

Praise Today

Contemporary Worship Forms in the Context of the Historical Service
Volume 4, Number 1 + Summer 1998

EVENING CHAPEL

On Wednesday, May 10, 1998, Adam Pringle and Benjamin J. Tomczack, both Seniors, did a special service for evening chapel at Michigan Lutheran Seminary (MLS).

Special Evening Chapel Service

May 20, 1998

Meditation: *Adam G. Pringle*

Liturgy: *Benjamin J. Tomczack*

Hymn: *Be Still My Soul*

Reading: 1 Timothy 4:4-16

Psalm 25

- L- To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;
- C- In you I trust, O my God.
- L- No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame, but they will be put to shame who are treacherous without excuse.
- C- Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths;
- L- Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
- C- Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
- L- Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.
- C- Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

- L- Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted.
- C- The troubles of my heart have multiplied; free me from my anguish.
- L- Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away all my sins.
- C- May integrity and uprightness protect me, because my hope is in you.
- L- Redeem Israel, O God, from all their troubles!

Reading: John 17: 20-26

Hymn: 436-- *Jesus Shepherd of the Sheep*

Meditation: Proverbs 16:1-3, 9

Prayer: (Sung by Adam Pringle) "If I have wounded any soul today, if I have caused one's foot to go astray, if I have walked in my own willful way, dear Lord, forgive. Forgive the sins I have confessed to Thee. Forgive the secret sins I do not see. Oh guide. watch o'er me and my Keeper be. Dear Lord, Amen."

Hymn: 449-- *Children of the Heavenly Father*

Proverbs 16:1-3, 9 - "To man belong the plans of the heart, but from the Lord comes the reply of the tongue. All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but his motives are weighed by the Lord. Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."

Dear Christian Friends,

This is it. The time that many of you have been waiting for. No more classes, no more books, no more teacher's dirty looks. Tutors, you get to take a rest for a while. Freshmen, you've finally made it through your first year of high school. Sophomores, you're going to be upper-classmen next year--a big responsibility. Juniors, you're going to be the big guys next year. Plus you get that cool class with President Prange. Finally Seniors, your high school days are over.

That may be bitter sweet. Brit-Lit's over with... and physics... not that those classes are bad or anything! For you guys it's time to move on, well most of you anyway. In less than three days we're going to be standing in that gym and getting our diplomas and saying good bye.

Good bye to MLS... good bye to our teachers... good bye to the dorm... good bye to your friends for maybe the rest of your life. Well, perhaps you're going to college with some of your friends so you won't need to say a full fledged good bye to them, some of you, like myself, won't say good bye to Saginaw, and you defiantly won't say good bye to your memories.

All of you are going to be feeling that someday. Maybe not tomorrow, maybe not when you're a senior, but you will feel that lost feeling someday, that alone feeling--but you shouldn't. God says, "Surely I am with you, even till the end of the age."

Isn't that a great promise from God? However, we still seem to keep telling God that we are in control. We want what's best for us, and so we think that we can do anything, and by ourselves. I'm going to be the best wide receiver in the NFC. I'm going to be a better piano player than Liberace. I'm going to be the next Picasso. Things change. Not because of us. We have no control over our lives. After we leave this school, what's going to happen? We have no control! Kind of scary huh? It shouldn't be.

We may not be able to control our lives. We may not be able to do what we want when we get out of school, but someone is able to. "In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps."

We need not worry. Our lives are in good hands. Our sinful, darkened lives, are in good hands. Why? How can God protect us, even when we push him off to the side to try and conduct our own lives? Because his love is so great. According to Psalm 118, "His love endures forever."

As we leave this school, whether or not we come back to this school or not, our lives are going to be lead by God. What a great assurance. We read Psalm 23, selected verses: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Don't worry about whether you're going to go the right college. Don't worry about whether you're going to pick the right friends. Don't worry about loosing touch with your friends. God's there to protect us. He will from now, until forever. "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life."

