

Day 3: Liturgical Elements in Our Church

20 minutes, 40 in translation

Break

20 minutes, 40 in translation

Outline

1. Review
2. Three practical ideas
 - a. Movement
 - i. Drama – Our worship services should reenact the story of redemption, or a piece of it!
 - ii. Approach – We approach God’s presence, he meets us there, we enjoy him (and he us), and then we go out of his presence into our common lives (to bear his image).
 - b. Balance
 - i. In content
 1. All kinds of Scripture
 2. All kinds of songs
 3. Balance of hearing from God and speaking to God
 - ii. In form
 1. Words vs. actions
 2. Leaders vs. congregations
 - iii. Ideal vs. practical
 - iv. etc.
 - c. Presentation
 - i. The medium is the message!
 - ii. Movement, involvement
 - iii. Balance between words (discursive) and actions/postures (presentative)
 - iv. etc.
3. Brief description: Form and Content. The Medium Is the Message!
 - a. Structure reflects meaning
 - i. How much of the Law of Moses is about the structure of worship? A lot! How much of the New Testament? Not as much, but still some key passages. (NT is not “prescriptive” as much about these matters.)
 - ii. Example: Priestly garments (Exod 28:9–12)
 - iii. Example: Eating the Lord’s Supper together
 - b. Structure contributes to meaning
 - i. Example: Posture when praying, singing, etc.
 - ii. Example: ways of taking the Lord’s Supper reflect and shape belief
 - iii. Example: Song choices restricted by medium
4. Examine liturgical elements, with point-by-point suggestions for discussion
 - a. Song choices

- i. Movement: Entering God’s presence¹; highlighting God’s attributes²; confessing sin; highlighting God’s work in Jesus; preparing for the sermon; responding in faith³
 - ii. Other types of song: Lament⁴, [call to repentance](#)
 - iii. Trinity: Do we mention the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit? (not necessarily all at once, but over the course of our service?)
 - iv. Songs about God vs. songs *to* God vs. songs to each other
 - v. Historic songs vs. new songs
 - 1. Sing a new song! Pss 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1. Psalm 150: mostly about the instruments!
 - 2. Psalms or other passages that reuse and adapt older psalms: Pss 29; 96; 1 Chr 16.
 - vi. Songs of the heart and songs of the mind
 - 1. Songs of remembrance: e.g. Pss 89; 105; 106; 136
 - 2. Songs celebrating God’s attributes: e.g. Ps 34
 - vii. Who decides which songs? Leader, preacher. Who decides if a song is appropriate? If we use the song book, someone from the VLKB vetted and prepared these songs. If we use a screen, we can add anything. Strengths, and weaknesses.
- b. Other aspects of Music
 - i. Content
 - ii. Style
 - iii. Instruments and volume
 - c. Call to worship
 - d. Passing the peace
 - e. Scripture readings
 - i. from lectionary? Not from lectionary? With a large portion of the church. OT and NT, Psalms, Gospels, Epistles.
 - ii. Where do we read, and which languages? From a Bible, a paper, a small screen, a big screen?
 - f. Confession of sin – Maybe a lament could be sung here, and then assurance of pardon
 - g. Ecumenical Creeds — Fellowship with one another, and with the church throughout history!
 - h. Sermon — The “prophetic” voice of God: Telling us what God has said and done, and how we should respond.
 - i. Lord’s Prayer; Prayers of the People
 - i. Do our prayers have “movement”?⁵
 - 1. Awe/invocation/adoration/thanksgiving – opening sequence
 - 2. Confession/repentance/supplication/affirmation of faith/witness – central sequence

¹ Example: 30 Ateik, Laikas Atverti Širdį/Come, Now is the Time to Worship. Appropriate at the beginning of the service.

² 158 Šventas, Šventas, Šventas; Dieve Visagali!/ Holy, Holy Holy. Highlights God’s Attributes.

³ Example: 137 Skaistink Mano Širdį/Refiner’s Fire. Song of response. This is most appropriate at the end of a service. How would the meaning of this song change if we did it first?

⁴ <http://magazine.cairn.edu/2011/12/unless-you-have-utterly-rejected-us/> . Example: Psalm 130, “Out of the Depths” Sovereign Grace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwKPMqxmVgc>

⁵ Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 99–102.

3. Grateful responsiveness/dedication/oblation/commitment to the Christian life – concluding sequence
 - ii. Do our prayers reflect the Trinity? What would we pray specifically to the Father? To the Son? To the Spirit?
 1. Prayer to the Father may emphasize: Omniscience, power, adoration, the Creator, thanksgiving, goodness
 2. Prayer to the Son may emphasize: Our sin, need for a Savior, the incarnation of Jesus the Word of God, the gospel, the Good Shepherd, perfect life/death/resurrection, his intercession for us at the right hand of the Father, perfect example of human life
 3. Prayer to the Holy Spirit may emphasize: Our regeneration, sanctification, indwelling in our hearts (not Jesus in our hearts, BTW!), empowering us to understand/love, transforming us more into Christ's image
 - j. Offerings
 - i. Practical purpose: support the work of the church
 - ii. Spiritual purpose: Acknowledge that all we have comes from God; The work of our hands is going to be used by God.
 - k. Celebration of the Lord's Supper
 - i. Oblation
 - ii. Thanksgiving
 - iii. Breaking of bread
 - iv. Distribution
 - l. Benediction
5. Preparation for the Drama
 - a. Rehearsal
 - b. Sermon preparation
 - c. Prayer
 - d. Preparing what to say before and after songs
 - e. Removing distractions
 - i. Screen
 - ii. Musical excellence, planning
6. Conclusions
 - a. Remember who God is
 - b. Remember who we are
 - i. Individuals
 - ii. Local community
 - iii. Universal church
 - c. Be thoughtful, and listen
 - d. Keep worshipping!