



Sometimes little children confuse the pastor in the white robe with Jesus! This is understandable but easily and gently corrected by loving parents, grandparents and siblings. The blessing of such misunderstanding is that little children being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, brought to church each week, are learning from God's Word and growing in their faith. People confused John the Baptist with Jesus, but John quickly pointed to Jesus, not himself, as the promised Messiah (**St. John 1:20, 29**). Therefore, as your pastor will tell you, the service is not about the preacher or any personal preference or any personal focus, rather it is always about **Jesus!**

Each Service brings the real Flesh-and-blood Jesus, true God and true Man to us. He comes to us in His Word and Sacrament. Jesus is the Word made flesh (**St. John 1:14**) the Anointed One of God; the Christ with whom His Father was well pleased (**St. Matthew 3:17b**) who has come to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world on the cross; to die and then rise triumphant, giving forgiveness, life and salvation.

Jesus comes to deliver us from certain death and separation from God, to deliver salvation and to bring all who were in darkness into the light of Christ. Jesus comes to set you free from the bondage of sin to proclaim to you the Lord's favor through the merits and worthiness of Christ which flows to you from His cross; the place of His work of redemption. Jesus makes Himself known to you in His Word as St. Paul said: "**Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ**" (**Romans 10:17**). This is the reason for every Sunday, for the Divine Service for the Word read and preached from Lectern and Pulpit, for the visible Gospel in the Sacrament, the Lord's Supper to give forgiveness of sins and strength for life in this world; God always giving His gifts freely through His Means of Grace (Word and Sacrament).

While at times we may get a bit tired of the repetition of the Divine Service and grow weary of what we think is the same message, each service, each Sunday, is evidence of the mercies of God which are new every morning (**Lamentations 3:22b**) and His grace bestowed on us continually through the work of Christ on His cross and in His resurrection.

We do get distracted. We are continually under attack by Satan to lure us away from the center of worship which is Christ and focus on ourselves, on our temptations, afflictions and hardships. But it is Christ who has endured all of this for us and resisted the temptations of the devil for us in our place. Jesus did not fail but perfectly gave obedience to God's Law and to God's will. In the Divine Service when we hear God's Word, we are given the gift of forgiveness and assured of God's faithfulness to His promises even when we have been unfaithful to Him. As we hear about God's great love for us in Christ, we are given the life of Christ, the perfect obedience of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ and we are reconciled to God the Father and given forgiveness of sins and given the blessings of eternal life since we belong to God through our Baptism into Christ.

Each week, our Lord comes to us in the Divine Service, that is, He blesses us with His gifts (the Divine serves; gives His good gifts through Christ thus: the Divine Service means God serves us giving to us what we cannot earn). Jesus comes to us in His Word and Sacraments bestowing forgiveness, love, mercy and compassion, giving to us what He earned on the cross that we would be members of the Kingdom of God; the Communion of Saints. With such great gifts as these given to us each Sunday, we can sing with the saints gone before and all Christians throughout the world:

Alleluia! Let praises ring!

Unto the Lamb of God we sing,

In whom we are elected.

He bought His Church with His own blood,

He cleansed her in that blessed flood,

And as His bride selected.

Holy, holy

Is our union

And communion

His befriending

Gives us joy and peace unending.

Alleluia! Let praises ring!

LSB 822 verse 2

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt