
Congregation (C): Amen.*

Amen declares our certainty. It is a word which means, “it is certain,” “it is so.” As in other moments of the service, we here declare our certainty that God is with us. Likewise, upon having our sins forgiven, we respond “Amen.” This is our confidence that our forgiveness in Christ is certain.

“We now draw near...” As Moses draws near the burning bush, God instructs him to remove his sandals, saying, “the place where you stand is holy ground.” Likewise when God descended upon Mt. Sinai, the children of Israel were instructed to first wash and sanctify themselves before they could draw near. To enter into God’s presence is to enter into holiness. To do so in with the corruption of sin clinging to us would be devastating. We cannot enter this space with indifference to sin nor while trusting in our own merit. Because we are born dead in sin and sin daily, falling short of the glory of God’s presence, we first lay bare our sins before God pleading and trusting in His atoning work in Christ. As Hebrews 10 says, we “draw near” by “a new and living way” through “the flesh of Jesus” who has born our sins in His own body on the cross. Our help is found no other place than this saving name of the Lord. In speaking the the good news of absolution, God is present with His gifts. He comes through His called servant to give forgiveness, life, and salvation.

*M: Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God, our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness. Our help is in the name of the Lord.*

*C: Who made heaven and earth.*

*M: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.*

*C: And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*

*C: O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray Thee of Thy boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent bitter sufferings and death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.*

*M: Upon this your confession, I, as a called servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*

Now the Divine Service truly begins. All else has been preparatory. The rhythm of true worship is no different than God's whole creation. He speaks, we receive and respond. As the life giving power of the Word at Creation brought forth something where there was nothing, so also the Word prompts and creates a worthy response where there would not otherwise be one. This is also why we understand the title "Service of the Word" to refer to the Word serving. This is the rhythm of the Liturgy – the Word gives; we receive; we respond.

## **We Glorify Our Lord's Presence**

### THE INTROIT, THE KYRIE, THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

"The Introit" is Latin for "entrance" or "going in." Originally these entrance psalms were sung antiphonally by the choir in order to accompany the arrival of the clergy, a procession from the sacristy through the entrance of the sanctuary and to the altar. We read our entrance psalm responsively after which we respond to the Word with songs of confessional praise.

The songs that follow the entrance psalm, the Gloria Patri, the Kyrie, and the Gloria in Excelsis, are ancient songs of the Church. The texts are drawn from Holy Scripture and have been used in Christian worship dating back to the second and third centuries. These songs are both of praise and of a faithful confession of what Scripture teaches.

We sing glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit as a proclamation that the God gathers us here is One Holy Trinity, besides which, there is no other. Our One God in three persons has existed from the beginning of ages on into the ages of ages or as we say “world without end.”

Even as the sick and disabled crowded around Jesus crying out for the Creator to have mercy on the fallen Creation, we crowd around our Lord with our illnesses of body and soul to sing “Kyrie Eleison” – “Lord, have mercy.”

In Christ, God has taken all our ailments, all our sins upon Himself. As it says in 2 Corinthians, He “has become sin for us.” Earth and heaven are joined in Christ and rightly we praise. We sing the song of heaven and earth. We join the angels of Luke 2 that Christmas night for the Spirit has brought to this world the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Indeed “glory to God in heaven and on earth peace among men.”

The Word is sounded in the Psalm; we receive; we respond.

## **INTROIT**

*[a psalm is sung or spoken]*

## **THE GLORIA PATRI**

*C: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

## **THE KYRIE – LORD HAVE MERCY**

Mark 10:47

*C: Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.*

## **THE GLORIA IN EXCELSIS – GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST**

Luke 2:14; John 1:29

*C: Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men. We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give thanks to You, for Your great glory. O Lord God, heav'nly King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord, the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, You that take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. You that take away the sin of the world, receive our prayer. You are seated at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us. For You only are holy; You only are the Lord. You only, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit, are most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

## **THE SALUTATION AND THE COLLECT**

Throughout the Liturgy we see transitions. Here in the Salutation we transition from our songs of praise to prayer and the hearing of the Word. More than “hello,” this is a call for God’s presence to be both with the congregation and with the minister as he offers the collect of the church – a collective prayer of God’s people focusing on the central

thought of the day. In this call to action, the congregation asks the Lord to be present with the minister's spirit as he intercedes, both praying for the people as he moves on to speak for God through the Word.

## THE SALUTATION

Luke 1:22; 2 Timothy 4:22

*M: The Lord be with you.*

*C: And with thy spirit.*

## THE COLLECT FOR THE DAY

*M: Let us pray ... [the collect of the day is spoken]*

*C: Amen.*

# Our Lord is Present in Word

## THE EPISTLE, GRADUAL, AND GOSPEL

Jesus is the Word made flesh. He was in the beginning the Creator of all things through the spoken word. In flesh, this Word has dwelt among us, the person of Jesus Christ, both the God of all Creation and the Son of Mary. He has carried the sins of His fallen creation and restored to us the gift of life. This Word remains living and active bringing us the body of Jesus, really present, and all the works He has accomplished for us. Here He speaks. We structure this hearing of the Word in a collection of Bible readings spread throughout the church year. This consists of Lectionary readings each Sunday from an Old Testament text, an Epistle text, and a Gospel text. These readings are designed to either focus on the central thought of the day or take us through a series of readings within a book of the Bible. Traditionally we draw out the thoughts of one of these three texts in the Sermon Theme of the Day.

