



St. John's

Ev. Lutheran Church

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WHAT IS THE NATURE OF DIVINE SERVICE? PART 2

(The second of a three-part installment on the Divine Liturgy)

Here is a quick review from last month's article:

- The Divine Service is called "Divine" because the Divine One serves us.
- He is "with us" in worship. Here's how:
- Jesus specifically links His enduring presence with His Church to the waters of Baptism and the preaching and teaching of what He taught
- Gathering in Jesus' name, gathering as His Church, guarantees Jesus' presence
- Jesus links His presence and work with the work of the Pastoral Office; as Pastors baptize, absolve, and make disciples, people are not hearing them, they are hearing Jesus

Therefore, the Divine Service is where heaven and earth meet, making it the holiest place on earth.

Do all Christians believe this? Not on your life! Most Christians want to believe that Jesus is everywhere nebulously and nowhere particularly. However, as Pr. Todd Wilken wrote in his essay "Lord's Day, Lord's House, Lord's Supper,"

God's omnipresence isn't enough. Sinners need a God who isn't just everywhere in general. That is only a God who sees everything you do and can find you and punish you for your sins. Sinners need a God who is somewhere in particular to forgive sins.

Now to be clear, Jesus does not speak through the mouth of the man no matter what the man says, but only when the man faithfully proclaims the Word of God. Just as God's Word can be proclaimed by anyone, so anyone can botch the Word of God. The Word of God can be twisted, and the distinction between law and gospel can be confused. Wherever these errors take place that is not Christ speaking.

Alright, Jesus is here. So what?

The point is, Jesus does not come to be served, but to serve. This is not only true for His earthly ministry, but this is true for all of His ministry. It is the essence of God. Think about His words from Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve...." If our worship is about our praising and our serving Him, then our worship is contrary to His own Word. If our understanding of theology and worship is to attend to thereby be served by Jesus, then our understanding of worship accords with His Word.

Let's look now at Luke 22:24-27. Here, Jesus flips the entire structure of the world on its head. Before we see the text itself, answer this question: In our world, who is more important? The waiter, or the guy dropping bucks-deluxe to eat the expensive meal? Or, to put it another way, is the busboy more

important, or the customer? The way the world works is clear to all. The one eating the expensive meal is more important. What is the adage? The customer is king.

Notice what Jesus says in the text. “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

Jesus reminds us that He is not like the world. He states, “I am among you as the One who serves.”

Verse 28-30 reads, “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Jesus states He is the One who serves, then He promises His disciples (those that stay with Him in His trials) to be able to recline at His table. Who will be serving? Jesus will. By the way, what on earth does that sound like? Where there is eating and drinking in His Kingdom and Jesus serves? That sounds identical to what happens in the Lord’s Supper—a foretaste of the great wedding feast of the Lamb on the Last Day.

Jesus is teaching us something very important about eating and drinking in His kingdom. He is the One who serves us in that eating and drinking. He has already said, “Whoever hears you, hears Me.” He is doing the talking.

Now He says when you come and eat at My table, who serves who? You are not serving Me, I am serving you. Jesus has come to serve us, so when He comes into our presence, into the Divine Service, where two or three are gathered in His name, He is serving us!

We protest, “But He’s greater, we should be serving Him!” Nope—that’s the way the world works, not the way Jesus works. See, how He flips the world on its head? “I serve you.” This is the Divine One in our presence serving us.

I will pick it up right here next time...



Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104

Associate Pastor – Rev. Devin M. Kerns, ext. 101

Deaconess - Linda S. Kinnett, ext. 102

Kantor - Rev. Roger M. Goetz

TLS Teachers - Ashley Jensema, Andrea Kosmicki, Edith Kerns, Rachel Kathman

2017 HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Sound Words Academy	Wednesday, April 5	5:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Midweek Lenten Service	Wednesday, April 5	12:15 & 7:00 p.m. (6:15 meal)
Palm Sunday	Sunday, April 9	8:15 & 11:00 a.m.
Holy Thursday	Thursday, April 13	12:15 & 7:00 p.m.
Good Friday	Friday, April 14	12:15 & 7:00 p.m.
Holy Saturday, Vigil of Easter	Saturday, April 15	8:00 p.m.
Easter Sunday	Sunday, April 16	8:15 & 11:00 p.m.

EVERYONE SHOULD EXPERIENCE THE EASTER VIGIL!

