

Marks of a Healthy Church (5): Public Worship

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Marks of a Healthy Church

By Dr. David P. Murray

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Free Reformed Church of Grand Rapids

950 Ball Ave NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Website: www.frcgr.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/frcgr

Let us read again in Leviticus Chapter 10, Leviticus Chapter 10 and verse 1. "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censor and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not."

Why do we worship God as we do in this church? Sometimes when we go on vacation or go away and work in another place we go to other churches, and we find that these churches worship quite differently to ourselves. And sometimes it seems more enjoyable, more lively, more engaging, more attractive. We wonder, "Well, why do we worship like we do?" Maybe, young people especially, as you begin to branch out and move out of the circles they were brought up in, encounter different kinds of worship, different worship styles, and again, can often appear, at least on first look, on first sound, to be very attractive. Very compelling. And the question is raised, "Well, why can't we be like them?" Why do we worship as we do? Why are we different? And it's not good enough to simply say, "Well, this is our tradition. This is just the way we've always done it." We need a much better reason than that for what we use in worship and how we worship.

That's what we'd like to look at today. I'd like to defend our church's principles of worship, why we do what we do, and why we don't do other things, but I'd also like to challenge our church's practice of worship, because we can have all the biblical principles in the world, and yet not be biblical in how we implement them. Similarly, we can find churches that maybe don't have biblical principles for worship, and yet, in their practice, they may be more biblical than we are. And we want to be able to join both of these together--both the principles and the practice. This is what is acceptable to God.

This is sermon number 5 in the series on "The Marks of the Healthy Church." I gave you six or seven of these. The first one was veracity or truthfulness, we looked at how the church must be the pillar and ground of the truth, we looked at what's a preacher, what's preaching and how we listen to the preaching of the truth. We now go on to our second mark, which is purity, or holiness. And really, they flow quite naturally, one to the other. If we have the truth, that should lead to purity. Truth should lead to holiness. The two areas of purity we want to look at is purity of worship, which we'll look at today, and purity of life, which we'll look at another day. Holy worship and holy living should be

marks of a healthy church. But today, as I said, we want to look at worship, we want to look at three things. We want to see that holy worship is careful worship, holy worship is truthful worship, and, thirdly, holy worship is joyful worship.

First of all, holy worship is careful worship.

Every Christian has some principle, or principles, for regulating worship. Every Christian has some idea that there are some things that we can have in worship and some things that we can't. Even the most extreme, outlandish worship leaders in the church today, and as a whole, still have some lines, where they say "Well, you know, here's one area I just wouldn't go to." So, whether we like it or not, we all have a regulative principle--a principle or principles that regulate worship. That set bounds and borders. We all have some sense, some conscience that there are some things that are acceptable to God, and some things that are simply not acceptable. So we all have a regulative principle. The only question is, what is it?

And there are various principles people use. I'd like to just briefly summarize a few of them, quickly. For some people it's the PAST. If what we've always done, that's what we should always do. So the principle that regulates worship is, "Is this the way we've always done it?"

Second principle people often work by is PREFERENCE. "This is what I like, this is what I enjoy. This is what gets my feelings going, this is what gives me a kind of high. This is my preference."

The third principle is PRAGMATISM. "It works. It's attractive. It's popular. It draws people in. People like it, and therefore if it's not drawing people in, if it's putting people off, then we must change it, or we must keep changing until we get the recipe, the formula that does the job, and that draws people in, and that keeps them in—pragmatism."

A fourth principle is PROHIBITION. That's basically saying, "We can do whatever we like, unless God has forbidden in it. So unless we can find a commandment somewhere in the Word that says "You shall not do this," then we're ok, we're fine. So for example, if the Bible does not forbid services where pets are blessed, dogs and cats, then who's to say it's wrong? Or if we can't find a text that says that, if we shouldn't have liturgical dance, then again, who's to say that's wrong? It's not forbidden, and therefore it's ok." Prohibition. That's probably the most common principle today.