The Gradual comes from the Latin meaning "steps." This reading, usually a portion or even a whole psalm, is our ascent. We are moving from from the thoughts of the Epistle or Old Testament reading to the thoughts of the Word made flesh in the Gospel text. The Hallelujah that accompanies this has been called "the perpetual voice of the Church." Sung both in psalms of the Jewish synagogue and in Christian Churches since the time of Christ, this Hebrew words means, "Praise the LORD!" It especially is meant to command attention to the fact that the Gospel reading is approaching.

We give special prominence to the Gospel text which brings to us the words and works of the Word in the flesh. Thus, gathered in the presence of our Lord, we normally rise and sing: "Glory be to Thee, O Lord!" He speaks and we respond: "Praise be to Thee, O Christ!"

## THE EPISTLE

*[the Epistle for the day is read]*

## THE GRADUAL

*[the Gradual of the day is read with Hallelujahs]*

## THE HALLELUJAH – PRAISE THE LORD

*C: Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*

## THE GOSPEL

*[the Gospel for the day is announced]*

*C: Glory be to Thee, O Lord!*

*[the Gospel for the day is read]*

*M: Blessed are they who hear God's Word and keep it!*

*C: Praise be to Thee, O Christ!*

## THE CREED

The Creed to follow is Latin for “I believe.” The presence of God in His word creates a faith that believes and confesses the truth of God’s salvation in Christ. There are three creeds that the Christian Church has accepted as a true proclamation of the faith that saves. We join with the saints in heaven and those on earth as we confess to one another and before the world the true Christian faith.

## THE NICENE CREED – I BELIEVE

*I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary And was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father; And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## HYMN, SERMON, AND OFFERTORY

We continue with a hymn which either reflects the thoughts of our previous readings or introduces the focus of our sermon. The hymns we sing are designed to accompany and enhance the service of the Word. Hymns unite a congregation in the thoughts of the Word for the day. Throughout the service, the word dwells among us richly in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16). Together we teach and admonish, break down and build up. In acknowledging and praising the truths of God's word, hymns bring the Word to us in meaningful and memorable song.

Our Sermon meditation is meant to develop the thoughts of one of the three readings of the day and apply it to our lives. This practice of searching and drawing out the truths of God's Word has been a part of God's people since before the time of Christ. Rather than a motivational speech centering in your works and life, Christian preaching centers in the works and life of our Lord – that is, it proclaims the gospel. Through a proclamation of sin, salvation, and sanctification, God's word works repentance and faith in the forgiveness Christ has won for us through the cross. The Spirit comes to us and dwells in us with new life through the Word. As we walk in the Spirit, fruits of faith flourish.

### **PRE-SERMON HYMN**

### **THE SERMON**

*[A Bible text is read and a sermon meditation is delivered]*

Upon concluding the sermon, we hear the promise of Philippians 4:7 in which our hearts are assured that the peace of this gospel which we have just heard will always protect us through faith in Christ Jesus.

We respond in that peace by offering our cleansed hearts to God beginning with the words of Psalm 51. Nathan the prophet has come to David revealing his sins of adultery and murder, and sharing the consolation of the gospel. David responds to the messages of sin and salvation with the words of this psalm. We too sing this prayer for God continue to dwell with us through His Spirit, restoring us to the joyful life we have been given through Christ for us and in us. The service continues to follow the rhythm of receiving and responding.

*M: The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

### **THE OFFERTORY**

*C: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit.*

## **Our Lord is Present Interceding and Accepting**

### THE OFFERING, GENERAL PRAYER, AND HYMN

God has set us free from the debt of the law, so that we no longer give “grudgingly or of necessity” (2 Corinthians 9:7). As Jesus said to His disciples, “Freely you have received, freely give.” We give of the fruit of our thankful heart, moved by the Christ, “who though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” Our thank offerings support the work of this ministry of the Word and the fellowship ministry of our synod as we endeavor to preach the gospel to all nations.

We likewise bring to the throne of God our requests, both for our needs and the needs of the greater body of Christ. The Word has prepared us to rightly approach God in this way. We seek not our will, but His alone. Through the interceding work of Christ on our behalf, God promises to accept our gifts and hear and answer our requests. We offer these things in His name.

A Hymn is normally placed either directly after the Sermon reflecting the Word just heard, or following the prayer as preparatory for our entrance into the Service of Sacrament.

### **THE OFFERING OF THANKFUL HEARTS**

### **THE GENERAL PRAYER**

### **COMMUNION HYMN**

## **Our Lord is Present in Meal**

### THE SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

The Word has prepared the way for the consummation of our Lord’s coming. It is in the Service of the Sacrament where this Word made flesh now dwells among us bodily present in Meal. We have seen already how the “real presence” of our Lord comes to us in the earthly elements of written word where gifts are received through hearing. The “real presence” of our Lord is also with us in the earthly elements of bread and wine where gifts are received through eating and drinking. The Word is now active in the Meal, joining earth and heaven as God gives the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation through the body and blood of His Son.

