

Vicar Andrew Wolfgram
Text: Luke 2:29-32
Date: February 4-5th, 2017
Setting: Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Communion

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are now in our fifth week of our sermon series “Through the Divine Service.” We have gone through Invocation, Confession and Absolution, the Kyrie and Hymn of Praise, and the Creeds. We are now to the Communion portion of the liturgy. Everything up to this point has been the Service of the Word, where the Word of God is proclaimed to you, His people. Law and Gospel has been preached in its purity and truth. We have confessed our faith using the words of the Nicene Creed. We now move into the Service of the Sacrament.

Much of our Divine Service has roots in ancient times. We proclaim the same words that Christians in the early church spoke when they met for worship. This continues especially in the Service of the Sacrament that begins with the Preface. The Preface consists of the dialog continuing between the pastor and the congregation starting with:

The Lord be with you.

to which the congregation responds: *And also with you.*

This dialog has been a part of the divine service since the second century. From ancient times the pastor leading the service says, “The Lord be with you,” to which the congregation responds, “And also with you.” This a blessing that is spoken to God’s people through the pastor. The presence of Christ is with them. The congregation responds in gratitude. We are thankful for the presence of God in our worship service. What do we do in response to the Lord being with

us? The pastor tells us what we are to do. The dialog continues in the call and response with the pastor saying:

Lift up your hearts.

To which the congregation responds: *We lift them to the Lord.*

We don't lift sin filled hearts to God that are stained with our sins. We lift up our forgiven hearts to the Lord. Forgiven hearts, absolved of our sin earlier in the service when we confessed our sins and the pastor forgave us our sins. Then, we await the pastor's next phrase. What are we do with our lifted hearts to the Lord? The pastor then gives us another invitation:

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

To which the congregation responds: *It is right to give Him thanks and praise.*

We are called to give thanks to the Lord our God. This makes sense because of what Christ has done for us, therefore we agree and say, "It is right to give Him thanks and praise." We are constantly remembering what Christ has done for us and praising and thanking God for all these things. The Proper Preface for the season in the church year is spoken and ends with the phrase: "*Therefore with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious Name, evermore praising you and saying:*"

We then sing together the Sanctus, which is Latin for holy. We sing Holy, Holy, Holy. We sing not only with other people in worship, but with our loved ones that have gone on before us to be with Christ. We sing with those that kept the faith until death, as they now dwell in the company of heaven.

Following the Sanctus, the elements are consecrated. We are in the presence of Christ. Christ's body and blood are with us in, with, and under the bread and wine.

Following the consecration of the elements, the Pax Domini is spoken. Pax Domini is Latin and translates as “Peace of the Lord.” Pastor says, “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” The congregation affirms this by saying, “Amen.” The Pax Domini reminds me of another peace that the world experienced. The Pax Romana was a 200 year span in history when there was a peace throughout the entire Roman world. Rome had dominated the known world, and because they were in control, wars didn’t break out. Because Rome was in charge, peace was maintained. When we talk about the Pax Domini, the peace of the Lord, we are talking about the peace that only Christ can bring. Peace between God and His people. This peace lasts longer than 200 years that the Roman Empire experienced peace, it has lasted for 2000 years since Christ died on the cross and rose for the forgiveness of your sin. It will last through eternity. So when we leave our pews and extend the hand shake of peace we are showing this peace that we have. Peace that God made with us and the peace that we extend from God to our neighbors, to our brothers and sisters in Christ, showing that there are no divisions among us.

The next portion of the Service of the Sacrament follows the distribution of Christ’s body and blood, in, with, and under the bread and wine. After you have approached the Lord’s table and received the body and blood of Christ, and you return to your pews, we sing together the Nunc Dimittis. Nunc Dimittis is Latin and translates to “Now you dismiss.” We have the joy of singing the words that Simeon said when he held baby Jesus in his arms. Simeon, who, as Luke 2:26 says, “It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” He had waited his entire life to witness the promise revealed to him. Simeon held Jesus in his arms. Jesus, in the flesh, His body and blood, Simeon held in his arms. As we sing in the Nunc Dimittis,

“Lord, now let Your servant go in peace; Your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which You have prepared in the sight of every people: A light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel.”

We also resound with the same joy that Simeon had. While Simeon waited his entire life for the promise of the Christ, we go to where Christ promised He would be, in the Lord’s Supper. After partaking of Jesus body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine, we depart in peace. This peace that we have with Christ. As Simeon held Jesus in the flesh, Christ’s body and blood, we have held Christ in our very hands. After holding Christ in your very hands, and having had his very blood upon your lips, we rejoice.

We can then depart in peace. Depart in peace as our relationship with God has been restored. Depart in peace as our relationship with those people around us are restored. Because we know that the Lord is with us, and we give thanks to God for what he does for us. Knowing that the peace of the Lord is with us always. Amen.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine... to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.”

Ephesians 3:20-21