

Meeting on Mount Zion

The Divine Service

Hebrews 12:18-29

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Preface

The following lessons were first given in 2021 during the fall Sunday School at Lehigh Valley Presbyterian Church in Allentown, PA. I am neither a liturgist nor a professor of liturgics, but I have read the books listed in the bibliography. It was not my intent to produce an academically professional presentation. My goal was to help our church better understand worship, particularly as we practice it in our church on the Lord's Day.

God has not provided us in scripture a prayer book or a worship manual. Scripture *does* contain principles of worship and all churches must follow these. But apparently God does not care as much about the form of worship as He does about other things, so it is misplaced enthusiasm to be dogmatic about a particular form of worship. Nevertheless our contention is that there is a form of worship which is very biblical and healthy for congregations. I am calling the form of worship which comes to us from the 5th century and is used widely today, the Western Liturgical Tradition.

May God be glorified and His church be edified by these efforts to understand how best to worship Him.

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Lesson 1

Introduction to the Divine Service

Hebrews 12:22-24

Introduction

1. Hebrews 12:22-24
2. Subject:
3. Focus:
4. The Lord's Day assembly

Preliminary Concerns

Lesson 2
Fundamentals of Christian Worship
Hebrews chapters 1-11

1. Hebrews 1:1-4; 3:1-6.
2. Jesus is superior to:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. This epistle was written to Jewish Christians who apparently were struggling in their faith.
 - a. A tiny sect, alienated from their countrymen.
 - b. Persecuted by unbelieving Jews.
 - c. Longing for the glory of temple worship.
4. Hebrews 10:19-25.
5. New Covenant worship is vastly superior to anything you have experienced anywhere else, so don't be careless about coming.

Fundamentals of the Lord's Day meeting

6. Worship:
 - a. Romans 12:1
 - b. Philippians 1:27
 - c. Ephesians 4:1.
7. The author of Hebrews calls our meeting a “public service.”
 - a. Greek *leitourgia* —> English *liturgy* = “public service.”
 - b. Our meeting is a *public* activity.
 - c. Our meeting is a *communal* activity.
 - d. Our meeting is a service *to* God, and a service *by* God.
8. Our meeting is in the “holy places,” “the heavenlies.” (Ephesians 1:3)

9. The essential nature of this event is God's meeting with His people.
 - a. Not primarily for teaching.
 - b. Not primarily for evangelism.
 - c. Not primarily for fellowship with other Christians.
 - d. Not a self-help meeting.
 - e. Primarily to enjoy God.
 - f. Primarily to converse with God.
 - g. Primarily to feast with God.

Content of the Lord's Day meeting

Form of the Lord's Day meeting

10. Three major liturgical traditions: Western, Reformed, and Revival.
11. Western.
12. Reformed.
13. Revival.

14. Most of the church continues to worship in the Western tradition.
 - a. Roman 1.3 billion
 - b. Anglican 110 million
 - c. Lutheran 80 million
 - d. Other Protestant 710 million
 - e. Orthodox 282 million
 - f. Total Christian 2.6 billion
 - g. Total Western Liturgical Tradition 1.5 billion

Lesson 3
Apostolic Worship
Hebrews 12:1-17

1. Hebrews 12:1-7, 12-13.
2. Competition, discipline, hardship, victory.

Apostolic Worship

3. *Didache* 1st century
4. *First Apology*, Justin Martyr A.D. 155-7
5. *The Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus about A.D. 197 or 215.
6. How would the apostles have worshiped?
7. Most likely conclusion:

Sub-Apostolic Worship

8. Did the church change to adapt to new generations?

Public Worship

9. Fourth century transformation.
10. By the 8th century all the elements of the Western Liturgical Tradition were in place and have never changed substantially since.

Lesson 4
Protestant Reformation of Worship
Hebrews 12:18-21

1. Hebrews 12:18-21.
2. Old Covenant worship vs. New Covenant worship.

Medieval Developments

3. Change and continuity
4. Three of the most significant medieval theological changes:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

“The Development of the Western Liturgy,”
<https://cdavidgreen.org/development-of-the-western-liturgy-2/>

5. Three categories of problems of the late Medieval church:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Protestant Reformation

6. The reformers addressed each of the three major problems in the church
7. Reformation of worship:
 - a. Swiss
 - b. Luther
 - c. England

8. Why the Reformation succeeded:
9. Post-Reformation developments:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
10. These developments, though beneficial in many ways, *tended to produce a defective form of Christianity severed from the rest of the church, past and present, and created a subjective, mental, and emotional faith.*

Lesson 5
The Meaning of the Meeting
Hebrews 12:22

1. Hebrews 12:18-22.
2. “But you have come...”
3. Old Covenant worship:
4. New Covenant worship:

A Public Service

5. Greek word *proskuneo*:
6. Greek words: *latreuo* and *leitourgeo*, *leitourgia*¹:
 - a.
 - b.

A Public Event

7. Who comes:

8. What we do:

9. Formality and informality:

10. Dialogical:

11. On the Lord's Day the body is reconstituted with its head in a celebration of the fulfillment of the covenant promise – that God be our God, and we be His people.