God turns peoples lives around. Whether or not you may realize it at the time, it's always for your good. We read Romans 8:28, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Again, I say don't worry. You can't control your life, and boy that's a great thing.

Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, and fellow class members of the class of 1998, depart in peace. You're lives are in good, even, the best hands!

Amen.

Graduation isn't the end of learning;
It's the beginning of another step.
Commencement means beginning,
It's not an ending.
Lifelong we learn, study and grow,
So that eternally we stand in
God's glow.

Praise Today is an independent publication serving pastors and worship leaders of confessional Lutheranism. It is published quarterly and relies heavily on the submissions of subscribers to share their ideas of worship framed in the historical orders of service with application to the needs of Christians today. Comments and submissions may be sent to:

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Back issues are available by writing to the editor at the address above.

IT IS FINISHED

The following is a three-part Stewardship Bible Study developed by Mark Bergmann (WELS, Brookfield, WI). The three parts look at our salvation: It Is Finished; our new lives: The Meaning of Life and Are You an Aroma?

PART 1 OF 3—1.IT IS FINISHED

- “...Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” **Leviticus 19:2** [also see **1 Peter 1:16**]
- “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” **Isaiah 59:2**
- “...without holiness no one will see the Lord.” **Hebrews 12:14**

Through these and hundreds of other clear Scripture passages, we find that we must be sinless to stand in the presence of God. Sin actually separates us from God. We often say “holy” means sinless, but to be holy actually means to be “set apart.” God is “set apart” from us because He is sinless and we are not.

- “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” Romans 3:23
- “For the wages of sin is death...” Romans 6:23
- “...How then can we be saved? ...all our righteous acts are like filthy rags...” Isaiah 64:6

We read in Scripture that we are sinful, and that if we die in our sins we will be eternally and completely separated from God in hell. By our very nature, our human nature, we are opposed to God in all we do. Even our best efforts at doing good are tainted with sin. Our most fervent worship of God and our acts of kindness to others are spoiled by many shortcomings including impure motives and insufficient commitment.

- “... now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, ... This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. ... Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” **Romans 3:21 - 4:5**

God also tells us that He wants all of us to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God wants us to be holy so that we can be with Him in heaven. Out of His great love, God sent His own Son, to live a perfect life in our place, and to suffer separation from the Father on the cross, all to pay the penalty for our sins.

Christ now offers to each of us His own perfect righteousness to take as our own. Those who accept Christ's righteousness as their own are then holy and able to be with God. Those who still try to go to God with their own righteousness always fail. The fact is that all of us deserve to go to hell and be eternally and completely cut off from God and His goodness, but when we accept Christ's righteousness, we are then declared by God to be brothers and sisters of Christ and co-heirs with Him. You see, when we cast aside our own sin filled righteousness and replace it with Christ's righteousness, we then meet God's requirement and can stand in His presence.

Some people believe that God forgives them because they try their best. By earthly standards they can be very good and decent people, but they still cling to their own righteousness. They have rejected Christ's righteousness and are headed for hell. God's plan of salvation is very simple. Christ did it all for us. There is NOTHING for us to do. When he cried from the cross, “It is finished,” the task was completed for us. There is nothing for us to add. When we try to add our own efforts to gain God's forgiveness, then we are no longer trusting in Christ alone.

Exactly how could Christ suffer in our place? Can we really understand how this works? No, we do not fully understand how Christ could take our place, but we can believe it.

FOR DISCUSSION

The Grand Canyon is about one mile wide and over one mile deep. If someone tried to jump across, what would happen? Would it make any difference how good of an athlete the person is? How is this like trying to use our own righteousness to please God?

When Jesus cried, “It is finished.” His work of salvation was complete. Why is it comforting to know that Jesus has done it all for us and that there is nothing left to do?

PRAYER

Dear Lord, praise and glory be to your name. You have given to us the righteousness of Christ. Let us daily remember the worthlessness of our own righteousness. You have made us a co-heirs with Christ and guaranteed us a place in the mansions of heaven. Help us to regularly study your Word, that we may grow in faith and become better equipped to be your humble servants. We ask this in the name of our dear Savior, Amen.