But the fifth principle, and I believe is the biblical principle, is PRESCRIPTION. We can only use in worship what God has prescribed--what God has commanded. That's different to prohibition. Prohibition says, "If God's not forbidden it, it's okay." Prescription says, "We can only do what God has commanded." And that's what's most commonly known in our circles as the reformed regulative principle. It's a principle that was recovered primarily by John Calvin at the time of the Reformation, and he saw that if we're to recover the biblical gospel, we've got to recover biblical worship, too.

The Reformation really had such a high view of God that--it recovered such a majestic God--that the reform said, "Well, this has got to impact how we worship as well." And this is classically summarized for us in The Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 21, Section 1, where it says, "The acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in Holy Scripture."

So, when we come to the worship of God, the big question is not, "What does God forbid?" but rather, "What does God command?" Worship is such a solemn, and weighty, and massive matter that it's not been left to our fallen human natures to try and figure out what's acceptable to God, and what's not acceptable to him. God has the right to determine how he will be worshiped.

And he's given scriptural basis for this. You take for example this classic passage in Leviticus Chapter 10. Here we have the sons of Aaron, priests, so it's the right people. They take censers, little canisters, into which they put hot coals, that had a scent, an aroma, on them--lots of herbs and spices that created a smell. God had given instructions as to how that formula should be made up. So it's the right people, taking the right censer, they put fire therein; this is all good. But then we read, "And put incense thereon and offered strange fire before the Lord." There was something about the formula that they concocted, that perfume that they put on the hot coal, that was strange to God. It was not what he was familiar with, not what he had commanded. And that's really what's said here. "Which he commanded them not." There's a lot that was good here, and no doubt well motivated. But, solemnly, seriously, they did not comply with God's prescription. He had not commanded them, and "So there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them. And they died before the Lord."

There are a few other verses that we can look at if we had time. I'll just give them to you, you can look at them in your leisure. Deuteronomy 12:32, 1 Chronicles 15:13-15, and Hebrews 12:28-29--all these verses and others. You have that classic verse in John chapter 4, verse 24, "God is a spirit, they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." And many others that tell us that God has the right to determine how he's worshiped, and that he has determined that he has prescribed it, and that is to be our rule. In the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 21, Section 5, that summarizes for us the biblical teaching on what should be in worship, "The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and hearing of the Word in obedience to God with understanding, faith, and reverence. Singing of Psalms with grace in the heart, as also the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God."

So, we mustn't innovate. We're not going to be creative when it comes to worship. The big question is not "What's forbidden?" but "What's authorized?" Now, of course this regulative principle, held by many reformed churches, varies in how people apply it, but this is the question that goes through every decision that pastors and elders must make

when deciding, “What is worship? What’s included in it? What are we allowed? Does God require this? Does God command this?” It’s not enough to ask, “Does he forbid it?” In the areas of worship, what Scripture does not authorize is forbidden. What Scripture does not authorize is forbidden. John Knox summed this up. He said, “All worshipping, honoring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God without his own express commandment is idolatry.” It’s that serious, and it’s that solemn.

So all this is to say, our worship must be careful--full of care. There must be a holy anxiety, that we use only what God prescribes in the content, and the conduct of worship. May God give us that carefulness, that focus, that ruthless focus, in using only what he has authorized and prescribed. Let’s examine our public worship by this principle; let’s make it a matter of great and constant care that we only in our worship use what God commands. And let this Chapter 10 be a solemn warning to us. Holy worship is careful worship.

But secondly, holy worship is truthful worship.

Been speaking here really about the spirit with which we should view worship. This great carefulness, this great reverence, but there’s got to be content as well, it’s got to be full of truth. Pastor Ray Lanning, writing in “Living for God’s Glory,” said this: “Of the many changes enacted by the Reformers, none was more dramatic than the change in public worship.”

What was so dramatic? Well, out went the Mass, with all that was associated with it. All the priests, all the vestments, all the altars, all the candles, all the images, all of that was rejected, in the desire to return to divine purity. And each of the Reformers went further and further in what they drove out of worship. Luther drove out some, then Zwingli, then Bucer, Calvin. Knox went furthest of all in his desire to have purity of worship--to have worship that is in spirit and in truth alone--but when they drove out all of these things that used to characterize worship it left a vacuum. And what came in but the Bible! Scripture filled this vacuum, more than adequately. So instead of all these other things, we had Scripture reading, scriptural preaching, scriptural sacrament, and scriptural singing--the singing of Scripture. Calvin, as somebody said, “Introduced a true liturgy of the Word, from beginning to end of the public worship, it was an encounter with the Word of God.” That’s what we want, isn’t it? The worship that’s full of truth--full of the Word.