A Service Event

12. God serves us:

13. We serve God:

14. Sacrifice!

- a. Romans 12:1
- b. Hebrews 13:15
- c. Psalm 40:7-8
- d. Psalm 141:2

15. The heart of the covenant (Jeremiah 24:7, etc.)

16. And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and *gave* it to them, saying, “This is *my body, which is given for you*. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19; also Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22)

17. Worship at the altar (Hebrews 13:10-16).

18. When Christians assemble on the Lord’s Day, it is to perform a *leitourgia* – a public service.

Endnotes:

1. “The word liturgy, derived from the technical term in ancient Greek (λειτουργία), leitourgia, which literally means ‘work for the people’...or ‘public service’. In origin, it signified the often expensive offerings wealthy Greeks made in service to the people, and thus to the polis and the state. Through the leitourgia, the rich carried a financial burden and were correspondingly rewarded with honours and prestige...The chief sphere remained that of civic religion, embodied in the festivals....

“The early Christians adopted the word to describe their principal act of worship, the Sunday service... which they considered to be a sacrifice. This service, liturgy, or ministry...is a duty for Christians as a priestly people by their baptism into Christ and participation in His high priestly ministry. It is also God’s ministry or service to the worshipers. It is a reciprocal service.”

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy>
 Accessed 5/19/2021

Lesson 6

Why The Western Liturgical Tradition

Hebrews 12:23

1. Hebrews 12:18-23.
2. Who is present in worship:

A Public Service

- 3.

Liturgical Options

4. Three families of worship forms present in the church in the west.
 - a. The **Western Liturgical Tradition**.
 - b. The **Reformed Liturgical Tradition**.
 - c. **Revival Worship Traditions**.
5. These are not matters for schism or pride!
 - a. **First**, we must exert our greatest energy toward loving each other.
 - b. **Second**, we must critically evaluate how we worship so that we can do that in the most biblical, spiritual, healthy way possible.

- c. **Third**, when we are with others who worship differently than we do, we must happily join in their worship.
- d. **Fourth**, we must critically evaluate other approaches to worship, but doing so in a charitable manner.

Why the Western Liturgical Tradition

- 6. **Engages the most people.**
- 7. **Most psychologically natural.**
- 8. **Closest to apostolic worship.**
- 9. **Best approximation of biblical worship scenes.**
- 10. **Incorporates the most scripture.**
- 11. **Most observant of the sacraments.**
- 12. **Most Christ-centered.**
- 13. **This is how the church worships.**

Lesson 7

Comparison of Worship Traditions

Hebrews 12:24

1. Hebrews 12:18-24.
2. God's people want to see Jesus!

Eastern Liturgies

3. The liturgies of East and West both retain the apostolic core of scripture readings, prayers, and the Eucharist. Both added a set of elements which seemed appropriate to a public event: Kyrie, Sanctus, etc.

Western Liturgies

4. The focus of these lessons is the western church.
5. The following table summarizes the chief differences between the Western Liturgical Tradition, the Reformed Tradition, and the Revival Tradition in each of the key characteristics we presented in the previous lesson. This table shows that in each category, the Western Liturgical Tradition is superior to the alternatives.

6. Comparison of Worship Traditions

	WLT	Reformed	Revival
Engages people	Dialog + hymns, creed, Lord's Pr.	hymns, creed, Lord's Prayer	hymns and songs
Psychologically natural	Discussion & meal	Impersonal	Lecture + singing
Apostolic tradition	high conformity	some conform.	little conformity
Biblical worship scenes	high conformity	no interest	no interest
Scripture	4 readings + dialog	1-3 readings	1 reading
Lord's Supper	weekly	quarterly	seldom
Christ-centered	high	moderate	low
Catholicity: age % of global church	21 centuries 60%	5 centuries 5%	Intermittent 20%
Tone	conversational*	performance**	performance**
Relationship btw man and God	marriage: husband-bride	covenant: king-subjects	salvation: savior-sinner
Location	Heaven	Earth	Earth

Opening:

* Greeting (Pastor: "The Lord be with you."

