

**Bible e-Study** - "***Living Life Worshipping God***" #4  
**Candles** (GOING DEEPER Invocation – Prayer of the Church)

***The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*** John 1:5

**NUGGET** – There are various factors that come into play using candles in worship. But in this verse from John we see a core reason. A candle, even a single candle in the dark dispels darkness and replaces it with light. Our use of candles reminds us of the presence of the eternal light of creation, Jesus Christ. Read [John 1:1-10](#). By using candles we have a living flame that reminds us of the life we all share in the light of Christ. John in speaking of the 'true light that gives light to every man' is referencing Jesus. Our use of candles is also a reference to Jesus. But not to Him alone as in [Acts 2:1-4](#) the Holy Spirit is also referenced by light from the tongues of fire that descended on Pentecost.

Light then is a key factor in our use of candles. Now we are no longer in the position of the early church where candles were a necessity in order to see clearly what was on the altar or to read by the light of them, however we retain their use because of the many biblical references to light. And we use different candles at various places in the nave and chancel for specific reminders:

- The candelabras each hold 7 candles, reminding us of Rev 4:3 where, in heaven, John describes 7 lamps or torches that burn in presence of God.
- The 2 candles on the altar during communion remind us of the presence of Christ Himself in the Sacrament.
- The Christ or Baptismal candle. We use this candle to remind us of the light of Christ which washes away the darkness from a person's life, as they become a child of God through baptism. (Also we give an individual baptism candle to someone when they are baptized to be reminded of the light of Christ now shining in their lives.)

Also the Christ candle can be used during the high season of the church year. Some churches light the Christ candle on Christmas Eve and it remains lit through out that portion of the church year till ascension Sunday when we celebrate Christ return to heaven 40 days after His resurrection. It is lit during that time of the year when we focus our worship on His presence among us on earth in bodily form.

The candle then remains in place though unlit (except at a baptism) to keep us mindful that, though Christ is no longer among us physically as when He walked this earth, but He is still present with us through His word of promise and the sacraments.

A closing word on candles in worship. We use a lighter/snuffer to light and put out the candles. Before the acolyte snuffs out the last candle, they relight the lighter and bring that flame from the chancel into the nave to remind us that we all go from worship renewed in the light of God's grace through His word, Jesus Christ.

**APPLICATION –**

1. We often use candles in our homes as decorations. Consider keeping your baptismal out to be seen as a reminder the light of Christ in your life.

**PRAY** – Give thanks to God for shining the light of life on us in Jesus Christ.

**GOING DEEPER**

## Invocation – Prayer of the Church

### 3. What is included in Divine Service - Liturgy

- a. Preparation
  - i. Invocation
  - ii. Confession / Absolution
- b. Service of the word
  - i. Introit
  - ii. Kyrie
  - iii. Gloria
  - iv. Collect
  - v. Gradual
  - vi. Hymn of the day
  - vii. Sermon
  - viii. Creed
  - ix. Offering
    1. Offertory
  - x. Prayer of the church

Now we begin looking at the things that are usually a constant in the worship service. Again remember that these things are free, they are *permitted*, not required. And they do have use for tying us to the church through the ages. Yet very little, if any, of what follows, save the Eucharist, has the command of God attached to it. At the same time, all that follows, in some form or fashion, has a biblical rationale for its inclusion and therefore is of benefit in teaching us more of who God is and who we are in relation to Him.

Beginning with the invocation, which, according to Webster's means, *a: the act or process of petitioning for help or support; a prayer of entreaty (as at the beginning of a service of worship) b: a calling upon for authority or justification.*

In using the invocation of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit we are *petitioning* the Triune God who has called us through His gospel and in His sacraments to again fulfill His promise to meet those gathered in His name. We appeal to God, the ultimate *authority* of the universe, (Who indeed has first called us through the Holy Spirit) to once again grant us His presence among the gathered.

Making the sign of the cross, as we speak the name of the Holy Trinity is a signature for a Christian. [*Remember though, this is done in Christian liberty only, this adds nothing to salvation nor is it done to draw attention to one's piety or holiness. It is meant only as a personal reminder that I am one 'marked with the sign of the cross' as was said when we were baptized.*] It is appropriate for all who wish, to join in this act as a remembrance of Holy Baptism. As we are baptized by the Lord's command in Matthew 28:19 in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we invoke that name and the reminder of our own individual baptisms as we gather together in worship.

Also, the three persons of the blessed Trinity revealed themselves at the Baptism of our Lord ([Luke 3:21-22](#)). So making this sign helps to put us in mind of Whose we are when we speak the invocation. The invocation is addressed to God, not to us. We are reminded by its use of the fact that the rhythm of worship begins with God, He comes to us first, we gather at His call and in His name. That's why our worship uses an invocation.

