



Service of Word and Sacrament: An Explanation

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Part One: We Gather

Introduction

Welcome to worship this morning!

In worship today we are taking time to review the first section of the liturgy we call Service of Word and Sacrament. We will pause at various places to hear a brief explanation of what we do in our worship. In the first section of the service we gather together and prepare ourselves for the high points of worship, the Word and the Sacrament.

Our liturgy has its roots in the ancient rite of the Western church. Its primary focus is on the one true God who is *for us* in Christ. It leads us to joyful thanksgiving as we partake of the benefits of God's Word and then it dismisses us in the peace of Christ. Here we will be encouraged to serve the Lord with gladness and to tell everyone what he has done.

There are three dialogues that take place in our worship. God speaks to us. This is the foremost dialogue and is sometimes called sacramental. This is God's action: God acts; God speaks; God forgives. The second is called sacrificial; we speak to God. This is our response to God's forgiving action in Christ: we pray; we praise; we give thanks; we sing. The third dialogue that takes place is between worshipers. We speak to one another as we worship. We encourage and teach one another. We share what we believe about our God and ourselves as we confess our sins, our faith, and as we worship with all our hearts.

Hymn

Service of Word and Sacrament begins with singing. This first hymn is called the entrance hymn. It draws our thoughts from the concerns of life and directs them to the majesty of our triune God. Singing this hymn helps to bind us together for worship. It reminds us that it is our high privilege to be gathered together in the presence of the living God. This hymn boldly announces "Christ is here!" We will begin by singing the entrance hymn, number 491, *O Master of the Loving Heart*.

Greeting, Confession of Sins, Absolution

Please turn to page 26 in *Christian Worship*. Following the hymn, the presiding minister begins the liturgy with the apostolic greeting. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you." This serves as a blessing of grace to us from the triune God. We then repeat God's blessing to the pastor by saying "And also with you."

Psalm 24 tells us that those who have clean hands and a pure heart can stand in the holy place of God. For this reason, the pastor will, at

times, lead this section of worship on the main floor of the church. This highlights the need for forgiveness to enter the presence of God. If not on the main floor, our pastor does not approach the altar until after confession. Martin Luther described the entire life of a believer as one of repentance. Together, as a congregation, we confess our inherited and actual sins and express our need for the Lord's forgiveness.

After the Confession of Sins, the presiding minister extends to us the joyous word of God's forgiveness. This announcement of forgiveness is called the Absolution. Our Lord Jesus gave his Church the ministry of the keys to bind the sins of impenitent people and to forgive those who repent. We have called the presiding minister to do this publicly on our behalf. The Absolution stresses the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death for the sins of the world. What a joy to hear this assuring word and, in faith, to live by it!

After the absolution we speak the simple word: Amen. With this short word we say that we believe and take to heart the good news of God's forgiveness in Christ.

The pastor will now begin the liturgy and lead us through the Greeting, the Confession of Sins, and the Absolution (CW p.26).

Prayer and Praise

Lord, Have Mercy (Kyrie)

"Lord, Have Mercy" (Kyrie) begins this section. This is a prayer for the presence of God. It asks that God would extend his loving kindness for the common needs of all people in the Church throughout the world. After each petition spoken by the pastor, we respond by singing "Lord, have mercy." This is another way of saying "Lord, help us" or "Lord, hear our prayer." We sing these responses from the depths of believing hearts.

The pastor will now lead us in the prayer, "Lord, Have Mercy." (CW p. 27)

O Lord, Our Lord (Song of Praise)

After receiving the announcement of God's forgiveness and praying "Lord, Have Mercy" we hear the pastor exclaim, "The works of the Lord are great and glorious; his name is worthy of praise." These words lead us into the canticle "O Lord, Our Lord." In this vibrant song of praise, we rejoice in what God has done for us and in what he continues to do

for us through Christ. This is joyous praise that revels in the vast and awesome salvation of our God.

Let us now listen as the pastor introduces the canticle and then sing it with joy, faith, and strength in our hearts and voices.

Prayer of the Day

The pastor invites us to pray with the introductory words “Let us pray.” After a brief pause he will read the Prayer of the Day. This is the first part of the liturgy that varies from Sunday to Sunday. This short prayer brings our hearts and minds before the throne of God and asks him to bless his people on this particular Sunday of the church year.

The prayer ends with a well-known formula: “through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you [the Father] and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.” Highlight the words “who lives” in your memory. These words remind us of the resurrection of Jesus, the reason for our worship and prayers.

At the end of the Prayer of the Day we sing “Amen.” We join the pastor in prayer and, with our amen, proclaim “This is also our prayer.”

The pastor will now lead us in the Prayer of the Day.