People: "And also with you.")

** Call to worship

Tradition

7. Tradition is nothing more than the habits of a group.

8. Jesus and tradition. (Mark 5)
9. The apostles and tradition (1 Corinthians 11:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:15)
10. Two temptations:
 - a.
 - b.

Objections and Concerns

11. The Western Liturgical Tradition is too catholic.
12. The Western Liturgical Tradition is too complicated.
13. The Western Liturgical Tradition is too long.
14. The Western Liturgical Tradition is too rote.

Lesson 8

The Western Liturgical Tradition: Complete

Hebrews 12:18-24

1. Hebrews 12:18-24.
2. The Old Covenant: **visible, yet terrifying; tangible, yet limited; and earthly.**
3. The New Covenant: **invisible, yet comforting; intangible, yet eternal, and heavenly.**
4. Where we worship:
5. The heart of the liturgy on the Lord's Day:

Development of the Western Liturgical Tradition

Apostolic core 1st - 3rd c

Liturgy of the Word

Old Testament Reading
Psalm
Epistle Reading
Psalm

Gospel Reading
Sermon

Intercessory Prayers

Liturgy of the Supper

Kiss of Peace
Offertory
Sursum Corda+

Eucharistic Prayer
Lord's Prayer+
Fraction

Communion

Public Additions 4th - 7th c

Introit
Kyrie *
Gloria *
Collect

Gospel Procession

Creed *

Preface +
Sanctus *

Agnus Dei *

Dismissal *

* Ordinary: Kyrie; Gloria; Credo; Sanctus; Agnus Dei; Ite, Missa Est

– contrast with the Proper

+ Fixed spoken texts

Complete Western Liturgical Tradition

Traditional Titles

Liturgy of the Word

Introit
 Kyrie *
 Gloria *
 Collect
 Old Testament Reading
 Psalm
 Epistle Reading
 Psalm
 Gospel Procession
 Gospel Reading
 Sermon
 Credo *
 Intercessory Prayers

Liturgy of the Supper

Kiss of Peace
 Offertory
 Sursum Corda +
 Preface
 Sanctus *
 Eucharistic Prayer
 Lord's Prayer +
 Fraction
 Agnus Dei *
 Communion
 Dismissal *

* Ordinary

+ Fixed spoken texts

Modern Language

Liturgy of the Word

Processional
 Lord Have Mercy *
 Glory to God *
 Prayer of the Day
 Old Testament Reading
 Psalm
 Epistle Reading
 Psalm
 Gospel Procession
 Gospel Reading
 Sermon
 Creed *
 Intercessory Prayers

Liturgy of the Supper

Kiss of Peace
 Offering
 Lift Up Your Hearts +
 Preface
 Holy, Holy, Holy *
 Prayer of Thanksgiving
 Lord's Prayer +
 Breaking the Bread
 Lamb of God*
 Communion
 Dismissal *

Texts of the Ordinary

Kyrie

Lord, have mercy upon us.
 Christ, have mercy upon us.
 Lord, have mercy upon us.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
 and peace to his people on earth.
 Lord God, heavenly King,
 almighty God and Father,
 we worship you, we give you thanks,
 we praise you for your glory.
 Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
 Lord God, Lamb of God,
 you take away the sin of the world:
 have mercy on us;
 you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
 receive our prayer.
 For you alone are the Holy One,
 you alone are the Lord,
 you alone are the Most High,
 Jesus Christ,
 with the Holy Spirit,
 in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Sanctus

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might:
 Heaven and earth are full of your Glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
 have mercy on us.
 Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
 have mercy on us.
 Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
 grant us your peace.

6. This is the pattern of worship which the whole western church followed until the 16th century, and which most of the western church still follows today.

Authority

7. Who has the authority to choose how a congregation will worship?

Lesson 9

The Western Liturgical Tradition: Elements

Hebrews 12:25-27

1. Hebrews 12:18-27.
2. The sinfulness of refusal.

How the Church Worships

3. “This is the way the church worships.”

