

**Mosaic – The Christian Life – Week 2: Worship and the Sacraments
Breakthrough – Pr Jim Sprengle, August 8, 2021**

- I. **Hebrews 10:19-25** – previously read
- II. **When I was a kid, my parents made me go to church.**
 - a. I know you all would like to think that your pastor was such a good little guy that he went to church and praised God each Sunday...and wore a halo.
 - b. Unfortunately, I complained about church – a lot.
 - i. I wanted to know why going to worship was so important
 - ii. It was boring
 - iii. The old people were mean
 - iv. The priest was mean
 - v. Basically, I was giving any excuse, whether it was based in reality or not, to avoid having to go to church on Sundays
 - c. Then I got smart... I asked, “where does the Bible say we have to go to church?”
 - i. My parents couldn’t answer that one... checkmate!
 - ii. I would finally be free from organized religion forever!
 - iii. However, it didn’t take long to find out that I was going to church anyway because... well, you know, my parents said so!
 - d. Oh the day I turned 18 and moved out of the house – I was free to do me – no more church, no more organized religion, no more getting up on Sunday
 - e. What was wrong with me?
 - i. It’s not that I didn’t believe in God
 - ii. However, I was not aware of the gifts that God wanted me to receive.
 - iii. I had no idea what God had to offer me each week, and even every day in my Baptism and in His Word.
 - f. So what happened?
 - g. How did Pastor Jim go from ditching church to holding the very services that he complained about as a kid?
 - i. My choices outside of God’s will and running away from Him just beat the living tar out of me.
 - ii. I finally came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity.... and wholeness
 - h. The short answer is grace.
 - i. God’s grace and forgiveness came to me in His Word, along with a new understanding of worship and His gift of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism.
 - ii. Once I began to grasp the gift of grace, worship became a necessity because where else can we find this food for our spirit?

- III. **Why do we Lutherans have such a high view of the Divine Service?**
- a. Maybe you didn't know this, but worship is important to us – mainly because it is the place we receive the forgiveness of sins, the Lord's Supper, and the Word preached – or God's grace and the Good News of our salvation in Jesus Christ.
 - b. We need to hear, "I forgive you," we need to be connected to our friends, we need this sanctuary and place of respite.
 - c. Some people say, "Can't I just go into the woods and worship Jesus?" or "I worship God away from people and all that organized religion stuff."
 - i. It may come as a surprise to you all, but I've never seen a tree give someone communion, or a rock preach the Word, or any part of nature proclaim the forgiveness of sins.
 - ii. No, these gifts are mainly found in the Divine Service and through God's means of grace.
 - d. Now you might be asking, what are sacraments... what are the means of grace... what is divine service... what does this all mean?
 - i. First of all, God's Word (which we heard last week) is a way that He delivers grace to us.
 - ii. Secondly, He uses the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
 - 1. These are the "means" or the way that God gives us His grace.
 - iii. The Word and Sacraments are given to us each Sunday in worship especially – and it is less about us and more about God.
 - iv. And finally, the divine service, or the worship service, is where God calls us into His presence and grace, and we respond in praise and thanksgiving
 - 1. He calls and we respond
 - 2. He blesses us with His promises and forgiveness, and we respond in praise, prayer, offerings, song and thanksgiving
- IV. **Now, in today's reading we are told to "provoke" each other...**
- a. That sounds a little negative, right?
 - b. Usually provoking means to make someone angry or to stir up trouble.
 - c. However, in Hebrews 10:24-25, the writer tells the congregation to stir up each other...not to anger, but to love and good deeds – and encourage one another to keep on meeting together
 - d. If I would have had one or more good friends who encouraged me to go to worship as a kid, maybe my mindset would have been different.
 - i. All of us can use the encouragement that comes from the people around us... and it just feels good when a large group of believers get together to receive and respond to God's love and grace.
 - ii. In fact, when we come to worship, our very presence gives encouragement to those around us...

- e. When I asked my parents where the Bible says we are required to attend church, I had no idea that God had built it into creation itself...
 - i. The Third Commandment says, “you shall remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy” – God rested after creation, not because He needed rest, but for humankind to benefit from a stop day.
 - ii. He knew we needed rest and rejuvenation – that we needed to be recharged by grace and forgiveness
- f. The Jewish people always stopped for one day, and this is where synagogues began to pop up as a meeting place to hear God’s Word, sing, pray and gather on the Sabbath Day.
- g. So the writer of Hebrews says keep meeting together (Hebrews 10:25) – which in the Greek, “meeting together” has the word, synagogue in it.
 - i. He is writing to people who need to keep going to worship unlike some who have gotten out of the habit.
 - ii. Even Jesus regularly attended worship, as it says in Luke 4:16 – that it was Jesus’ custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day.
 - iii. But even more than that, Jesus tells us in John 4 today that, “...the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship Him,” (vs 24).
 - 1. This is a change... people were not going to worship as a good deed to stay on God’s good side and bring sacrifices anymore.
 - 2. Instead, the sacrifice was going to be made by Jesus and the door would be opened for us by the power of the Holy Spirit to receive all the benefits Jesus (the Truth) won...
 - 3. In other words, worship is not about us doing something for God as much as it is about God coming to us

V. **The blessings of worship and the means of grace cannot be measured.**

- a. It says in Ephesians 1:7-8 that God lavishes His grace upon us...
- b. When we have a solid understanding of what worship means and the grace of God poured into our lives, why would we desire anything else?
- c. Hebrews 10:19-21 says that we can confidently enter into God’s presence without a sacrifice or offering because Jesus’ blood was the sacrifice.
- d. Even the curtain that held people back from approaching God in the Most Holy place was torn open to give us access through Jesus’ flesh and blood.
 - i. Sound familiar? The Lord’s Supper is access to God and a gift to be received as pure grace
 - ii. It goes on to say that we are washed with pure water... again, sound familiar? That’s Baptism!
- e. I can tell you that God’s ways of getting His grace to us (the Word and Sacraments) come most often by way of the divine service.

- i. I can also tell you from personal experience that God's grace saved me from a living hell on earth and hell in eternity away from His presence.
 - ii. The transformation is real... the proof stands before you today...
 - iii. My breakthrough came because Jesus broke through the barriers of my sin and rebellion.
- f. I pray that my words have stirred you up... provoked you... into living out the grace of God in your lives...
 - i. Grace that comes by His Word, the Lord's Supper, and Baptism...
 - ii. These are the Means of Grace found right here, right now, FOR YOU.
Amen.