**April 25, 2021 Session 2**

**The People Who Worship**

*God wishes us to believe Him and to receive from Him blessings, and this He declares to be true divine service.*

Philip Melanchthon,Apology of the Augsburg Confession III:107

**Introduction**

Driving home from worship one Sunday morning, Susan pondered Pastor Gomez’s sermon. He drew a connection between the Gospel reading and their community in a way she had not considered before. Intrigued, she asked her family what they thought of the message. Her question was met with an awkward silence. When she pressed further, it seemed that no one else had listened to the sermon. “Come on, Mom,” her son complained, “isn’t it enough that we went to church?”

16. How would you respond to the son’s question?

17. Are you ever tempted to think of worship as something to attend and watch, but not really participate in? Why does this happen?

**In Spirit and Truth**

18. In John 4, Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman who had led a sad and sinful life. When His questions get too personal, she tries to distract Him with a question on worship. Read John 4:19–26. What does she ask? How does Jesus respond? What do you think it means to “worship in spirit”?

19. How does our opening quote from Melanchthon reflect Jesus’ teaching?

20. Many of our worship services begin with Confession and Absolution. Read 1 John 1:8–9 and Psalm 32:5. Why are Confession and Absolution important preparation for worship?

21. In John 4:23–24, Jesus told the woman that true worshipers worship in spirit. What else did He teach her? What does it mean to “worship in truth”? See also John 17:17.

22. Sometimes, Christians speak as if this emphasis on “spirit and truth” is unique to the New Testament. Read Hosea 6:6. How does this passage reflect this same teaching?

23. Hosea calls us to a living faith. Read Romans 12:1. What does this verse call us to do? What is our motivation for this? How can we do this?

**By Faith Alone**

24. Seeing this biblical teaching on worship, is it ever proper for us to consider worship simply as “going through the motions,” or mindlessly repeating words or actions? What can we do to avoid these problems?

25. Every religion in the world has some form of worship. Most of the members of these religions seem sincere and many seem to live good lives. Without faith in Christ, are they engaged in true worship?

26. God reveals Himself to us and calls us to worship Him. How should we relate to those who do not acknowledge Him or worship Him? See 1 Peter 3:15.

**Taking Stock**

27. We have seen how our worship is rightly preceded by confession and absolution. Read Matthew 6:11–12. What hint do these words of Jesus contain about how often we should pray? How often we should ask for forgiveness?

28. (Personal Reflection) In our introduction, we saw Susan talking with her family about worship. Write below the name of a family member or a friend with whom you could talk about worship this week. What blessings might you describe for them from the Divine Service? How does God speak to you in His Word? How does He nourish and nurture your faith?

**Comparisons**

**Eastern Orthodox:** “What is to be noted of the *place* where the Liturgy is celebrated? It must always be consecrated in a *temple*, the *table* in which, or at least, if there be no such table, the *antimense* [altar cloth] on which the Sacrament is consecrated, must have been consecrated by a Bishop. Why is the *temple* called a church? Because the faithful, who compose the Church, meet in it for prayer and Sacraments” (*The Longer Catechism of the Eastern Church*, questions 320–21).

**Lutheran:** “That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. . . . The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered” (*Augsburg Confession*, articles V.1 and VII.1).

**Reformed**: “This catholic Church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 25.4).

**Anabaptist:** “We believe in, and confess a visible church of God, namely, those who, as has been said before, truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized; . . . this church, we say, may be known by their Scriptural faith, doctrine, love, and godly conversation, as, also, by the fruitful observance, practice, and maintenance of the true ordinances of Christ, which He so highly enjoined upon His disciples” (*Dordrecht Confession*, article 8).

**Roman Catholic:** “The sacred and holy, oecumenical and general Synod of Trent—lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same Legates of the Apostolic See presiding therein—to the end that the ancient, complete, and in every part perfect faith and doctrine touching the great mystery of the Eucharist may be retained in the holy Catholic Church. . . . The Catholic Church instituted, many years ago, the sacred Canon, so pure from every error. . . . For it is composed, out of the very words of the Lord, the traditions of the apostles, and the pious institutions also of holy pontiffs” (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Session 22, Doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass).

**Baptist:** “We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word; that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles of Timothy and Titus” (*New Hampshire Baptist Confession*, article 13).

**Wesleyan:** “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ’s ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same” (*Methodist Articles of Religion*, article 13).

**Liberal:** “We can no longer think of the [worship] service as something demanded by God to which the worshiper is therefore compelled to submit. We must think of it as an exercise designed entirely to help the worshiper in securing the right religious attitude toward God, life, and duty. We must consider, then, the presuppositions with which our worshiper enters the church. The psychology of apperception is important here. We must estimate his attitude toward each element of worship. We must consider what may check the rising tide of emotion and what may carry it on to the full” (Gerald Birney Smith in *A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion*, p. 617).

**Point to Remember**

God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. John 4:24

To prepare for “The Way of the Church,” read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.