Liturgy of the Word

4. **Introit:**
5. **Kyrie:**
6. **Gloria:**

7. **Collect:**

8. **Sermon:**

9. **Creed:**

10. **Intercessory Prayers:**

11. The focus of the first part of the service is on speaking: Jesus speaks to us and we speak to Him.

Liturgy of the Supper

12. The focal point is eating!

13. **Kiss of Peace:**

14. **Offertory:**

15. **Sursum Corda:**

16. **Preface:**

17. **Sanctus:**

18. **Eucharistic Prayer:**

19. **Lord's Prayer:**

20. **Fraction:**

21. **Agnus Dei:**

22. **Communion:**

23. **Dismissal:**

Ordinary and Proper

24. Ordinary: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Dismissal.

25. Proper:

26. I am calling this skeleton form the Western Liturgical Tradition.

Lesson 10

The Eucharistic Prayer and the Presence of Christ

Hebrews 12:28-29

1. Hebrews 12:18-29.
2. Acceptable worship:
3. “For our God is a consuming fire.”

The Eucharistic Prayer

4. Who prays the Eucharistic Prayer.
5. Early eschatological tone.
6. Later focus on Christ’s death.
7. The Eucharist is essentially a sacrifice.
8. How we get into trouble:
9. Transformation from a public service to a professional spectacle.

10. Eucharistic Prayers have four discrete parts:

- a. Thanksgiving
- b. Institution
- c. Consecration
- d. Sacrifice

11. “Eucharist” comes from the Greek word *eucharistia*, which means “thanksgiving.”

12. Consecration...

13. So consecration is simply asking God to use these ordinary physical elements for an extraordinary spiritual purpose.

The Presence of Christ

14. Three views of Christ's presence in the Eucharist:

- a. Magical
- b. Mystical
- c. Materialist.

Views of the Eucharist

Magical (Roman):

Christ's presence:	Physical body through transubstantiation
Sacrifice:	Christ present in bread and wine
Action:	Dramatic re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice by priest OR a real sacrifice of Christ by priest
Result:	Increase in merits of participants

Mystical (Reformed):

Christ's presence:	Spiritual through Holy Spirit
Sacrifice:	Christ offers His body and blood to us We offer ourselves to Christ as a living sacrifice
Action:	A royal banquet celebrating our union with Christ
Result:	Closer fellowship with Christ and each other Greater transformation into the image of Christ

Materialist (Evangelical):

Christ's presence:	Not present
Sacrifice:	None
Action:	Obedience to Christ's command
Result:	Memory aid regarding Christ's death

Lesson 11
Music and Style in Worship
Revelation 4:1-11

1. Revelation 4:1-11.
2. This is heaven!
3. The Revelation is a picture book.
4. The dominant image:
5. When we worship every Lord's Day we lift up our hearts and we enter this heavenly throne room.

Music

6. Music is not worship, and worship is not singing.
7. Christian worship is meeting on Mount Zion where we engage in a public service.
8. Music is intrinsic to the divine nature
9. Creation sings. (Job 38:7; Psalm 96:12; 1 Chronicles 16:33; Isaiah 44:23; 55:12)

10. Man is part of creation, so man sings. Music is integral to the universe and to mankind. Man sings.

11. God sings. (Psalm 22:22 and Hebrews 2:12)

12. Jesus sings.

13. Singing and culture.

Culture and Worship

14. There is no cultureless worship because there are no cultureless people.

15. Culture encompasses more than language.

16. Adapting the Western Liturgical Tradition to local culture.

17. There is a handy table listing various musical forms and worship texts at <https://cdavidgreen.org/music-in-worship/>.

Music in Worship

18. I can think of seven different classes of worship texts:
- a. Psalms – the heart of true worship in all ages
 - b. Canticles
 - i. scripture songs
 - ii. Song of Moses, Magnificat, Song of Simeon
 - c. Liturgical texts
 - i. Earliest appeared in the 1st century
 - ii. Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, etc.
 - d. Carols
 - i. Composed
 - ii. Tell a story
 - iii. Multiple verses
 - iv. O Little Town of Bethlehem
 - e. Hymns
 - i. Composed
 - ii. Tend to be more theological
 - iii. After the ancient period are usually multi-verse
 - iv. A Mighty Fortress is Our God
 - f. Scripture songs
 - i. fragments of scripture
 - ii. Be Exalted, O God; Create in Me
 - g. Gospel songs
 - i. Composed
 - ii. Tend to focus on personal experience
 - iii. Usually multi-verse
 - iv. When the Roll is Called Up Yonder