OPTIONAL READING

Read **Romans 3:9 - 4:8**; and **7:14 - 8:17**.

What additional thoughts does the Apostle Paul mention in these sections?

SUGGESTED HYMNS

Sing or read a hymn about taking Christ's righteousness as your own.

Jesus Your Blood and Righteousness

- # 376 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [371 in the Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

- # 382 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [370 in the Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

Rock of Ages Cleft for Me

- # 389 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [376 in the Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

Your Works, Not Mine O Christ

- # 401 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [380 in the Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

PART 2 OF 3—THE MEANING OF LIFE

- ... I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. ...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory ...the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise. **Isaiah 43:1-21**
- ...They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor. **Isaiah 60:21**
- ... You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. **1 Cor 6:19 +20**

God claims us as His own. We have no other purpose for existence other than God's purpose. Our lives have no meaning or value outside of God's purpose for us. God tells us two reasons why He claims us. First, that He made us. Secondly, that He paid a great price to take us to heaven. The price was the life and death of Jesus.

- Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment." **Matthew 22:37+38**

- "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me." **Matthew 10:37+38**

God demands to be first in our lives. Our relationship to God is primary, and all else comes after that. In Isaiah 42:8 God declares, "I will not give my glory to another." When anything begins to come between you and your God, whether material possessions, career, hobbies, or family; your faith is in jeopardy. God will not take second place. Our "old man" (our sinful human nature) continually works to replace God with other things. Our "new man" desires to keep God first in the throne of our hearts. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit do we have the weapons to battle our sinful nature. As Christians we daily battle evil inside and outside ourselves by using the "full armor of God" described in the last chapter of Ephesians. The 5 defensive parts of the armor are Truth, Righteousness, Readiness that comes from the Gospel of Peace, Faith, and Salvation. The one offensive weapon is the Word of God.

- And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. **Colossians 3:17**
- ... offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God --this is your spiritual act of worship. **Romans 12:1**
- So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. **1 Cor 10:31**

As Christians, everything that we do should serve to worship God and give glory to Him alone. This is the reason for living - to worship and praise the Lord of Glory. Our Creator made us for this very purpose. As we grow in faith our lives contain more and more spiritual fruits (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, righteousness, truth, etc.) and fewer works of the flesh (jealousy, evil desires, greed, anger, slander, hatred, selfish ambitions, and the like). See the "optional readings" section of this study for more on our life in Christ.

- My soul finds rest in God alone **Psalms 62:1**
- Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; ... you will fill me with joy in your presence. **Acts 2:26-28**; also **Psalms 16:9-11**
- May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him **Romans 15:13**

We were created with a need that only God can fill. Only a relationship with God can fill the desire of our hearts. That's the way God made us. Solomon found out the hard way that there is no fulfillment in other things - he tried to find meaning to life in earthly power, in hard work, in sex, in wine, in wealth, in laughter, in wisdom and learning, but his search was fruitless. He only found grief and sorrow in these endeavors as recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. On this earth, God brings us joy and peace in the midst of sorrow and turmoil. As Christians, we know that our eternal home is with our Savior in heaven.

For Discussion

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will." **Romans 12:2**

What does "transformed by the renewing of your mind" mean?

Note: The optional readings listed below may help in answering this question.

Prayer

By Your blood our souls were bought; By Your life salvation wrought; By Your light our feet are taught, Lord to follow You. In Your promise firm we stand; None can take us from Your hand. Speak, we hear, at Your command, We will follow You. Father draw us to Your Son; We with joy will follow on Till the work of grace is done, There to live with You. Amen

[CW436 - *Jesus Shepherd of the Sheep*; text by Henry Cook; public domain]

Optional Reading

Read **Colossians 3:1-17**. And then, if you have time, also read expanded explanations in **Ephesians 4:17-5:21** and **Galatians 5:16-6:10**.