Now we look at the confession and absolution we speak and hear at some point in most services. Having responded to God's call to gather in His name, as we do

through the invocation, and thereby His presence comes to us, we are immediately aware of our unworthiness and how sinful we are. He is perfect, we are not. And this becomes painfully real for us in His presence. Just as Adam and Eve hid in the garden when God came seeking them after they had sinned, ([Gen 3:7-10](#)) we too are aware, because of His perfection, that in His presence we are sinners. We take time for self-reflection in light of His holy word and especially of the 10 Commandments that give a means to reflect on His holiness and our sinfulness. When we confess from our hearts and with our lips, we acknowledge that God, in His justice and holiness, ([Lev 19:2](#); [Mt 5:48](#)) has rightly condemned us in our sinfulness. That is His right as our Creator. And we, as His creation, by our confession agree with His judgment. So as part of our worship we, each individually and together corporately, confess our sins to God. ([James 5:16](#), [Ps 32:5](#), [1 John 1:8-9](#))

Then we hear His pardon. We never make confession without also hearing absolution! The absolution the pastor pronounces is done by the command of Jesus Christ and in His place. [Matthew 16:16-19](#); [John 20:20-23](#) This is part of the priestly function of the office of pastor. In speaking the words of peace, pardon and forgiveness; the pastor is speaking God's declaration of redemption through the blood sacrifice of Christ, not the pastor's own declaration. The just and correct condemnation by God of each of us in our sin is now answered by the mercy and grace of God in Christ through His granting us forgiveness. His declaration, through the pastor, of forgiveness overwhelms our shame and puts to rest our troubled conscience. According to Luther's small catechism, what the ministers of Christ do in absolving those who repent, is *just as valid even in heaven as if Christ our dear Lord dealt with us Himself*. The cross of Christ has overcome our sin, and through confession and absolution that pardon and peace are declared to be ours by grace through faith in Jesus.

Next can be an introit, which is Latin and means 'he enters'. This was developed beginning in the 400's when psalms were adapted for use by two voices or choirs. One would sing or 'call' a beginning verse and another would 'answer' with the next verse. This 'call' & 'answer' is known as antiphonal singing. From this came the antiphon, or verse that is repeated at the beginning and end of the introit and is intended to help focus on the theme of the day or season.

To this was added, by the 900's, the Gloria Patri, to mark the invocation of the Holy Trinity at the beginning of the service. This was important because the introit was sung during a procession, which was used to usher in the clerics and preacher from outside and through the nave of the church up to the chancel area. When everyone was in place the choirmaster would signal by hand and the Gloria Patri was sung followed by the closing antiphon.

For us, since the 1500's the introit has taken on the greater function of setting the approach or tone to the day's worship. The introit helps, in focusing on the season of the church year we are in, and by using various texts of Holy Scripture to help guide and lead us into worship and away from the cares and worries of everyday life.

On to the Kyrie and either the Gloria or the Hymn of Praise depending on which Divine Worship setting you are using.

Kyrie Eleison is Greek for 'Lord, have mercy' and came into use as a specific part of worship well before third and possibly even before the second century in the ancient Eastern church as the prayerful response of the congregation to the petitions

spoken by the priest. This is directly quoting scripture at many places including [Matthew 15:22](#), [Mark 10:47](#) and [Luke 17:13](#) where it is spoken directly to Jesus by those in need. It is our acknowledging, in prayer, that Christ is Lord and that Christ is merciful.

It is a prayer of humility and fervent supplication. We are meeting the Son of David, the Lord of heaven and earth, and our approach to Him comes out of our desperate need of His aid and help. The use of this approach to Christ in corporate worship has been noted in records as far back as the 300's in Jerusalem and Antioch. In the West its use can be traced to Milan in the 400's.

Very often, in addition to its specific use as our first prayer as a congregation together in the early part of the service, we will often use this in our prayers of the church to, as the woman in Matthew did, beseech God for His mercy.

Now, the gloria or hymn of praise likewise comes to us from scripture and the worship of the ancient Eastern Church. The Gloria ([Luke 2:14](#), [John 1:29](#)) is the hymn of praise the angels used at the birth of Jesus and tradition tells us that in the Western Church it was perhaps used for the first time in the mass on Christmas Eve in 530 AD.

Sometimes we use the hymn of praise alternative "This is the Feast". This commemorates the resurrection of Christ based on passages from [Revelation 5:9-13](#); [19:4-9](#) to again remind us of the glory bestowed on us by God being present with us now and in heaven to come.

The Collect. Like the introit, the collect is specific for a given Sunday. The collect is a prayer that also follows the theme of the season of the church year and the focus of that particular day. It comes from French Protestantism of the late 1500's. The collect is meant to 'collect' or draw our thoughts and hearts together before the throne of God, away from the distractions of this world and what God brings to us in His word that day. The salutation at the beginning, '*The Lord be with you... And with your spirit*', is meant to indicate the special relationship between the congregation and it's pastor and comes out of scripture in places like [Ruth 2:4](#), [2nd Thessalonians 3:16](#) and [Galatians 6:18](#). The salutation along with the collect then pull together pastor and congregation in heart and mind to focus on the gifts of God He wants to give us that day through His Word.

The gradual, from the Latin for 'step' (as it was sung from the chancel steps), is seasonal. It does not change weekly. It is meant to provide a thread of continuity through a season of the church year and is usually placed between the Old Testament and New Testament readings. Originally taken only from the psalms, now the gradual uses other text of Holy Scripture as well, as it gently moves us from season to season in the church year. The verse of the day, with the alleluia, is a choral or spoken introduction to the gospel lesson and again, like the collect and the introit, is unique and chosen to compliment the season as well as the readings for the day.