It is the stairway of Jacob’s dream with angels ascending and descending. It is the ascent to Jerusalem. We now approach the bodily presence of Jesus Christ in the His



Supper. As we approach this climax of the service, the Spirit instructs us to do so “in a worthy manner” (1 Corinthians 11:27,28). Therefore the structure of this movement in the service is designed to bring us through this ascent. The Invocation has brought us through baptism into God’s presence. The Confession and Absolution have washed and cleansed us from our sinful works and unrighteous efforts. The Word has revealed the thoughts of God to us. And now by faith we join each other in communion with God. As Paul writes, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16, NKJV)

Thus we responsively ask the Lord to be present both with the congregation and with the minister as we enter this holy space through faith. We lift up our hearts to heaven itself. We join in song with all the company of heaven which ascend and descend amid this heavenly feast. For in this, even now while still on earth, we commune in our God’s feast of victory.

With the whole host of heaven we sing the Sanctus of Isaiah 6, wherein Isaiah enters the holy Temple of heaven to hear the angels sing “Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus” – that is, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth (or hosts). Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.” Again we see how Jesus brings together earth and heaven with the glory of His work of salvation. “Hosanna” we sing. “Save now!” Here the song transitions to the voice of God’s people from Psalm 118. This is the song of Palm Sunday which was being sung as Jesus made His entry into Jerusalem. We ascend to this heavenly Jerusalem of the Lord’s Supper singing “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” Here our King comes to us.

## **THE PREFACE**

*M: The Lord be with you.*

*C: And with thy spirit.*

*M: Lift up your hearts.*

*C: We lift them up unto the Lord.*

*M: Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.*

*C: It is meet and right so to do.*

*M: It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God:*

*[Insert proper preface for the season – for example, Trinity Season: “...who with Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, one Lord. And in the confession of the only true God we worship the Trinity in Person, of Unity of Substance, for whom Majesty is One.”]*

*Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we praise and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:*

## **THE SANCTUS – HOLY, HOLY, HOLY**

Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9

*C: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heav'n and earth are full of Thy glory; Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He, Blessed is He, Blessed is He Who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest.*

We pray the prayer which our Lord taught us in Matthew 6:9-13.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Matthew 6:9-13

*M: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil;*

*C: For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

As the first climax showed itself in the words and works of our Lord, the Gospel reading, so also we find in these words of our Lord the great gift of His body and blood, brought to us by the Word He speaks. This is His living memorial.

## **THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24;  
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

*M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me." In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

Through this heavenly entrance of Christ our King, peace is made between earth and heaven, between the creation and the Creator. We ask this peace to be with us now and forever as we now call upon our peacemaker – the sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. The Agnus Dei, Lamb of God, of which John cries out "Behold!" is the culmination of the Bible and of the Divine Service. Both in the Word and now in Meal, the one sacrificed by God Himself to make atonement, and bring mercy, is now present in bread and wine. Yet no longer merely the Lamb who was Slain, it is the Lamb described in Revelation 5 – "who was slain, who has redeemed us to God by His blood, and has made us kings and priests to our God." It is the Lamb who even now lives and reigns among us. Hallelujah!

## **PAX DOMINI – THE PEACE OF THE LORD**

John 20:19

*M: The peace of the Lord be with you always!*

*C: Amen.*

## THE AGNUS DEI – LAMB OF GOD

John 1:29

*C: O Christ, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us. O Christ, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, grant us Your peace. Amen.*

## THE DISTRIBUTION

*M: Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins. Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins. Now may this true body and true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting. Go in peace.*

## Blessed with God's Presence, We Depart in Peace

Upon seeing and holding the gift, the Christ child in his own arms, Simeon says in Luke 2, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace as You have promised, for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before all peoples." We too have held this gift of God. We, by faith, have seen, heard, and tasted God's salvation. We depart in peace. We depart from this Service of the Word and from this world itself at peace with God in heaven. Glory to God, forever.

In this we give thanks and receive the departing blessing which God first bestowed on His people in Numbers 6:24-26 – the Benediction ("blessing"). Along with a departing hymn, you receive the promise of God's blessing of peace to go with you. He promises His presence to remain with His people in Word and Sacrament, sending His Spirit to dwell in them and among them wherever they go and whatever they face. Amen, Amen, Amen – It is certain.

## NUNC DIMITTIS – NOW LET US, THE SONG OF SIMEON

Luke 2:29-32

*C: Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation: which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

## THE THANKSGIVING

Psalm 107:1

*M: O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.  
C: And His mercy endureth forever.*

## CLOSING HYMN

**THE BENEDICTION – THE BLESSING**

Numbers 6:24-26

*M: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*

*C: Amen, Amen, Amen.*

Thus concludes the Service of the Word and Sacrament – the presence of God serving His people with the gifts of heaven.