

Sermon October 16, 2016 - Pentecost 22

## HEALING WORSHIP

### The Written Word

#### Various Texts



Dear Friends in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philemon 3)

The words of the psalmist come to our ears now when he said: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

God’s word is the theme for our meditation this morning, continuing on our series on worship.

It is my prayer and my desire that as we continue with this series you will have a fresh

outlook and a renewed appreciation for our liturgy and our worship services. For in them God blesses us with all kinds of gifts and brings about healing for our souls, therefore our theme of Healing worship.

All through these several weeks we have learned that Worship begins with God, it begins with his actions as he comes to us bringing healing of the soul. Worship is not something we initiate but it is our response to God’s goodness.

And because it begins with God worship is a mountain top experience. For this we have been reading Hebrews chapter 12, ([Hebrews 12:22-24](#)) which I would like to ask that somebody read please, Hebrews chapter 12, verses 22 to 24: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,<sup>23</sup> and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”

Now, as we have said before, this text refers to God’s kingdom as a whole, but then again it is here in Church, in spirit and truth, that God’s Kingdom reveals itself and comes to each one of us, which in turn enables us to live our lives in Christ, in faith and victory. Therefore this text in a way summarizes what we do here in Worship services every time we gather with one another.

And what we do, our responses, are because of each of God’s gifts that come to us through and as we follow our liturgy.

Each one of the elements of our liturgy provides a gift to each one. And today’s gift in the liturgy is God’s Word.

#### **The Scripture Readings**

Through the service we come now to the mountain top where the Lord has prepared us a meal, a meal rich in all kinds of blessings where the main course is our salvation.

That’s what the prophet said would happen, if somebody would please, turn to ([Isaiah 25:6](#)) Isaiah 25, and please read verse 6: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.”

It is through His word and the sacraments that He nourishes us and not just with simple meals but a banquet, a banquet of word and his body and blood.

But not only nourishes us, God's word is how God communicates with us. It is how he talks to us. He's the reason why we're together for worship and what he is going to tell us.

We know that God is present in his Word. And where God is, there are his gifts of salvation, peace, and joy. Other aspects of worship, of course, delight us, but what surpasses everything else is the very presence and power of God through his word and that's where we out to spend more time.

In the Scripture readings, various voices and situations may be brought to our attention; but the one speaking through them all is God himself. He has something very important to say to us about our life in the present and for the future.

Ad what God has to say is different for each one. We all listen, we all read, but the message, the comfort, the lessons learned might be different for each one. Therefore as God's word talks to us individually and directly, we not only listen, we also are to learn and practice what we learn.

### **What the Readings Are**

The Christian church through the ages has assigned readings to each Sunday and special occasions, using the church year calendar. In addition to focusing on the life and teaching of Jesus, these readings contain other important teachings of God and events in the life of Israel and of the early church. This list of readings, then, gives us the opportunity to hear a cross section of the Bible in the course of a year. The three readings are from the Old Testament, from a letter or epistle in the New Testament, and from the gospels.

In recent decades, the most widely used list of readings follows a three-year cycle, the readings are divided in three Series, A, B and C, one per year, which cover much more content of the Scripture.

Now, why should we know that... just give me God's word, that's all I care for... right? Sure, however the point of sharing this information with you is so that you realize that in the three year cycle, and if you were in Church every single Sunday, or if you kept track of the readings, you would have heard or read the entire Bible, at least in its relevant content.

### **The Old Testament Reading**

The first reading from Scripture in the Divine Service is usually from the Old Testament. This part of the Bible contains the story of the Israelites, whom God chose for his own people and from whom he raised up a Savior.

Most often, the Old Testament reflects the Gospel Reading for the day. This is possible because the Old Testament points to the coming of Christ and the Gospels show the fulfilment of that promise.

