

“Liturgy Commentary”

St. Luke 10:24

September 6, 2020

SERMON 1932

by Michael David Henson

Commentary 1: Lutheran Worship was called in German *Gottesdienst*, literally that is, Service of God, or as we commonly call it, the Divine Service. Although the Divine Service is definitely a two-way street between God and man, the most important part of the Service is God’s Service to us. Without His service to man, there would be no service of man back to God.

God didn’t wait for us, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5). Hosea says, “Come and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up” (6:1). First showing us by the Law that we are the ones who have departed and need to return, then God calls us by the Gospel so that we come to faith in Christ. Through God’s Service to us He heals, binds us up, revives us and raises us up.

Speaking the words of Invocation “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” is not really the beginning. Those words go all the way back to our baptism, when God through the minister spoke those words over us and applied water to us. In our baptism we were given the forgiveness of sins, a new spiritual birth, and were made a child of God. With these words, we call upon the one true God and remember what is sure—God’s service to us in Holy Baptism.

Commentary 2: We have just confessed our sins and God’s representative has served us the forgives our sins. This daily confession and forgiveness are the life of the baptized. When we learn that God threatens to punish all who break these commandments, like the people on the day of Pentecost we say, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The only place to turn is to God Himself—the Divine’s Service to us! Ps 124:8, “Our help is in the name of the Lord.” Our God has promised, as St. Peter told them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

Now that we baptized ones have repented and received forgiveness, we praise God in the Introit—taken from the psalms, in the Kyrie, and in the Gloria in Excelsis. There is no one else to praise, bless or worship except the Father, the heavenly King, the Son, the Lamb of God, and the Holy Spirit.

Commentary 3: The first prayer is a summary prayer, which collects all the teachings found in the readings into one theme for the Divine Service. Today’s service prays for “the increase of faith, hope, and love.” Faith is trust or belief that we are saved through Jesus’ merit alone which we have not deserved. Hope is the confidence that we expect to receive in the future everything which God has promised in His Word.

Love is the free response of God's people toward God and man for all the kindness which we have mercifully received from God.

There are three readings of the Word of God. In the Old Testament reading the prophets and kings point forward to God's Son who hadn't yet come in the flesh. In the Epistle reading, the Apostles point back to our now risen and ascended Lord, who came to accomplish our salvation. St. Paul says, "...that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Gal 3:22). And then finally, Jesus speaks to us in the Holy Gospel. The reading of the Holy Gospel is the high point of the Service of the Word. The work and words of Jesus fulfill the purpose for God's creation and all human history.

Once the Divine has served us His Word, we respond by confessing who God is and what He has done with the words of the Nicene Creed.

Commentary 4: The hymn of the day is like the collect of the day in that it is designed to sum up the theme of the Divine Service. The hymn asks that believers might be moved to praise God with a "thankful heart." The blessings which we have and do receive in the Divine Service are countless. Yet, we often don't realize or express our thankfulness by our love for God and our neighbor. The way in which God is going to increase our faith, hope, and love is through enlightening us with His gifts in the Divine Service. The more we learn, "Jesus, Your Boundless Love So True," the more we will love like the good Samaritan toward those in need.

Sermon: Our sermon text is from St. Luke 10:24, "For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The certain lawyer, who was a Biblical scholar, had been around where Jesus was. His ears had heard Jesus preach the Word of God. Nevertheless, this man did not believe that Jesus was the promised Savior, nor did he believe that salvation was a free gift of God received by faith.

Jesus told His disciples the Gospel message that they were blessed in having the Savior standing before them. All of the Old Testament prophets and kings had longed for this day. This lawyer didn't agree and wanted to talk about the Law of God! This man thought that God's law was much more important and greater than Jesus. "Who cares about Jesus' love? What about the law which requires our love? It says, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27).

Jesus does not disagree with the man concerning the law. Jesus says, "You have answered rightly." Jesus disagrees on whether this man has actually kept the law. Jesus tells him, "Do this and you will live." The law is right and good, but no one has loved God and his neighbor, except for the sinless Son of God. "Brag about the law all you want, but you have NOT kept it, and thus you will not have eternal life." This man wants to use the law to brag about himself, but the law only points to Jesus Christ!

The man realizes that for him to keep the law of love toward his neighbor, there will need to be watering down of the requirements of the law. Exactly which people are considered neighbors? The story of the Good Samaritan is an example of Jesus giving the man full-strength law without any mercy. The story illustrates a love for an enemy

that goes well-beyond any action which the man might have done. You don't get to pick your neighbors. You are to be neighborly to whoever comes your way! Once again, Jesus has slain him by the words of His mouth. The law says, "Go and do likewise."

The Gospel readings ends right there. We hope that the man realizes that "the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe" (Gal 3:22). God desires to move this man from testing Jesus to belief in Jesus, from a misplaced trust in the law to trust in the Gospel promise. The man's eyes and ears were blessed by Jesus, and he didn't know it.

Commentary 5: My ears are blessed! In this Divine Service I have received abundant gifts. I should have been glad to come to God's house. I should have been thankful and rejoicing. Through the readings and the sermon, Jesus' words have led us to ask for a clean heart and a right spirit. Forgiven, we ask "Restore to me the joy of your salvation...." When you understand the Divine Service, the response is joy! Joy, joy, joy! "For all this it is my duty to thank and praise serve and obey him." Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

And now we are about to begin the Service of Holy Communion. It is once again a Divine Service of God to us. In this Service He gives us the benefits of His Son's suffering and death. He gives us Christ's Body and Blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Commentary 6: The pastor says Psalm 116:12-13, "How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD." How do you give thanks for a gift? You receive it and use it. The Lord's Supper is Jesus' parting gift for His church. "Let us give thanks to the Lord." "It is truly good, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thank to you...." Receive the cup of blessings! Lift it up! By our reception, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Commentary 7: As we come to the end of the Divine Service, we realize that God has answered our prayers and given us "the increase of faith, hope, and love." In the Nunc Dimittis, we confess with Simeon that our eyes are blessed, singing, "for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all people." Our Light Jesus is the glory of Israel which has enlightened us Gentiles.

The effect of God's Word and Sacraments increasing our faith, hope, and love, have resulted in the fulfillment of the second part of today's collect. The collect says, "and as we do obtain that which You promise, make us to love that which you command." The post-communion prayer asks for the very thing Jesus was commanding His disciples in the Gospel: faith toward God and fervent love toward the neighbor. Blessed by God, we depart in the peace of knowing God's merciful forgiveness. We depart with God's name upon us.