

Theme: Worship is the assembly of the local church where God speaks to us through His Word, meets and strengthens us in the sacraments, and we respond as a community in spoken and sung prayers.

I. Intro - Modern worship “wars”

- A. In recent years back and forth worship “wars”
- B. Some of it is just about personal preference but some reveal misunderstandings about worship and why the church gathers
- C. What is worship? Why does the church gather to worship?
- D. Question 71: Are Christians only called to be part of the universal Church?
No, all Christians are called to be part of local churches where they are led and cared for by elders, **worship God, learn the Scripture, receive the sacraments, pray together**, serve one another, and carry out the Great Commission together.

II. The Church - A Community of Worship

- A. The Church is the community of believers
They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42
 - 1. They - this refers to those who had responded to the Gospel in faith, repenting, and being baptized.
 - 2. When a church gathers, it does not gather as just a group of humans but rather as the community of believers.
 - 3. Once again, this is why the Gospel is always central, and why each of us needs to personally respond to God through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 4. While the church should always be considerate of visitors who may not be believers, the focus and purpose of the gathering is believers who have come together to worship God.

- B. The Church gathers to hear from and worship God
They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42
 - 1. The activities described by Luke are predominately aimed at believers gathering to hear God speak by His Word and to respond to Him in worship.
 - 2. The same thing is seen in Colossians 3:16
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Coloss 3:16
 - a. The Word of God is richly in their midst
 - b. Believers gather to instruct one another in the faith
 - c. Believers gather to give praise and thanks to God
 - 3. Although the Church should always be aware of the needs of its members and even of unbelievers, the dominant focus in worship gatherings must be to hear from God and to respond in worship.

III. The Church’s Pattern of Worship

- A. The Word of God is the foundation of worship
They devoted themselves to **the apostles’ teaching** and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42
 - 1. The foundation of worship is God’s Word for through it God speaks to His people and teaches them how to properly worship Him.

2. A church that does not read and teach God's Word or does not let it govern all of their life and worship is losing its connection with Jesus Christ.
3. The Word is God's eternal, infallible truth, and a church must be saturated in the Scripture so that its truth forms the heart of their worship as the people of God.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Coloss. 3:16

- a. The Word must swell RICHLY - it must fill every aspect of the gathering and worship of God's people
- b. This even includes the songs and prayers of God's people.
- c. The Word reveals God in all of His glory to us, and then it gives us the language and actions to respond in worship.
- d. The Word of God must be read, sung, prayed, and taught in all of its fullness so that the church may grow strong in Christ.

B. The sacraments are a critical part of worship

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, **to the breaking of bread** and to prayer. Acts 2:42

1. The first act of worship for the new believers was being baptized in water (Acts 2:36-39).
2. The people then regularly came to the Lord's Table (the breaking of bread).
3. Water baptism and the Supper are more than just rituals - they are sacraments.

4. A sacrament is a special symbol given by God to His people that when received in faith serves as a sign and seal of His promises to us, functions as a means of grace to strengthen us, and through which we testify of our faith in Him and His promises.
5. In water baptism, we are marked as the people of God, put off the old man of sin, and are clothed with Christ. At the Lord's Table we regularly feast upon the grace of God, freshly receiving grace and all the benefits of Christ's death for us.
6. The sacraments may only be received as part of worship with God's people, and therefore reinforce our critical need to gather together to worship.

C. We respond to God's Word in prayer (including song) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread **and to prayer**. Acts 2:42

1. 'The prayers' - both spoken and sung - were an essential feature of worship in the New Testament Church.
2. In prayer we respond to God's Word to us, recounting His truth, confessing our sin, and giving ourselves to Him.
3. This includes praying the words of Scripture and also personal prayers of response to God.
4. It also includes our songs that we sing to God
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Coloss. 3:16
 - a. We respond to God's Word in songs of various types, including prayers of praise, confession, and instruction.

b. This is an essential part of how the Word dwells richly in BRCC!

5. Spoken and sung prayers and praise are the natural response of those who have had God's Word reveal God's glory, their sin, and the overwhelming grace of God given to us in Christ

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, **that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.** 1 Peter 2:9

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name. Hebrews 13:15

6. This means that our times of singing and prayer are not optional add-ons to hearing the Word - they form the heart of our response to God.

D. Worship is a communal expression of the church that strengthens our bonds with God and one another

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and **to the fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

1. The fellowship - our corporate worship has a horizontal aspect as well.

2. As we gather for corporate worship, God speaks to us as His people through His Word, meets and strengthens us in the sacraments, and we respond as a community in spoken and sung prayers.

3. When we meet God together in this way it naturally sustains and strengthens our relationships with one another,

4. This is why merely listening to a teaching via podcast and singing along with our favorite Christian CD is NOT worship in the NT.

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I treasure corporate worship?

1. God uniquely meets with us when we gather!

2. Do I let this critical gathering structure my life? (Sabbath principle)

3. Do I come prepared to worship?

a. Do I get to bed early Saturday evening so I awake refreshed and ready to worship?

b. Do I get up early so I am not rushed in getting to worship?

c. Do I get to the gathering EARLY so I can fellowship and prepare my heart to hear from and respond to God?

4. Do I participate in every part of worship?

a. Do I actively listen to God's Word as we are called to worship?

b. Do I pray and sing ROBUSTLY in response to our magnificent God and His glorious grace?

c. Do I expectantly come to the Lord's Table, knowing the Spirit WILL meet me in the sacrament and feed my soul?

d. Do I spend time in fellowship with others to grow in community?

5. I urge you - come prepared and expectant to worship - God will meet you, shape your soul, and fill you with deep joy.

B. The Lord's Supper - The Table of Christ's Presence

1. We celebrate the sacrament of Communion - not just a ritual, but the actual experience of God by the Holy Spirit
2. But we must exercise faith to receive the blessings of God's Presence as we come to the Table
3. Come, confess the faith, receive the Sacrament in faith, experience the Presence and blessing of God!

The Church - The Community of Worship

Acts 2:42; Colossians 3:16

October 25, 2020

Communion

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Church; catechism; worship; means of grace

The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24–26

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16