1. What words are used to describe your earthly nature (old man)?
2. What words are used to describe your spiritual self (new man)?

These 3 sections of Scripture describe our life by the spirit in general terms. The Colossians and Ephesians passages then continue by applying these to the specific earthly relationships of wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters.

Suggested Hymns

Sing or read a hymn about living for Our Master.

We are the Lord's

- # 427 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [453 in The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

Stand Up!--Stand Up for Jesus

- # 474 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [451 in The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

Christ Be My Leader

- # 367 in Christian Worship (CW)

PART 3 OF 3--ARE YOU AN **AROMA** ?

- I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. **Psalm 50:9-11**

- "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." **Acts 17:25**

- "Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me." **Job 41:11**

Everything and everyone in the world belongs to God. Not only that, but God is also all powerful and is fully capable of doing all things. Our Lord can and does advance His kingdom and carry out His plans without our aid or assistance.

As Christians, everything that we think, say, or do, should serve to worship God and give all glory to Him alone [**Rom 12:1; 1Cor 10:31**].

God calls us to be "salt" and "light" in this rotting and darkened world of sin so that others might see Christ in us and be led thereby to praise the Lord [**Mat 5:13-16**]. God also calls us to be the "aroma of Christ." To those who reject the gospel we are "the smell of death," but to those who come to believe in Christ we are "the fragrance of life" [**2 Cor 2:14-16**]. We function as salt, as light, as fragrance, and as aroma when we reflect God's love in our daily lives.

- ...motives are weighed by the LORD. **Prov 16:2**
- "If you love me, you will obey what I command." **John 14:15**
- "...this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on." **Luke 21:1-4**
- ...He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts... **1 Cor 4:5**

The Lord not only judges us for what we do, but also for why we do it. God looks at our motives. Do we act out of love or out of selfishness? A Christian is salt and light because he is filled with God's love and can not hold that great love in, but must let it overflow in acts of kindness and love. The motives of our sinful human nature, or "old man," are always improper and selfish. As Christians though, we have been born again and have a "new man" who continually battles against our old nature. The Holy Spirit strengthens us for this battle through our regular contact with the Word of God which we find in the Scriptures and in the sacraments.

- Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **John 17:17**
- Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. **2 Tim 2:15**
- All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. **2 Tim 3:16-17**

God has chosen His Word as the means through which He sends us His Holy Spirit. We call the Scriptures, Holy Communion, and Baptism the "Means of Grace" because these are the three places that we find the Word of God. These are the means that God uses to bring us to faith and to keep us in faith. God's Word is our spiritual food. We grow in faith through studying and taking to heart what God tells us in His Word.

Here is a summary of what we have found in the Scripture passages that were presented in parts 2 and 3 of this Bible study:

1. God owns everything that exists because He made it all.
2. God owns everyone in the whole world because He made us and He sent His Son to die on the cross for us.

3. God does not need anything from us or from anyone else. God already possesses all things.
4. God demands to be first in our lives. God will not take second place.
5. As Christians, everything that we do in our daily lives should serve to worship God and give glory to Him alone.
6. Only a proper relationship with God can fully fill our every desire. God made everyone this way.
7. God not only judges what we do, but He also looks at the motives behind our actions.
8. Our motive for everything should be love for God and love for others.
9. We grow in faith through studying and taking to heart what God tells us in His Word.

For Discussion

1. Should you serve on a committee or work group at church out of a sense of duty (because God wants you to), or because you want to express your love for God? Explain your answer.
2. How do you put God first in your life at school or at work?
3. Why should you study the Scriptures regularly?
4. Try to list at least 5 situations or places where you could have regular contact with God's Word.
5. Why should you take Holy Communion regularly?
6. Why should you go to church each week?
7. Should you decide how much money you want to give to your church by determining your fair share of the congregational budget, or should the amount be set by your love of God and as an act of worship?
8. Why should you tell your unchurched neighbor about Jesus?