So, let me say a couple of things here--first of all about preaching in worship, and then secondly about Psalms and worship. First of all, preaching and worship. We can fall into two errors here when we are thinking about the role--the relationship between preaching on the one hand, and worship on the other. And the first mistake is this, that we view worship as preliminary to preaching. That worship, as it were, just a warm up, until we get to the main event, which is the preaching of the Word. This division has become very, very clear in many churches, where you have a sort of a worship leader, and then you have the preacher. And the inevitable result of this is that, the actual worship--the singing, the reading, the praying--sort of gets downplayed. And people just sort of coasting along. And then when the preaching comes, they engage, and they switch on.

Well, we have to avoid this. That our singing, and our praying, and our reading is just - you know - so much secondary stuff, 'till we get to the big stuff, the primary matter of preaching. No, we've got to make from the moment we come in here, that the singing of the first psalter, the prayer, the reading of Scripture, is to be right up there with the preaching. So let's not minimize and shrink and relegate the so-called worship part of the service, secondary to preaching.

In fact, Spurgeon once went to preach in a place, and the pastor said to Spurgeon, "You do the preaching, and I'll do the prayer before the preaching." And Spurgeon said, "No no no. If we're going to split the labor, I'll do the prayer, and you do the preaching." Because to Spurgeon, the prayer was right up there, with the preaching. And, needless to say, the pastor stepped back and said, "No no no, you just do both." But it communicates to us how Spurgeon saw the lead up to preaching as just right on the same level as the preaching itself.

But, the second problem we can often encounter with regards to preaching and worship is we do the worship bit, but then the preaching isn't worship. We sort of move from a worshipful spirit and prayer and singing and hearing of the Word, and then we get to the preaching, and suddenly we become sort of cold and intellectual and academic and rational and logical, and the worship spirit goes out the door. No, preaching is to be worshipful, and the hearing of preaching is to be worshipful, and the singing and the praying and the reading of the Word is all to bring us into a worshipful spirit that we may stay there in worship, and as I preach, I should be thinking in my heart, and worshipping in my heart. As I declare these truths that, it should be a heart-warming, heart-elevating experience for me, but also for you in hearing. Not just to be sitting there passively, receiving, receiving, receiving, receiving, but as you receive, it should be going up, and worship. You should be turning what you hear into prayers, and praises, and petitions, so that the preaching, and the hearing of it is full of worship. Spirit and truth together.

But let me say a word about Psalms and worship. Luther reintroduced congregational singing to the church. Before that, for a thousand years, the worship was done by the choir--the monks, the chanters--and the congregation just sort of watched, and looked on. And of course this happens today in many churches, where there's a sort of performance and stage. I was reading a report recently of a man who went to a church like this, and he suddenly realized that, by the third or fourth song, nobody else was singing. That there was just a spectator event. This is a return to pre-Reformation times when there was no congregational singing, it was done for them. Well Luther said, "No, the people of God should sing." And he introduced a hymnbook, and started congregational singing.

Well, Calvin took the Reformation further and took this congregational singing that Luther had reintroduced, but he took congregational singing into biblical singing, the singing of the Bible, the book of Psalms in particular. He wanted worship from beginning to end to be biblical both in its conduct, and in its content. He wanted it to be an encounter with the truth. And Calvin based this, as many of the other Reformers did, on commands in the Bible.

