

The Community of Saints
Bible Class for 5-3-20
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Introduction: *concerns about spreading a virus has virtually shut down in-person worship in favor of services on radio and live-streaming. It may be a good time to reflect upon the place and value of being "in church" when we can.*

1. Why "Go to Church?"

These days, some who want to "go to church" cannot because of restrictions on gathering. When we can gather again, hopefully soon, what are some reasons you, and other worshippers, "go to church?"

Some Christians rarely if ever "go to church." What are some reasons you hear about why they choose not to do so?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of following a service online instead of in-person?

2. Services, Rites, and Worship

Most world religions have rituals or services of worship. Some of them are "corporate," meaning they are done with other believers, and others are "personal." Here are a few examples:

Islam: *5 times daily prayer, gathering for service Friday at noon*

Judaism: *Daily prayer, gatherings on Sabbath, Festivals*

Buddhism: *the search to overcome pain and sorrow individually through meditation and sacrifice, not gatherings of worship*

Shintoism: *Altars and statues at home, sacrifices, personal and family*

Christianity: Christian gatherings and rites may appear to be similar to these groups. What does the Bible say about the purposes of worship?

Old Testament:

Read Exodus 29:38-46

Exodus 20:24

What would you have **smelled** and **seen** in the temple?

What were the purposes of such sacrifices on the altar?

What are at least 4 characteristics of the Divine Service we follow?

1. *Reverence before God*
2. *Desire to be free from the stain of sin*
3. *Centered on God and His will, not us and our desires*
4. *A community experience – more “we” than “I.”*

What is behind these characteristics?

God is holy; He is our creator and judge; life now and forever depend on Him

Read Psalm 150

What does this “hymn” add to our understanding?

God is worthy of praise for His power and grace; we should give it all we’ve got in music, song, and offering to show how much we appreciate His goodness!

New Testament

Read Hebrews 9:11-15 *Jesus is the once-for-all sacrifice for our sin*

Hebrews 10:19-25 *the blood of Jesus cleanses us in baptism; we are a community of faith, not just individual believers*

Matthew 28:19-20 *Baptizing and teaching are how disciples of Jesus are made*

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 *Jesus gives Himself personally in Holy Communion. We confess together what we receive and that He is coming again in glory.*

What is central to worship in these passages? *Jesus is active and present in His word and Sacraments to build and strengthen His disciple community.*

Next week: Worship as a Community