Hymn of the day

[Ps 40:3](#), [Mt 26:30](#), [1 Cor 14:26](#), [Rom 15:9](#) and [Eph 5:19](#). These all speak of the use of hymns in settings of praise, worship or fellowship. Hymns make use of the power of words, especially God's word, set to music, which enhance our understanding of our relationships with God, creation and others. Music and words combined also have the power to aid memory. So when we use God's word set to

music we have a great aid to memorizing Holy Scripture. Article 24 of the Apology of the Augsburg confession says, [XXIV.] *Concerning the Mass*

Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the Mass. In fact, the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence. Almost all the customary ceremonies are also retained, except that German hymns, added for the instruction of the people, are interspersed here and there among the Latin ones. For ceremonies are especially needed in order to teach those who are ignorant. Paul advised [[1 Cor. 14:2, 9](#)] that in church a language that is understood by the people should be used.<sup>1</sup>

The Sermon. As we said when speaking about the pulpit, the Word of God is the core of Lutheran worship. Without the proclamation of God's Word there is no way to know the forgiveness of our sins. St. Paul in Colossians 3:16 speaks of the need to be admonished and taught from the Word of God. That is what a sermon is for, teaching, guiding and recalling the promises of God. Going back into the Old Testament we find that God had it mind for people to be taught His word and how that was to be a help in people lives. Look at [Lev 10:10-11](#), [Deut 4:1-10](#), [2 Chron 15:3](#). These all speak of the need for teaching God's word to God's people.

As St. Paul says in Romans 10:14 ***“But how are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”*** The sermon is there to put our focus on God's Word for daily living and renewal in Christ.

The creeds we commonly use in worship are the Apostles and the Nicene. Once or so a year we may also use the Athanasian Creed, usually on Trinity Sunday. Simply put the creeds are a summary statement of Christian belief and doctrine. If you look at the structure of each of the creeds they all say what is true regarding the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We use these creeds in worship to remind ourselves of who God has revealed Himself to us to be.

These creeds serve as the basic core of all our teaching, doctrine and expression of what Holy Scripture has revealed to us. These are the statements against which all doctrine and teaching must be measured. Anything taught in opposition to or against these creeds puts a person outside the ranks of being a Christian. The creeds are considered universal or catholic (catholic with a small 'c'). That is, to be considered an orthodox Christian, or one who claims to be a Bible believing person, a person must claim allegiance to these creeds.

They are the bedrock, the foundation statements of Christianity; they proclaim clearly that God is the creator of all, that Jesus is the Son of the living God and that the Holy Spirit is sent from both the Father and the Son together. We repeat them Sunday after Sunday so that anytime anyone asks, what do you as a Christian believe, we can each have a ready answer.

The Offering and the offertory. Much of what we've looked at to this point in the Divine Service has been about our receiving of the gifts of God. We've heard God's gift of absolution. We've heard God's word reveal to us more of who our God is and we've heard His message of salvation for our lives in the sermon. Now, in

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<sup>1</sup>Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (69). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

response to His giving, we have the opportunity to respond in a similar fashion, by giving back to Him.

We now return to God a portion, from the first fruits of our labors, that He has provided to us through our health and abilities. "*He gives us all we need to sustain this body and life,*" so Luther reminds us in the Small Catechism. Since all we have is from Him, it is right and good that we should acknowledge that by making an offering to Him of what He has allowed us to gain. 1 Cor 16:2 reminds us, "*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income.*" Our willing and cheerful offering reflects the first portion of what we have been given so that everything that we spend for ourselves, after our offering to God, is second to God, thereby keeping Him first in our lives.

We sing or say an offertory so that our hearts and minds remain focused on God and His work and action in our daily lives. See [Psalm 116:12-13; 17-19](#). The offertory aids us in keeping our act of offering directed toward God and His generous and kindly provision for us, and in making our offering a joyful response from our hearts to Him. We give to God our best and first because that is what He has given us, His first-born Son for our salvation and the best in the perfect sacrifice Jesus Christ, for the atonement of our sins.

Prayers of the Church. Galatians 6:2 *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* This might seem to need no explanation, we come to church and we pray! However, as we have noted, we have had various prayers that we pray pertaining to specific parts of our worship so far in the Divine Service. Now, in these prayers of the church, we, together, stand between the world and God as His royal priests ([1 Pet 2:9](#)). *Together* we appeal to God that His will be done for us, our family and friends and the general welfare of this world that God has put us in as His people.

These prayers have their foundation in [1Timothy 2:1-4](#) "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone..." Our prayers are both a response (along with our praise and offerings) to God's goodness and a seeking after God that He would bless, preserve, extend and defend His church. For this reason, since the 4th century the congregation has often participated in the prayers using a responsive format like we sometimes do.

We have divided up our prayer concerns on the prayer list so that we don't overlook these aspects of daily life. It is always a joy to return thanks to God for His answers as well, so we begin the list with thanks for answered prayer.