

Liturgical Commentary Series

It's a simple enough question: Why do we do what we do in worship?

What we do together on Sunday mornings and on certain nights of the year we call 'Worship'. For something we do so regularly, it's surprising how different it looks from everything else we do in the world. In that way, it can be confusing, disorienting, disconcerting, and just plain weird.

If you've been to worship at other kinds of churches, you might notice some differences. We have a particular way we do things, but it's not particular for particular's sake: There is a long history, a theological tradition, and a great deal of Spirit-led thought by which our worship has been shaped over a very long time. And as we engage in worship together, some of this can be helpful to know.

So, starting next Sunday, we will take a brief moment in the midst of worship and speak to different elements of our liturgical practice. It will look a little different Sunday to Sunday, but each element we engage we will seek to translate. **We'll ask two questions of each part: What does this mean? and Why is it important for today?**

What we do in worship is not different from what we believe as Lutherans. Our worship is shaped by our faith, just as our faith is shaped by our worship. In this way, by the Grace of God, it has the power to hold us steady in faith even when we might falter.

Confession and Forgiveness.

We name here the weight around our necks - the things we've done that weigh us down. **We say it. We face it. We lay it bare, to ourselves, each other, and to God.** But we do this with confidence. We say that God sees what we carry even without our confession. In this way, confessing is not for God's sake - it's not required for God to love us or forgive us. Rather, it's a gift of God that we need - it's for our sake.

It's a movement the liturgy leads us in.

It starts with the most basic confession "Almighty God" | "I am not mighty."

This is the way Lutherans begin their church services because nothing that comes after this matters without it. Whatever is said (all the words) after this we don't hear a word of it unless we hear this first: You are loved and forgiven. What I get to say in reply, we'll hear next week.

Absolution

The second part of the Confession is "The Absolution." In it, I get to remind you of the foundation of our faith - that we're forgiven not because we are good but because we are loved. This forgiveness is a pure gift, given by God in Christ. In other words, God's forgiveness is ours not because of how good we are, but because of how good God is.

In the absolution reminds us of what's true: that we can't do this alone, and that we don't do this alone.