



Because of Grace We Worship (Colossians 1:18)

- A. God's grace is free. God's grace is certain. God's grace is unconditional. God's grace is everlasting.
- B. Jesus Christ secured this grace – which is God's unmerited favor, on our behalf when He offered Himself for our sin on the cross.
- C. When a human heart is awakened to God's grace the ONLY response is worship (and wonder). Worship is the active and ongoing celebration of God – and our access to God's presence because of grace.
- D. The British author, professor, and theologian, C.S. Lewis underwent a fresh awakening to God's grace in 1951 – after he had written many books, including *Mere Christianity*.
 - 1. "I had assented to the doctrine [of grace] years earlier and would have said I believed it. Then, one blessed day, it suddenly became real to me and made what I had previously called 'belief' look absolutely unreal."¹
 - 2. Lewis went from "understanding" God's grace to standing under God's grace.
- E. Today I want us to consider the worship service. Why do we gather together for worship and what are we to do?
- F. There is a theological term that I would like to introduce you to: **Means of Grace** -- Placing ourselves in the pathway of God's empowering grace.
 - 1. We can flip a light switch, but we don't provide the electricity. We can turn on a faucet, but we can't make the water flow.
 - 2. And so it is for the Christian with the ongoing empowering grace of God. His grace is essential for our spiritual lives, but we don't control the supply. We simply place ourselves in the pathway.
- G. A church's worship service is a significant means of grace.

II. BODY

¹ *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis*, Vol. 3: 751. (In 1956, Lewis remarked to Mary Van

- A. *“And [Jesus Christ] is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.”* – Colossians 1:18 (ESV)
- B. Let’s unpack that piece by piece...
1. Head of the body – the Church: In Paul’s writings he often makes use of the physical body as a metaphor to describe the Church. (If Jesus is the Head then the Holy Spirit is the heart.)
 2. Jesus is the beginning: What Paul is saying is that Jesus is the One through whom all things were created.
 3. First born from the dead: *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”* --1 Corinthians 15:22
 4. Preeminent in everything: What does *preeminent* mean? *“...To have first place in everything”* --Colossians 1:18 (NAS)
 - a. Not only was Jesus present at the creation of all things – but Jesus will be present at the restoration of all things, Jesus Christ is Lord of all. He is both the beginning and the end.
 - b. *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”* --Revelation 22:13
- C. This verse, Col 1:18 becomes like an umbrella under which we can consider the various means of grace.
- D. As we focus in on *“the church”* I would like to pose the question: What do we do when we get together for a worship service?
1. First, we need to identify what we are NOT doing.
 - a. A worship service is NOT built on the model of a modern entertainment event.
 - b. In a modern entertainment event we are passive spectators and the event has some warm-up acts and then the main event, and then we go home.
 2. Worship is a verb, a set of actions. Actions that God does—calls, declares, speaks, corrects, forgives, restores. Actions that we do—praise, confess, thank, listen, lament, intercede, eat and drink.
 3. Worship is a dialogue of actions that embody the good news that God loves us in Jesus.

E. Therefore, a church service (i.e., a worship service) is meant to be interactive and dynamic, each service is a retelling of the drama of the gospel in five-acts: 1) Approach, 2) Renewal, 3) Commitment, 4) Communion, and Commissioning.

1. **Approach** -- God takes the initiative and calls us to worship Him. Thus worship begins with God.
 - a. *“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”* --Hebrews 10:25
 - b. Attending a worship service begins with taking some time to prepare our hearts to worship God. It may be before you leave the house. It may be on your way to the worship service.
 - c. Getting to the church service on time is our first act of corporate worship.
 - d. God calls us to meet Him:
 - 1) We worship God through song and ask God for help:
 - a) We respond to God's call by worshipping him as a community. Because we are sinners, we acknowledge that we can only approach God because of Jesus. Realizing that none of us are naturally inclined to worship, we ask for God to be with us by His Holy Spirit and to give us the power to respond to Him.
 - b) Our response is often through music. Music holds the capacity to bring God's truth to us, while allowing us the opportunity to express ourselves to God at the same time—a distinctively powerful form of communication.
 - c) I want to encourage you to be expressive in your worship. Do whatever you'd like – raise your hands (surrender), kneel, come forward. Please do not cross a line and draw attention off of God and onto yourself.
 - d) If you sense that God is doing something, or wanting to say or do something in the service. Come up to the people who are leading the service...

- 2) We worship God by committing our tithes and offerings to God service:
 - a) We give our material possessions as an act of faith and a symbol of lives that are dedicated to God.
 - b) Our tithes and offerings are a response of gratitude for the invaluable gift we've been given in Christ.
2. **Renewal** -- *"Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."* --Acts 3:19
 - a. We confess our faults. (We don't often specifically lead you as the gathered church through this portion yet it is good to be aware of this and it is good for you to practice this. It may begin to happen before you get to the building, it may happen during the singing, it may happen during our preaching time.
 - b. Because of grace, we can be radically honest with God about our moral faults. As we recognize the ways we've failed to love God and others, we confess our sins, recognizing how our sins affect both our personal relationship with God *and also* our relationships with one another.
3. **Commitment** – *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."* --1 Peter 5:6-7
 - a. One of the most important points in our service is when someone who is trained and gifted opens God's word and explains the way it reveals the grace of Jesus Christ and what implications it carries for us and our world.
 - b. We believe that when we receive the message, the gospel, we encounter God and are changed.
4. **Communion** – *"And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves...'¹⁹ And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'²⁰ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'"* -- Luke 22:17, 19-20

- a. Once a month we receive communion together as a gathered church.
 - b. I would also encourage you to take communion together in your Life Groups and in your home with your family.
5. **Commissioning** – *“But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”* --Psalm 73:28
- a. God sends us out in His refreshed power.
 - b. Our worship service concludes with a “benediction.”
 - c. God promises that He will go with us as we take the grace we’ve just experienced and extend it into our city and world.
 - d. Just as we began with God’s gracious invitation, so we end with his gracious promise to be with us and empower us for his mission.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. From the oldest person to the youngest person, we all have the privilege of participating in this retelling of the gospel.
- B. Every part of the worship service is an act of worship to God – and a celebration of God’s abounding grace.
- C. Making use of the prayer ministry team.
- D. “The church is the primary arena in which we learn that glory does not consist in what we do for God but in what God does for us.” — Eugene H. Peterson²

² *Tell It Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers.*

P.A.S.S. Questions For Further Reflection and For KHC Life Groups

In preparation for your LG or personal study check out the Pastor's Blog regarding gospel-centrality:

<https://kingsharbor.wordpress.com/2016/05/09/what-does-it-mean-to-be-gospel-centered/>. (You may want to walk through it with your group.)

P - Participation (get everyone involved in the dialog)

1. What are the top five reasons people attend church?
2. What are the top five reasons people don't attend church?

A - Application (makes it personal)

3. If a "means of grace" is placing ourselves in the pathway of God's empowering grace, describe some of the "means of grace" that have become consistent in your life.
4. Also, are there some means of grace that you would like to add to your life?

S - Scripture (thinking biblically is a learned behavior! :-)

5. What does it mean to be gospel-centered? (Is this a new concept for you?)
6. If each service is a retelling of the drama of the gospel in five-acts: Approach, Renewal, Commitment, Communion, and Commissioning; which do we do well and which could we improve on?

S – Sharing (aim for a time of honest reflection, authenticity, and transparency in a safe atmosphere modeled by you).

7. How can we best prepare ourselves to be in God's presence with our church family?