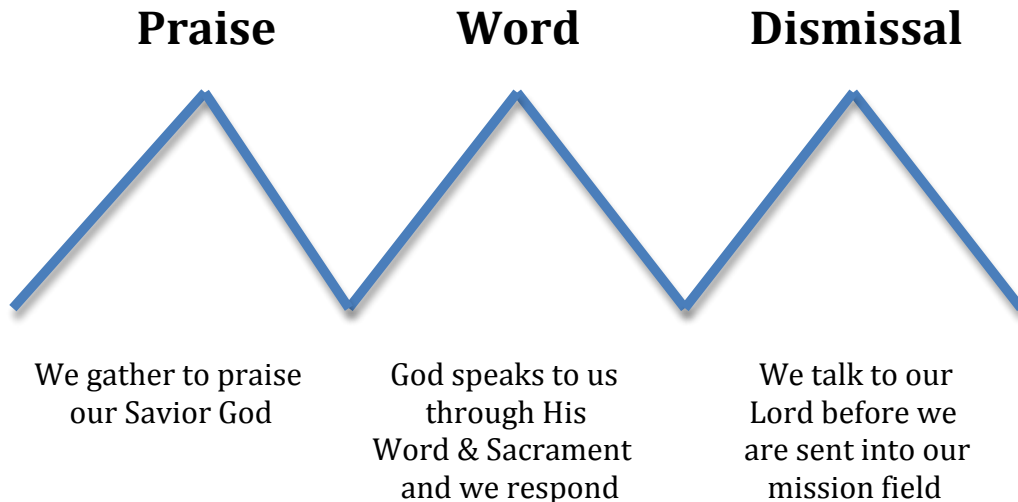


A walk through worship at St. Mark: A Threefold Worship Pattern

When viewing public worship, Christians must be sure to understand that God has not given explicit directions about the form the church's worship should take. The apostles, especially Paul, made it clear that the forms of public worship should remain in the realm of the church's Christian liberty. When Jewish converts tried to insist the Old Testament worship laws should be retained by the Galatian congregations, Paul wrote, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). We at St. Mark, therefore, maintain that the forms and rites of our public worship are adiaphora, that is, things God has neither commanded nor forbidden in his Word; in other words, we have the freedom to worship in various ways. In an effort to make sure we always strive to offer the best environments to hear the Gospel, our worship services and format will continue to be reviewed and revised, if necessary for greater Kingdom impact.

In an effort to carry out another biblical principle: "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40), the following helps the worshipper understand why we *currently* do what we do the way we do it in our worship services.



We view our worship in a threefold pattern. We begin as we "**Praise**" God. We are called to respond to God's past and present saving action with praise and thanksgiving. Our first two praise songs lift up the name of our Savior God with celebratory tones often utilizing the repetition of biblical truths and phrases as seen in the songs of Revelation. We then welcome God's people to God's house with helpful service announcements and a personal touch. We continue by reminding

ourselves no matter how good we feel about ourselves or our accomplishments, we are fallen sinful creatures in need of God's mercy and rescue. We are assured of God's forgiveness and salvation in Jesus in a responsive statement and/or in our response song.

The worshippers then move to the **"Word"** section of our service where we are reminded that God works through his Word and Sacrament and we respond. The Lord's Supper is regularly offered at this point giving worshippers an opportunity to receive the forgiveness of sins in a very real and mysterious way through the body and blood of Jesus in this sacrament (Matt. 26:28). Having again been reminded of our great God's love for us we respond with opportunities to give him the first fruits of our schedules, abilities and budgets. Our next song emphasizes the message of the day as well as gives the worshipper another avenue of praise and thanks. The message, utilizing various forms, offers the worshipper food for the soul, hope for the future and relevant guidance for practical, Christ-honoring living.

Now it is time to take Jesus' message to our mission field – the **"Dismissal"**. We enter into the throne room of the Lord of Lords as we join in prayer; once again exercising our Christian freedom by utilizing different forms of prayer: private, silent and corporate. The worshipper is then sent into his mission field as Jesus' ambassador with a blessing and a reminder. Paul captured the essence of being sent into the mission field when he wrote the Roman Christians: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1). Paul espoused the idea that worship is a way of life. Rather than ending at the door of the church building, worship continues into every aspect of our lives. We declare the same as we remind you: "You matter and you are loved."

*To listen to or view past messages or to learn more about St. Mark visit our website:
www.stmarkpartners.org*