(This piece has appeared in the past in our Easter-month newsletter; we present it again to encourage everyone to attend the Vigil of Easter. This year our congregation will be blessed to be joined by members from Calvary, as well.)

It's sundown on Holy Saturday, and Mark records these words: "But when the Sabbath was past Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint the body of Jesus." (16:1)

There in the darkness, with candles, prayer and conversation and meditation on Scripture, the faithful women reflected on everything the Lord had done and taught, and how it all fit with what is recorded in Scripture about the Messiah. That's the beginning of the *Easter Vigil*—the very first Holy Saturday.

Of course, God's people had already observed a night-time Paschal vigil for some 1500 years by then, harking back to the night of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, "a night of watching by the Lord, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a 'night of watching' kept to the Lord by all the people of Israel throughout their generations." (Ex. 12:41-42)

No wonder, then, that the Easter Vigil has been *the* service for Holy Saturday in the Christian Church for more than one and a half millennia. In a visually stirring way, the Vigil awaits God's salvation from sin, death and the devil's power, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, who, Scripture tells us, is the Light of the world.

Today's Easter Vigil begins outside in the darkness around a newly kindled fire. There the prayers of the faithful cycle around themes of purifying fire and life-giving light. All gathered then light their own candle from the paschal candle, which points to Christ and the hope of the resurrection. (The paschal candle is the large "baptismal" candle that normally stands near the baptism font.)

In silent witness to the community, the faithful follow the paschal candle in procession toward the main church doors. The completely darkened church is lighted only by our individual candles. Three times in the church we stop to chant responsively, "The light of Christ! Thanks be to God!" The faithful gather in the front pews of the darkened church, and in the light only of candles the pastor now chants the ancient *Exsultet*, Rejoice!

God's Word and our prayer follow, tracing the threads of God's saving work through the Law and the Prophets which culminates in the resurrection of Jesus and our baptism into His death and resurrection.

And now the paschal candle moves to the baptismal font. There our words recall our own baptismal renunciations and confession, and we sing together yet another ancient hymn of praise to God.

The breathtaking ancient Easter Litany follows—responsive prayer to the Paschal Lamb into whose death-destroying death we have been baptized.

And then comes the proclamation of the Paschal Lamb in Holy Word and Blessed Meal. As the altar is prepared for the Easter feast, the darkness of Good Friday and Holy Saturday gives way to the light of Easter. Bells peal. Light and Easter color wash over the congregation. And then a shout. "The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!" The congregation bursts forth into the Easter hymn of praise, "This is the Feast!"

The witness of the Easter Gospel fills the sanctuary with the light of Christ, and in that light the Lord Jesus gives us His feast of victory, His risen body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The joyous service ends with the concluding communion liturgy and a final triumphant Easter hymn.

We invite you to join the redeemed people of God throughout history—the children of Israel, the Marys and Salome, and the Holy Church throughout the world—and experience the beauty and joy of the Easter Vigil as a regular part of your annual Easter tradition. **This year's Easter Vigil will be held at 8:00 p.m. on the Saturday before Easter, April 15. Please join us!**

REACHING THE WANDERING

With the approach of Holy Week and all the extra opportunities to receive the Lord's gifts in His Church, we re-run last month's article on reaching the wandering in our congregation.

Do you know someone in church—a family member, an acquaintance, a friend—whom you haven't seen for a while at the services of the Lord's house? It's not putting too sharp a point on it to say that those fellow Christians place themselves in great danger of falling from the Faith.

And that's not the Lord's desire for them. He wants to save them (1 Tim. 2:4). And so the pastors and elders have been actively working to contact just such fellow Christians of ours. Each month those whom we haven't seen in a while receive a letter and a phone call from us encouraging them to return to the services of God's house. Sadly, however, there also comes a time when, after repeated friendly and pastoral contact, we can't but conclude on the basis of their non-response that those who have strayed no longer desire to be members of the Body of Christ in this place. And so they're released.

That's the use of God's Law that's called for under the circumstances. But we never want it to get to that point. God doesn't want it to get to that point. And yet even this proclamation of the Law, aimed at repentance, is good and right. Why? Because God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he repent and live (Ez. 33:11).

This is where you come in. Paul tells Timothy, "God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4), and Jesus promises, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). Those whom God has baptized He baptized in all earnest. He wants to keep them in His Word and save them. However, as the parable of the sower reminds us, there are many distractions, "the cares, riches, and pleasures of life," that lead Christians to fall from receiving preaching and the Word and God's Sacrament (Luke 8). We all know what those things are in today's society. Unfortunately, those things ultimately lead them to fall from the Faith altogether. But this isn't what God desires for them.

