

## ***Liturgy: The Dialogue of Worship: Called to Worship***

### **Scripture:**

Read Psalm 148

### **Introduction:**

Liturgy may not be a familiar word. It may even sound a bit churchy or formal. But in reality, the word liturgy – or literally “*the work of the people*” – is a dusty, gritty, earthy word used to describe the various habits and practices that the Christian Church has used in their worship of God over the centuries. Over the next few weeks, we’ll be breaking down a typical Sunday worship experience at Redeemer in order to show how each of the parts and “practices” of what we do on a Sunday serve to not only reinforce but to actually physically re-enact our experience of and understanding of the gospel.

As we break down these practices of worship, we also want to work against the “sacred vs. secular” divide – the idea that worship is merely something we do in a sanctuary, on Sundays, with a few friends and a lot of strangers. Christian worship is not just a call to do something “religious” on the weekends. This isn’t about engaging in a few ancient and old-fashioned spiritual practices that have little to do with life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The bible teaches just the opposite. Our habits and practices shape *who we are* and *who we’re becoming* because our habits and practices are shaped by what we love and desire most. This means that in order for us to be a community dedicated to living for God’s honor and the common good of our neighbors, *we have to be formed differently*. We have to take up practices that point our loves toward God.

One of these practices is what is commonly known as “The Call to Worship.” It’s a clarion reminder that the Lord who made everything, who sees everything, and who knows everything is desirous of a relationship with us. The Call to Worship is *read* by a pastor or presider, but they’re only serving as a representative. The “call” itself is from the Lord. God wants your heart and He wants you to know His. The invitation to worship the Lord is a safeguard against the human tendency to give our worship away to other people or things. The bible teaches that to be human is to be *liturgical*, meaning that to be human is to *worship*. We’re hardwired to find our identity, value, and worth in something outside of us. *The only question that remains is in whom or in what will we find it*. Psalm 148 gives us a glimpse of the cosmic chorus singing its praise back to the Creator. What allows us, as humans, to be part of that choir is the great “horn,” the great deliverer, Jesus, of verse 14. He’s the One that brings our song, our loves, and our worship back in line with God.

**Reflection:** Take personal inventory of your life, heart, and spiritual journey. Use these prompts as a way to prepare for group discussions, or for personal times of prayer.

1. What comes to mind when you think of liturgy and worship? Why does your mind go there?
2. What are some of the most significant (regular and routine) habits and practices that shape your attitudes and actions?

### **Discuss:**

1. What about the sermon stood out or impacted you the most? Do you have any follow up questions about the sermon?
2. Notice that verses 5-6 root the praise and worship of creation in a “command and decree.” But then notice that in verse 13 human beings are *invited* to worship, we aren’t commanded. While the rest of creation honors the Lord because it must, we alone are given the choice to worship. *Discuss*. (Note: Commentators have noted that of all creation, humans alone are the ones singing out of tune when it comes to the worship of God. How can we be brought back into tune again?)
3. Consider David Foster Wallace’s quote: “*In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.*” Wallace goes on to say that if you worship anything else, be it money, power, looks, your intellect, each of these will “eat you alive.” Is he right? *Discuss*.
4. Re-read verses 11-12. In those verses you get a glimpse of a pan-national family gathered as one in their worship of God. While significant cultural, ideological, and even sociological differences certainly still exist within these groups, nevertheless they gather with one voice of praise toward the living God. Grace and the invitation to worship bring people of radical difference together. *Discuss*.

### **Apply:**

This week, pay extra attention to the habits and practices that you’ve acquired. Some of these may also require a trusted set of eyes as we acquire some habits without knowing it. What type of person are these patterns and practices forming you into? Consider beginning or deepening the simple habits of bible reading, prayer, confession, singing, journaling, or spiritual friendship. Formation takes time so don’t be discouraged by a lack of “immediate results.”