



THE LINE

why liturgy?

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summary

The Line uses liturgy to enable response to Jesus in corporate worship. The structure of liturgy at The Line reflects the scriptural view of worship: our *response* to God's *initiation*. As such, each week participants in the liturgy are given means by which to respond in worship to the gospel, the climax of God's initiation with mankind.

liturgy: what?

Q: What is liturgy?

A: Liturgy is a word which we use to describe the way in which the church *responds* to Jesus in corporate worship.

Explanation:

Liturgy - "public work at private/singular expense" In the ancient Greek world massive projects were undertaken in order to display the nation's beauty and power in the public sphere. Often these project could not find sufficient funding through taxation. To compensate, private patrons *endowed* the government with funds in exchange for *public recognition* of their donation. This practice was known as "Liturgy." The word "Liturgy" was first associated with the christian worship service in a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek called the *Septuagint*.

The word was adopted because the church is *endowed* by Christ with beauty and power to be demonstrated in the public sphere (Eph 1:3-14; 1 Pet 2:9-11). As the church publicly worships Jesus, its divine patron, God is publicly recognized for His beauty and power (Rom 12:1-2; 5:8; 1 Thess 4:1-12; Matt 5:13-16; Heb 10:25).

(1) Identity: The church exists as Christ's beloved, his royal ambassadors, his family, and his friends. (Eph 5; 1 Pet 2:9-11)

(2) Function:

Private: The church is called out to be a people of thriving (moral, social and professional) who by the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, in response to the work of Jesus, repent and abstain from sin and furiously bless the world.

Public: The church's corporate worship is a public activity/work in response to the singular redeeming work of Jesus.

liturgy: why?

Q: Why adopt *formalized* worship?

A: God does, and man responds. The church's corporate worship should intentionally reflect this.

Q: Why would The Line adopt *formalized* worship?

A: The Line is a church *in* and *for* Chicago. Many people in Chicago have a background in ordered/liturgical worship. In addition, many people in Chicago spend their lives "ordering" (i.e., practicing their vocation in highly disciplined and educated forms). As redeemed Christians in Chicago, we also seek to order things to intentionally reflect the plan of Jesus' salvation.

Explanation:

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Significantly, Jesus has not only done the work of making it possible to worship and interact with God, he has also given us the means to do so (Scripture, prayer and communion) and given gifts to people (preaching, teaching, writing, singing etc) to lead us in our response. In every aspect of people's interaction with God from initial wooing, to salvation, to repentance, to sanctification, to thriving, to death and resurrection and to eternal life God is the doer. Even in people's response there is evidence of the active work of God causing them to respond. Liturgy portrays this in full.

In addition, Chicago has a very large percentage of people who are coming from catholic/non-catholic yet liturgical background. In our effort to be "all things to all people so that by all possible means God can save some" we are adopting a liturgy (1 Cor 9).

Finally, we must consider that Chicago is filled with people who value not only vocational, but also artistic expertise. In planning and creating our worship services, we ask: what would a church service ordered by Christians from this city look like? As such, our services aim at *intentional* and *artful* expression of God's work toward man and man's response to God's initiation.

liturgy: who?

Q: I'm not sure this is for me. Isn't liturgy for the pious and devout?

A: God's *initiates* with men and women regardless of their spiritual state. Therefore, we have adopted a liturgy that anyone can use to *respond* to God in faith, regardless of their spiritual state.

Explanation:

This manner of ordering worship for people has been happening since Christ's ascension and was formalized in the 8th and 9th centuries. Since that time there have been many established versions of church liturgy, mostly associated with varying institutions and denominations. Problematically, many of these ancient liturgies function under the assumption that everyone who is attending the church service is their ready and willing to submit to and worship God.

By contrast, our liturgy functions under the scriptural assumption that even the most devout believers are still fighting a will that is bent towards sin and rebellion. We have adapted a liturgy that will both portray and facilitate the fact that God is actively pursuing man, and man can choose to respond in faith or disbelief.

liturgy: how?

Q: Are you saying that just because I recite the words, hear the music and sing I am worshipping? Isn't that a Roman Catholic model? Didn't Martin Luther preach against those models?

A: Simple recitation or "going through the motions" of liturgy accomplishes nothing.

Explanation:

There is nothing inherently spiritual or mystical about the words, songs, or bread and wine. They are symbols representing greater realities and when participated in with faith, they become worshipful. God is and always has been after our hearts, our pure devotion. Our role in the liturgy is to respond in faith. In call and response: to make the words spoken your own. In communion: to remember Christ's sacrifice and to believe that you are now one with Christ and with other believers. In listening: to allow the music and

words to turn your gaze to God so that you may remember that He is after you, so that you may respond.

When church leaders set out to order worship in middle of the first millennium, their intention was not to create a stagnant barrier between man and God. It was to teach and order the worship of the lay people, who did not have a personal copy of the Scriptures and who, for the most part, who were uneducated. Also, There were many false teachers spreading things called heresies that were perversions of the truth that sounded just similar enough to be confusing. Men and women who loved God then decided that easiest way to decipher truth from heresy was by putting it up against Scriptures and the Apostle's teaching and tracing a line of truthful teaching through particular men and women tracing all the way back to the Apostles themselves. In this way they could more easily teach the lay-people truth from heresy. It was for the protection of the truth and salvation of people that these systems were set up.

Tragically, these systems were eventually used to oppress people and create a hierarchical system where God was no longer personal. Liturgical systems were used to buttress the heresy that God cares more for the systems than for the heart; that the Scriptures were exclusively for clergy; and that it was possible to manipulate spiritual realities by participating in physical functions. This eventually led to a practice called the "buying and selling of indulgences" where people could purchase with \$ passes out of hell and purgatory. This practice was the last straw for Martin Luther who discovered that in the Scriptures there was a personal God, who freely saved and dealt grace to all people who would respond to his Son in faith, and that even that faith as a gift from him.

Martin Luther re-discovered the truth that God has always desired man's heart before anything else. In our worship, we hold fast to this truth. The practices and forms are symbols and means, while the substance and effectiveness is by faith (Lev 26:40; Deut 10:16; Deut 30:4-6; Isaiah 58:6; Rom 2:17-29).