## 6 - WORSHIP

We were made to glorify God and enjoy him forever, which, in a word, means worship. From Adam and Eve to Israel in the Wilderness to Roman slaves who became Christians, the pattern was to live all of life "as to the Lord" as an act of worship, and then to gather with other believers on the Lord's Day for corporate worship and rest from their labors.

When it comes to worship, especially corporate worship, we see a principle throughout Scripture that God's word regulates God's worship. He tells us what He wants in corporate worship and our joyful duty is to give that to Him out of love for who He is and gratitude over what He has done. Our approach to worship is not, 'as long as it's not forbidden its ok.' Neither is our approach, 'whatever works in our cultural moment we will do.' Our approach to worship is, 'what God says he wants, we will give as best we're able.'

When you survey the Scriptures, you find a number of elements God requires for corporate worship. God calls his people to worship and so we do. God calls us to sing psalms hymns and spiritual songs and so we do. God calls us to confess our sin, to proclaim the gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Christ, to give and to pray, to baptize and partake of the Lord's Supper, and for His ministers to publicly read Scripture as well as preach and teach Scripture - and so we do. God send us out with his blessing and so we do.

Notes / Questions					

What God has not commanded in his word is exactly *how* these elements are to be ordered and presented. This leads to a wonderful variety of worship services even among churches in the PCA that hold to the same convictions about Scripture. Here is how we approach worship:

In terms of order, every Sunday the elements of the service are arranged in what we'll call 'gospel' order. The gospel begins with God's call to sinners, which immediately leads to something of a crisis. When we hear God's call and draw near, we are mindful (and our opening hymn is usually along these lines) that God is God: holy, holy, the enthroned creator of us all. This leads us naturally, as it does with everyone who encounters God in the Bible, to be mindful of our sin, and to a time of confession. God calls us and, apart from a Savior to cover our sins, we cannot come near. Thankfully, God does not leave us in despair but preaches Christ to us and assures us that, by faith in Him, we are called to come near and we are forgiven. This is why we have the assurance of pardon. Having heard the gospel afresh we then respond in gratitude, giving gifts to the Lord, giving prayer to the Lord, giving psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to the Lord, and giving our attention to His word. Not only do we preach the gospel every Lord's Day, but our order or worship itself preaches the gospel.

In terms of worship style, another component of corporate worship that sets us apart is how we think about music and instrumentation. For each psalm, hymn or spiritual song that we sing, and we do actually sing the psalms, we're asking a number of questions. 1) Are the words Biblically faithful and Biblically rich? This eliminates many songs that may be musically resonant to a particular generation, but not as spiritually nourishing and edifying as they could be. 2) Does the arrangement lead to congregational singing? This filters many songs that are great to listen to but, because they lend themselves to being performed, they usually don't lend themselves to congregational singing. 3) Does the instrumentation fit the text? Sometimes there's nothing better than a piano. Sometimes, when you want to sustain a note, there's nothing better than an organ. Sometimes a guitar or drum kit add just the right element of levity or rhythm to facilitate congregational singing. Our instrumentation is as varied as we think will help us better sing the songs we chose.

Why do we insist on singing the best of contemporary and the best of traditional psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs? Why not pick a style? In a word: love. Out of love for our older saints, so long as we can answer those 3 questions (above) with "yes," then we will sing songs that are precious to them. Out of love for our younger saints, so long as we can answer those 3 questions with "yes," then we will sing songs that are precious to them. We sing contemporary and traditional out of love for every generation, and in a desire to have a service that brings every generation together.

In terms of preaching style, the pastor preaches from a historical pattern called *consecutive expository* and deviates occasionally for a *topical expository* series that either fits the church calendar best (like in Advent or Easter) or meets a particular need.

"Consecutive expository" means that we preach through texts of Scripture from beginning to end and that the main point of the passage is the main point of the message. There are a number of advantages to this practice. 1) Since all of God's Word is profitable, God's people benefit from having all of it read and preached. 2) This keeps pastors and parishioners alike from resting on hobby horses, or favorite themes and verses at the expense of the whole counsel of God. 3) This keeps pastors and parishioners alike from avoiding topics that they might be tempted to avoid. 4) This fits with the texts themselves which are meant to be read and understood in context.

"Topical expository" means that we still exposit or 'unpack and explain' a passage of Scripture, but that the sermon will center on a particular theme.