Prayer

O Lord of Heaven and earth and sea, To you all praise and glory be! How can we thank you properly Who gives us all? For means of grace, for sins forgiven, For souls redeemed and hopes of heaven, What can to you, O Lord be given, Who gives us all? Dear Lord, from you we all derive Our life, our gifts, our power to give. Oh, may we ever with you live, Who gives us all! Amen

[CW487 - *O Lord of Heaven and Earth and Sea*; text by Christopher Wordsworth 1807 - 1885, alt.; public domain]

Optional Readings

- Romans 11:33 to 12:2.
- 1John 3:11-24
- Malachi 1:6-14; 3:6-18

Suggested Hymns

Sing or read a hymn about reflecting God's love in our lives.

Forgive Us, Lord

- #482 in Christian Worship (CW)

Lord of Glory, You have Bought Us

- #486 in Christian Worship (CW)
- [#442 in The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH)]

Love in Christ is Strong and Living

- #490 in Christian Worship (CW)

Allelujah
Allelujah
Allelujah
αλληλυσια

Alleluia, Song of Sweetness

It is an ancient custom in the Christian church that a "farewell to Alleluia" is sung at the close of the liturgy on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Traditionally Christians do not sing "Alleluia" then until Easter morning; this symbolizes our voluntary restraint of praise during the penitential season of Lent.

Submitted by Daniel Witte, WELS, Westmont, IL

- An 11th century hymn sung to the tune of Hymn 26
- Translated by John Mason Neale. We also remember Neale for translating such hymns as "Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel" and "All Glory, Laud and Honor." Neale died in 1866 on Transfiguration Sunday.

Alleluia, Song of Sweetness

1. "Alleluia" song of sweetness, Voice of joy that cannot die-- "Alleluia" is the anthem Ever dear to choirs on high. "Praise the Lord, our King Almighty"--Like loud thunder thus they cry.
2. "Alleluia" rings your echo, True Jerusalem and free. "Alleluia," with our mother, Singing, We all wish to be. But by Babylon's sad waters Mourning exiles now are we.
3. "Alleluia" cannot always Be our song while here below; "Alleluia" our transgressions Make us for a while forego, For the solemn time is coming When our Savior's blood will flow.
4. Therefore in our hymns we pray you, Grant us, blessed Trinity, At the last to keep your Easter In the home we long to see--There to you forever singing "Alleluia" joyfully.

The hymn in its typical public domain (uncopyrighted) form can be found at the Commission on Worship's page on the WELS web site. Rev. Witte updated the version found there a few years ago to improve the rhymes. (Neale could get away with rhyming something like "high" and "eternity" but that doesn't sound like a good rhyme to most ears today.)

Rev. Witte's source for the hymn was Concordia's "Proclaim" worship guide. He is pretty sure the hymn also appeared in the ALC's old *Service Book and Hymnal*.

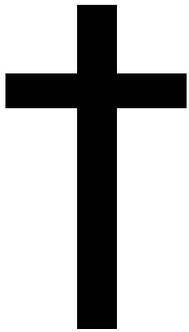
His congregation sings "Alleluia, Song of Sweetness" at the end of the Transfiguration service every year to the tune of Christian Worship 26.

Confession & Absolution

The historic orders of worship in the Christian Church were merely a continuation of the Jewish synogogue services. They are comprised of portions of God's Word, set in an orderly fashion around the Church year. A unifying theme is found in the readings for each week with the collects and prayers for each particular Sunday.

The confession and absolution are also found in God's Word--and with good reason! As the Jews in Jesus' day noted, only God can forgive sins! Thus the Church takes its mandate from God's Word and uses God's Word to absolve and forgive each sinner his or her sin.

The following order of Confession and Absolution I now present to you for your use.



**LORD, have mercy
on me, a sinner!**

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Call to Confession (1 John 1:8-10):

- P-** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Confession (Romans 7:18, 19):

- C-** I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing.

Absolution (Romans 8:1, 12:1):

- P-** Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--which is your spiritual worship.

**Your sins are forgiven;
go and sin no more.**