### **The Epistle Reading**

As you have noticed, we also read from the Letters or Epistles section of the Scriptures. That is because of practical teaching they offer. As you see, when the early Christians gathered for worship, they probably followed the pattern of worship long used by God's people, alternating between praise, prayer, and the reading of God's past revelation in the Old Testament. They also realized that they were gathering because the God of the Old Testament had newly revealed himself in Jesus. Therefore, the early

church put Jesus at the center of their worship, reading the gospel accounts of his life and work. However, as the apostles soon learned, not everyone in the growing church understood how everything Jesus said and did fit together. Nor did they always understand the implications for daily life. Sometimes they bickered. Sometimes they forgot what they had been taught.

Sometimes they got discouraged or even scared. That's why Paul and a few of the other apostles wrote letters or epistles to the churches and asked that the letters also be read when the churches gathered for worship.

The New Testament contains 21 such letters. They (the letters) speak of topics that young churches and believers face, and they instruct the readers in correct doctrine and Christian living. Thus, when an epistle is read today, we expect a direct treatment of and encouragement for Christian living.

### **The Gospel Reading**

Now, think back to the warm, secure, and tender feelings you've had on Christmas Eves while listening to the story of Jesus' birth. Now let your heart and mind jump to the thrill of trumpets and choirs heralding "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!" Those same emotions are available to you every Sunday as you hear the Gospel Reading. True, God is speaking in all of the Scripture used in the service, but the Gospel draws us to Jesus, our Redeemer, our friend, our brother, the one who has tenderly brought us to the Father. That's why, before we hear the Gospel Reading, we offer a word of praise. When the Gospel has been announced, the congregation sings "Glory to you, O Lord."

This shout welcomes our Lord, Jesus Christ as he comes in his Word. He is truly there and speaking to us. And when the reading has concluded, the enthusiastic praise is even clearer: "Praise to you, O Christ." We do so because we know that the Gospel belongs to us all. Our Lord speaks to us there. By faith we recognize his voice.

This is no ordinary message! Therefore, we focus our attention and receive his message with joy.

### **Receiving the message with joy!**

That's what God desires for us that we receive his word with joy! His Word comes to us for our salvation and also for teaching and training. The Gospel of John reminds us in chapter 20, (John 20:31) of our Salvation, would anyone please read verse 31: "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

And Paul reminds us in his second letter to (2 Timothy 3:16:17) Timothy chapter 3, of teaching, training and more; would somebody please read verses 16 and 17: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

Wow, how important it is to hear God's word being read to us in Church, in worship. Yes it is important that through the sermon an explanation and application be given, but reading alone is of great importance. And not only listening God's word being read to us, but reading it ourselves is also of great importance, so nobody will deceive us and so that we continue exploring God's rich gifts to us given in his word.

That's what the congregation at Berea did when they heard the word preached. Would anyone please read Acts 17:11: "Now these Jews were more noble than those

in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

### **Conclusion**

Hearing and reading the Scripture is inherently included in the third commandment God has given us to sanctify the Sabbath, to rest in God alone, in His word and all his gifts. For in there we are refreshed in the Gospel of Christ, there we are reminded of our sins and failures, but uplifted in the forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness that Christ won for us on the cross of Calvary as he was sacrificed, killed, and buried for us. Thereby taking our sins and failures, but at his resurrection on the third day, we are given a new life, victory and the hope of a new life in Him. (Law and Gospel)

Thanks be to God for His word and for the opportunity to hear and read it.

### ***For Exploration***

1. What do the following passages say about the use of Scripture?
  - a) Luke 10:16; 11:28;
  - b) John 8:47;
  - c) 1 Thess. 2:13
2. Some of the links between the Gospel and the Old Testament Reading are less obvious as we heard in the sermon. Let's do some exercises: What link do you see, in the readings below?
  - a. Fourth Sunday after Pentecost (Series A): Ex. 19:2–8a and Matt. 9:35–10:8
  - b. Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Series C): Is. 66:18–23 and Luke 13:22–30