That's why God gives all of us not only pastors and elders, but also our fellow Christians, His priesthood called to "declare the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). Sometimes a word of concern or invitation or warning from a fellow Christian, rather than from the pastors or elders, carries much more weight with those who have wandered. And never underestimate your prayers, for "the prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jas. 5:17).

All of us in the Body of Christ have the blessed responsibility to care for one another (Gal. 6:2). And that's not just a social nicety. It's of eternal importance. Why? "*God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing*" (1 Thess. 5:9-11). In other words, God uses you to help keep your fellow Christians in the Faith, especially those who are close to you.

And so we ask for your help. It's quite easy. Pray for them—your prayers avail much. And talk to them. When you do, you'll be proclaiming not your word, but His. And that Word is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword.

May the good and gracious Lord who has begun a good work in all the baptized bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God grant it!

Jon Stephens

David M. Keens

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP: BUDGET AND RECEIPTS REPORT

In an effort to keep our congregation informed about our financial situation, the Board of Stewardship has agreed to publish monthly budget reports. These reports are designed to give you a snapshot of our congregational support of the budget adopted by the voters assembly for 2017. We hope that you will find this information useful.

Through the month of February:

Budgeted Receipts through February	\$119,898.00
Actual Receipts through February	\$ <u>97,459.09</u>
Surplus (Shortfall) through February	(\$ 22,438.91)

WEDNESDAY EVENING LENTEN SERVICES: THE PASSION ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

The Wednesday Noon and Evening Lenten services this year take up the theme of the Passion according to St. John. For our evening worship, we'll be using the office of Compline (*Lutheran Service Book*, pp. 253ff.). This service has a long history in Christendom and has recently become somewhat familiar to Sound Words Academy attenders; by now Lenten service attenders have come to know it, as well. If you're still interested in reviewing it, you can find recordings at <http://www.lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=453>. Click the LSB Compline file folder, and then the thumbnails for Versicles, Responsory, Prayer, or Nunc Dimittis and Benediction to hear voice recordings of those portions of Compline. **Our remaining Lenten services are on March 29 and April 5. Service times are 12:15 p.m. and 7 p.m.**

2ND QUARTER VOTERS MEETING

The 2nd quarter Voters Assembly meeting is scheduled for April 23 at 2 p.m. in the Nave. Reports will be presented by the Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and the Council and the various boards.

2017 FLOWER CALENDAR

The following services are available in the next few months if you would like to provide flowers for any of them: May 28, June 25, July 2, August 20.

ST. JOHN'S ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

Save the date: June 17, 2017: St. John's Annual Golf Tournament this summer will be held at Forbes Field. This is a fundraiser for the youth group and their activities and their trip to Higher Things Conference in July. Plan to participate as a golfer, a sponsor, or as a volunteer! More details will be forthcoming.

EASTER BREAKFAST

We need volunteers to help serve and clean up at the Easter breakfast on April 16. Please note that this is not on the second Sunday, but the third. If you would volunteer, please contact the church office or Deaconess Linda. **Whether or not we have the Easter breakfast is determined by the number of volunteers we have.** Please let us know by April 5. **We would ask that the potluck breakfast be hardboiled or deviled eggs and pastries and breads.** Thank you.

ANNUAL CHURCH CLEANING SATURDAY, APRIL 8TH

The Annual Church Cleaning in preparation for Holy Week and Easter has been set for Saturday, April 8, beginning at 8:00 a.m. or as close to 8:00 as you can make it. Many willing hands are needed to assist with spring cleaning throughout the building (including dusting high and low and washing down walls throughout). This is also the time we work at preserving all the beautiful woodwork in the church and give the pews their annual treatment of a blend of Rub Cut Oil and Naphtha. For over 75 years this task has been lovingly accomplished by hundreds of willing hands. Last year we had an excellent turnout, which helped complete our cleaning in record time, and we hope as many will join us again this year.

Help is also needed to dust the nave light fixtures and change batteries in smoke detectors (really tall ladder work). Bring a bucket and some cleaning cloths if you can. Plan to join other members for service and fellowship as we prepare our Lord's house for Holy Week and Easter.

