

A Walk through the Worship Service, Part III

Last time we considered the Prayer of Confession through the Doxology. Here we consider the New Testament reading through the Benediction, as well as other special elements that periodically take place during the worship service.

New Testament Reading

Continuing the theme of two-way communication between God and His people (through His Word and prayer), God speaks to us again through the New Testament reading. As with the Old Testament reading, this reading either supports the sermon text, is part of the sermon text, or reinforces some other element of the service. As with the previous reading, it, too, emphasizes the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation in Christ.

Sermon

The sermon is a prayerfully prepared exposition of God's Word focusing on a specific passage of Scripture, typically presented in sequence through an entire book of the Bible. Its goals are to explain, illustrate, and apply God's truth in a clear and winsome fashion so that God the Father will be glorified, the Lord Jesus will be exalted, and His people will be equipped, challenged, and encouraged to follow Him. As enabled by the grace of God and supported by the regular prayers of His people, sermons at Covenant are delivered with sincerity, urgency, and conviction, believing by faith that the preaching of God's Word is His primary means of building His Church.

Benediction

God has the final word in the service through the benediction, or "good word." It is a word of blessing, comfort, and assurance taken directly from scripture. While there are different ways of faithfully offering the benediction, ministers at Covenant typically invite the congregation to bow their heads in order to divert their gaze from the minister (who himself is but a sinner in need of grace) and instead focus upon the audible assurance of God Himself through His Word.

Postlude

The postlude is the triumphant musical conclusion to the service. It sends God's people into a new week with the firm reminder that though we face many afflictions in this life, God's triumphant grace in Christ is our eternal theme. It also serves as the gateway to the time of congregational fellowship that follows the service, which itself is a foretaste of heaven.

Special Service Elements

While each of the above worship elements are included each week, there are other important elements that are included periodically as well. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is celebrated on the first Sunday of each month and includes a confession of faith taken from a historic creed of the faith, such as the Apostles' Creed. The sacrament of Baptism is celebrated as often as is needed, typically several times a year. Once or twice each year missionary teams are commissioned, church elders and deacons are ordained and installed, and new members are publically recognized and prayed for. On occasion we welcome special musical guests, but however the order of service may vary, our emphasis is always on the grace of God through Jesus Christ according to the truth of His Word.

May this walk through the worship service be used of God to help inform and remind you of why we worship as we do so that your heart, too, may rejoice and give glory to God!