



# The Lighthouse

September 2020

## Our Biblical Worship

“In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.” And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” And he said, “Go...” (Isaiah 6:1–9)

There is a much confusion and debate concerning worship in our day. As our society throws out traditional values, it is no surprise that there has been a move from traditional to contemporary forms of worship. There is a temptation to think that if the church does not change to go along with cultural trends that it will cease to be relevant. That is why it is important to understand why we Presbyterians worship in the way that we do. There is a reason behind it and the reason is not, “Because that’s how we’ve always done it!”

First and foremost, our form of worship must be Biblical. Jesus said God must be worshipped “in spirit and in truth.” Not only must God be worshipped with a right heart (“in spirit”), but he also must be worshipped in a way that is in agreement with his Word (“in truth”). Our confession of faith sums it up in this way:

Chapter XXI Paragraph 1. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might.

But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

The Confession goes on to remind us of those elements the Bible dictates for worship. “Prayer, with thanksgiving..., the reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner.

So, the Bible gives us the elements, but why do we put them in the order in which we have them? The answer is that our order has a Gospel structure to it. The order of our worship service is meant to communicate an appropriate response to the Gospel.

We begin with a time of praise (call to worship / prayer of praise / hymn / Gloria Patri / Creed); followed by a time of confession (recitation of the Law of God / confession of sin / assurance of pardon / collection); which is followed by a time employing the means of grace (intercessory prayer / sacraments / Scripture reading / sermon); which is followed by a response of thanksgiving and blessing (concluding hymn / benediction).

This is the pattern we see in Isaiah 6. Isaiah goes to the temple, he encounters the glory of the thrice holy God, he sees himself as a sinner and repents, he hears God's word and responds with service. Wouldn't it be awesome to have the same experience as Isaiah?

It is my hope that all of us would worship intelligently on Sunday mornings (and any other time we worship, as well!) – to understand what we are doing and why we are doing it as we are. It is always easier to be engaged in an activity when you understand the “why” behind it!

Grace & Peace,

Tim

## Old Hymns Were Once New Hymns

Here is an excerpt from a newspaper objecting to new trends in church music.

"There are several reasons for opposing it. One, it's too new. Two, it's often worldly, even blasphemous. The new Christian music is not as pleasant as the more established style. Because there are so many songs, you can't learn them all. It puts too much emphasis on instrumental music rather than Godly lyrics. This new music creates disturbances making people act indecently and disorderly. The preceding generation got along without it. It's a money-making scheme and some of these new music upstarts are lewd and loose."

This was not written last week, but in 1723. These remarks were directed at a young English hymnwriter who produced a new hymnbook entitled *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in 1707. Then in 1719 he produced *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*.

One minister hissed that the young man was "profane, conceited, impudent, and . . . mangling, garbling. . . Songs of Zion" fit "for one who pays no regard to inspiration." His detractors took issue with one of his most popular songs calling it "man-centered" and "focused on human experience" . . . This hymnwriter was Isaac Watts, and the song was "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

His *Psalms of David* was roundly criticized because he loosely paraphrased the Psalms and inserted New Testament theology into them. At the time, the English church limited its singing to English translations of the Psalms. Many of his English colleagues couldn't recognize Watt's paraphrases. How could "Joy to the World" really be Psalm 98; or "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" be Psalm 72; or "O God Our Help in Ages Past" be Psalm 90? Such looseness in translation brought criticism. "Christian congregations have shut out divinely inspired psalms and taken in Watts's flights of fancy," protested one critic. Others dubbed the new songs "Watts's whims" instead of Watt's hymns.

Yet today, Watts is hailed as the Father of English hymnody. He wrote over 700 hymns and modern hymnbooks still include 20 to 30 of his hymns.

In our worship we sing a mixture of old hymns and new hymns and songs. We also try to work in a Psalter selection. A very large number of people have expressed their opinion concerning the music. Some people don't like the new songs, and some don't like the old. Some people want the organ and some rejoiced that lightning put ours out of commission. There is no way we can please everyone perfectly, so we will continue to mix the old and the new. We will always strive to sing theologically sound music whether it is new or old.

Some things to remember:

1. The old hymns have stood the test of time. It is a testimony to their usefulness to the church that they have been sung for centuries in some cases.
2. Old hymns were once new hymns that some people did not like, nor did they want to sing them in church. Thankfully, however, they did.



# Birthdays for September

Fran Handel 1st

Jimmy Bailey 16th

Jennifer Griffin 17th

Margaret Fore 17th

Tammy Turney 17th

Ashley VanderKoooy 20th

Church Office will be closed on Monday, September 7th for Labor Day Holiday.