SOUND WORDS ACADEMY

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words,” Paul instructs Timothy (2 Tim 1:13). St. John's **Sound Words Academy** offers mid-week educational opportunities every Wednesday evening, including:

5:00-5:55	New Testament Greek
5:30-6:00	Lite dinner (Luther Hall; supported by free-will donation)
6:00-6:50	The Rhythm of faith (grades 1-5, Johnson)
	Youth Catechesis I (Kinnett)
	Youth Catechesis II (Kerns)
	Revelation (Bruss)
	Epistles of St. John (Hintz)
7:00-7:45	Lenten Service, “The St. John Passion,” Compline (Nave; open to everyone)
7:45-8:40	Young Adults/College Students (Bruss)
	Women's Bible Study: <i>Martin Luther</i> (Kinnett)

WOMEN'S LEAGUE CARING & MISSION

Personal Care Kits for Lutheran World Relief will be prepared in April through June.

Items needed are:

- Light weight bath towels, dark colors: 2 sizes – 52” x 27” and 20” x 40”
- 2 or 3 bath-size soap bars (4 to 5 oz., any brand, original wrapper) totaling 8 to 9 oz.
- Sturdy combs
- Metal nail clippers
- Adult-size toothbrush in original wrapper

If you would rather let us do the shopping, monetary gifts will be accepted. Please give your money to Geri Tate (271-0886), Marcia Wade (286-1119) or Carol Ravins (266-7088)

59TH ANNUAL ST. JOHN'S SMORGASBORD

What a meal deal for you! Chicken, Baked Ham, B-B-Q Meatballs, Baked Beans, Salads, plus Homemade Pie—all that for \$10 Adults, \$4 for Children 6-12, and Children under 6 are FREE. It's the 59th Annual Smorgasbord for Missions in Luther Hall on Tuesday, April 25 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Tickets may be purchased at the door, in the office, or on the first four Sundays in April between

services.. Anyone is welcome to sell tickets to family, friends, and coworkers and may contact Chuck McMullen at 246-4337 with questions. Profits go to mission projects-Topeka Rescue Mission, Doorstep, Topeka Lutheran School, Lutheran Hour Ministries, LLL Rosebowl Parade, and the Orphan Grain Train. Anyone wanting to volunteer to help prepare the food items or assist in the dining room would be welcome Monday, April 24 at 9:00 a.m. or Tuesday, April 25 after 11 a.m. Congregational members may be contacted for additional volunteer needs as this is a tremendous project and any assistance is greatly appreciated. The men of St. John's will be receiving a letter requesting dining room help for the night of the smorgasbord. Please contact Jim Simpson at 379-5703 with any questions.



TLS NEWS

Join us at the TLS Pancake Feed, **Saturday, April 1**, from 8:00 a.m. to 10 a.m., at the main campus, 701 SW Roosevelt Street. Bring your appetites for all-you-can-eat pancakes, sausage, coffee and juice for price of \$5.00. Proceeds will help with the expense to replace 65-year-old windows along east side of school. We hope to see you there!

DOORSTEP NEWS

Welcome Spring! Please keep Doorstep in mind for donations as you start Spring cleaning around your house. Remember, the Dovetail Shoppe can take furniture and larger items. Just call Doorstep (357-5341) or the Shoppe (234-3004) to inquire about donating.

Doorstep had a successful **Operation Soup Line!** Thank you to everyone who helped out selling tickets, making desserts, donating baskets, volunteering at the event and attending! Doorstep had its highest number of delivery orders this year at 423, and made the most on our 14th Annual event at \$17,912. In total, they served 1,082 through delivery, carry out and through the line!

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR APRIL 2017

April 2	Peter Denies Jesus	Mark 14:26-72
April 9	The Passion of Christ	Matt. 27:11-66
April 16	EASTER: NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	
April 23	The Resurrection and the Empty Tomb	Matt. 28:1-19 John 20:1-18
April 30	Jesus Appears on the Emmaus Road	Luke 24:13-35

Bible Verses for April:

If we are faithless, Jesus remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself.	2 Timothy 2:13
Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world.	John 1:29
The angel said, “He is not here, for He has risen, as He said.”	Matthew 28:6
The Lord has risen indeed.	Luke 24:34

Sunday school is one important tool for parents to nurture the faith given to your children in Baptism. Don't let your children miss out on this opportunity to grow spiritually and to get the life-giving Word into their ears, in their hearts, and on their lips. Parents, be an example for your children by attending Bible class while the children are in Sunday school.



THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20a)

So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. (*Augsburg Confession*, Article 5)