



Service of Word and Sacrament: An Explanation

Written by Pastor Wayne Schultz (with slight adaptations)

©1996 by Northwestern Publishing House

Part Two: The Word and Our Response

Service of Word and Sacrament: An Explanation

Written by Pastor Wayne Schultz (with slight adaptations)

©1996 by Northwestern Publishing House

The Word

We have reached the first of the twin peaks of Service of Word and Sacrament: the mighty Word of God that we have come to hear. This Word reassures us that God has not deserted his wayward people. This is not the uncertain word of human beings. This is the Word from God, the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. This is the Word that gives life when it is read, preached, and believed. This is the Word that God wants us to apply to ourselves and take to the people of the world. So we listen carefully. We hear God's law, sharper than a double-edged sword. It brings us to our knees so that we cry out for mercy. Then, with joy and gladness we hear of God's grace, centered in the person, message, and work of Christ. Here is the bread and water of life. Let us rejoice in these words from our God. Alleluia!

First Lesson

Except for the Sundays after Easter, the First Lesson is a reading from the history and the prophecies of Old Testament times. These are the very words our Christian ancestors heard in the centuries before Christ was born. The First Lesson often corresponds to the theme of the Gospel for the day. At the end of the reading, the presiding minister will say, "This is the Word of the Lord."

We continue with the First Lesson.

Psalm of the Day

Christian hymnody has its roots in the book of Psalms, which served as the hymnal for Old Testament believers. Thus, the Psalm of the Day naturally follows the First Lesson and usually is sung. The various types of psalms deal with the depths of life on the backdrop of God's tender mercies. They express our deepest sorrow and our highest joy. When we sing the psalm together, the congregation proclaims God's Word to themselves and to one another.

Our Psalm of the Day is Psalm 19 (p.70). We will sing the refrain and the verses together.

Second Lesson

The Second Lesson is from the New Testament letters of Paul or another apostle or from Revelation. This lesson from God's Word often stresses Christian teaching, Christian faith, and Christian living. At the end of the reading, the presiding minister will again remind us that these words are from our God when he says, "This is the Word of the Lord."

We continue with the Second Lesson.

Verse of the Day

The reading of the lessons is interspersed with musical responses. We now come to a response called the Verse of the Day. The verse is a Scripture verse framed with Alleluias. During Lent, the Alleluias are usually omitted. The verse serves as a prelude to the Gospel. There is a special verse for each Sunday in the church year that is intended to be sung by a choir. If the choir does not sing the Verse of the Day, the congregation sings the general verse on page 30. When we sing the general verse together the congregation proclaims God's Word to themselves and to one another once again.

On Thursday we will sing the general refrain. On Sunday the school children will sing the appointed verse of the Day.

Gospel

In the past soldiers put down their weapons and kings removed their crowns when the Gospel was read. As a sign of special honor to the Savior, we stand for the reading of the Gospel. We have come for this moment. Christ is the central message of the Gospel – his life; his words of law and gospel; his blessing and assignment to his Church; and his promise to return. Here we see the empty cross and tomb. We hear the familiar news that is always new, good, and refreshing.

After reading the Gospel the presiding minister will look up and say, "This is the Gospel of the Lord." Our response to this announcement is a short burst of praise as we sing "Praise be to you, O Christ!" This is called the Gospel Acclamation.

We continue with the Gospel. We will respond with the Gospel Acclamation. (p. 30)

Hymn of the Day

The next hymn is called the Hymn of the Day. It is the major hymn for this morning's worship. The hymns chosen to be sung at this place in the service are representative of the best of the hymnody in the Christian church. Let there be joyous singing of this prominent hymn!

We will sing hymn number 464.

Sermon

The sermon, the final part in the section of The Word, is normally based on the text of one of the lessons of the day.

In the sermon the preacher unfolds the meaning of the biblical text. The sermon is a proclamation of the power, salvation, and counsel of our God. Through the sermon our preacher nourishes us as disciples of Christ.

We continue with the sermon.

Nicene Creed

After hearing the lessons and sermon we stand to confess our faith in the triune God. We use the Nicene Creed, which is a summary and profession of the Christian faith that has been in the hearts and on the lips of Christians since the fourth century. When we say “We believe,” we are declaring that this is a confession of the whole Christian Church on earth concerning the unchanging teachings of the Scriptures and the person of Christ. As believers we join our voices to confess God’s truth about himself and his plan of salvation.

We continue with the Nicene Creed. (CW p. 31)

Offering

We have heard God’s Word. Now, as a congregation of believers we gather our thank offerings and place them on the Lord’s altar. These offerings are the fruits of faith. They are to be used for the work of the Lord in our community, through the work of our congregation, and in the world, through the efforts of the members of our synod.

The offering will now be received. During the musical interlude, we have a few moments to reflect on the meaning of God’s Word for our lives in today’s world.

Prayer of the Church and Lord’s Prayer

In the Prayer of the Church on page 32, we pray for the needs of the Christian Church, for the advance of the local parish, for the welfare of the nations of the earth, for the success of the worthy institutions of society, and for the support of those with special needs. This prayer and others like it are spoken responsively. Included in the prayer is a place for special intercessions. There is also an opportunity for silent prayer, when we can bring our personal concerns to the throne of God. The Lord’s Prayer concludes the prayers in this part of the liturgy.

We continue with the Prayer of the Church.