19. I can think of seven classes of music which are used in worship:

- a. Chants
 - i. Psalm tone plus cadence
 - ii. No fixed meter
 - iii. Adaptable to any text
 - iv. Not as interesting musically
- b. Carols
 - i. Simple melody
 - ii. Definite meter
 - iii. O Little Town of Bethlehem
- c. Chorales
 - i. Block chord harmony
 - ii. Fixed meter
 - iii. Useful only for texts with compatible meter
 - iv. Easy to sing, but more interesting than chant
 - v. A Mighty Fortress is Our God
- d. Art music
 - i. Wide variety
 - ii. Complex melodies and harmonies
 - iii. Performable only by trained musicians
 - iv. Hallelujah Chorus
- e. Spirituals
 - i. Relaxed meter
 - ii. Repetition
 - iii. Responsive parts
 - iv. Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?
- f. Gospel
 - i. Simple melody and harmony
 - ii. Fixed meter
 - iii. When the Roll is Called Up Yonder
- g. Contemporary
 - i. Simple melody
 - ii. Harmony not important
 - iii. Definite meter
 - iv. Rhythm is more important

20. Many texts can be set to several musical genres.
21. The Western Liturgical Tradition always includes the Ordinary (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Agnus Dei), so those texts must never be left out. However they can be set to a wide range of musical genres.
22. Three points to keep in mind about chant.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
23. Heavenly culture and earthly culture

Lesson 12
Culture and Style in Worship
Revelation 5:1-14

1. Revelation 5:1-14.
2. The heavenly public service.

Other Cultural Aspects

3. Content is the message, meaning, and words of worship. Style is the *way* in which we convey the message, meaning, and words.
4. The church is foolishly naive if it ignores the local culture of its community, and it is spiritually compromised if it allows itself to be defined by that sub-culture.
5. Style issues:
 - a.
 - b.
6. What is vitally important is that we recognize style issues for what they are and treat them accordingly.

The Impact of Style

7. We all approach God according to our cultural norms, and those norms dictate the style we use. And style is not merely a choice among many options. Style conveys our culture.

8. Some style or cultural issues:
 - a. Architecture
 - i. Size and style of building and grounds
 - ii. Maintenance of building and grounds
 - iii. Windows
 - iv. Furnishing and fixtures
 - v. Furniture
 - vi. Audio/visual equipment
 - vii. Handicapped accommodation
 - viii. Air conditioning
 - ix. Parking
 - b. Services
 - i. Nursery
 - ii. Pre-school
 - iii. Youth Group
 - iv. Women's ministry
 - v. Library
 - vi. Coffee bar
 - c. Music
 - i. Musical genres
 - ii. Musical instruments (organ, piano, strings, woodwinds and brass, guitar, etc.)
 - iii. Performers
 - d. Accessories
 - i. Vestments
 - ii. Candles
 - iii. Incense
 - iv. Altar cloths
 - v. Communion utensils
 - vi. Banners
 - vii. Flowers
 - viii. Flags
 - ix. Seasonal decorations

- e. Printed materials
 - i. Bulletin
 - ii. Brochures
 - iii. Reports
 - f. Execution
 - i. Punctuality
 - ii. Preparation
 - iii. Smoothness
 - iv. Friendliness
 - g. Internet presence
 - i. Website
 - ii. Sermon recordings
 - iii. Live streaming
 - h. Other
9. When a church is struggling, the first thing people point to is the music. They think that by changing the music the church will grow and be happy. That is very foolish. Perhaps the music does need to be freshened up, but that is not the whole problem – and the problem is not the liturgy, either. The music and liturgy are reflections of the culture. If change is truly needed, there has to be change deep into the culture of the church. And the place to start is to be *aware* of the culture.
10. The Western Liturgical Tradition has no built-in style. It can be used in any style. Two things are vitally essential for any church:
- a.
 - b.

Lesson 13

Summary and Conclusion

Revelation 21:1-7

1. Revelation 21:1-7.
2. Fulfillment! Finally God is dwelling with man, and man is His people.
3. But we forget...
4. We are reoriented in the sanctuary. (Psalm 73:16-17) Away from the world, out of reach of the devil, we are surrounded by the heavenly host, and we are welcomed by God Himself. There we join the heavenly host and remember who we truly are.
5. Christian worship is essentially when lovers embrace, when Jesus and the church offer themselves to each other in love. The most appropriate biblical description of worship is “the marriage supper of the Lamb.”
6. In practice this looks like a “public service.” The whole body assembles and is reconstituted with its head. Everyone has a part to play.
7. The Western Liturgical Tradition is a skeleton outline which local churches flesh out to make a worship service suitable for their community. Worship looks different in each generation and each community, but that skeleton is always present providing the structure upon which a satisfying service can be constructed.

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