Of course there are numerous commands in the Old Testament. Remember that's our big question, "What's God commanded, What's God commanded?" Not "What does he forbid?" but "What has he commanded?" Well, he certainly in the Old Testament commanded Psalm singing, didn't he? Throughout it. The book of Psalms themselves is full of sings, "Sing of, Sing as, Sing as." But we also have New Testament commands. We can't spend too long on this this morning, but for example in the book of Colossians Chapter 3, Verse 16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." So there, already we see it's the word of Christ, "Dwelling in us in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord, now you look at that in the face of it, you say "Well okay, they're Psalms, but they're also hymns, and they're also spiritual songs." And the way that the majority of the church has interpreted this is exactly like that. We have some Psalms, and we have some hymns, and we have some spiritual songs. However, what's interesting here is first of all, remember this is all couched under that it's the word of Christ. Secondly, these titles here--Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, in the Greek--are the same titles given to the Psalms in the Greek Old Testament. And the people in Bible times would have been familiar with that, when they read in the Greek, Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, it put them back to the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament. And each of the Psalms had headings. And these were the headings--some were specifically called Psalms, some were specifically called hymns, some were called spiritual songs. That was the Reformers' reasoning, in saying not what God's commanded is the book of Psalms. The Psalms are the book of Psalms, the hymns in the book of Psalms, and the spiritual songs in the books of Psalms.

We also have the Lord's example. In Matthew Chapter 26:30, he's instituting the Lord's Supper, transferring from Passover to Lord's Supper, and we're told he sang a hymn. Again that sounds to us as if, well, you know, he sang hymns. Well, no, what they sang on these occasions were the Hallel Psalms, the Pascha Psalms, Psalms 113-118. That's what he was singing there, he gave us that example. Interestingly, too, when it says here "Spiritual songs," 24 times out of 25 times in the New Testament when "spiritual" is used, it means "of the Spirit." Songs of the Spirit, or from the Spirit. And, interestingly, also, the NIV, it translates this phrase, "Psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit." That would be our reasoning for exclusive Psalmody.

Now, we have to admit, not many people are persuaded of our reasoning. We are a small minority in the whole church of Christ. I think that calls us to some measure of humility, as we make this argument, recognizing that not that many people are persuaded of this. But all I want you to know is that as a case, we're not doing this because of the past, it's what we've always done. It's not because of preference, it's what we like to do, although we do. It's not pragmatism, certainly, because it's not that popular. It's not about prohibition; it's about prescription. Our concern, at least as far as God gives us light, our concern is to do what only God has prescribed, and as far as we can see this is what he has prescribed.

So, there is a case. It's a biblical case, it's an arguable case, but I think it's a humble case that we want to make. I don't see much merit in going around critiquing and attacking

every other church's worship style. I think it's much better to make a positive case from the Psalms, and to do that, I would argue along these lines.

First of all, they are inspired by God. We can know that for sure they are songs of the Spirit, they are the word of Christ. We can be absolutely sure that God wrote them.

Secondly, they are without error. I'm sure there are many, many songs, hymns, and choruses that are without error, but we can be sure the Psalms are without error, unlike some songs and hymns.

Thirdly, they are God-focused. If God inspired them, then we're going to have a focus on God through the Psalms.

Fourthly, they are balanced. There's a good balance between the focus on God and the focus on man. Maybe some spiritual hymns and songs might be more man-focused than God-focused. There's a good balance between doctrine and experience. That's truth, but there's the encounter, and there's the experience of the truth. There's a good balance between the past, the present, and the future. The Psalms look back and draw from the past, the Psalms look to the present, and deal with the present-day situation, but they also look forward and point us towards our great hope. So they're balanced.

Also they are Messianic. They are Christ-centered. We can argue that when we sing to God with the Psalms, we are singing to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We sing the Psalms with Trinitarian tongues. We also not only sing to Christ with the Psalms, we sing of Christ with the Psalms. If you look in books about the Psalms, you'll notice that oftentimes writers will trace the history of Christ on earth using the Psalms, showing how the Psalms predicted his birth, his growth, his public ministry, his teaching, his miracles, his suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension--and even smaller details, like his betrayal. And so when we sing with the Psalms, we're singing to him, and we're singing of him. We're also singing through him--only worship given to God through Christ is acceptable to him.

And fourthly, we sing with him in the Psalms. These were the songs he sang. This was his hymnbook growing up. These were the songs that nurtured him, that encouraged him, that directed him, that taught him, that he used as man in the worship of God. These were the Psalms that helped him in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross. And so as sing these Psalms, one of the questions we should be asking is, "How did Christ sing them?, How did He use them? How did He experience them?" This will bring Christ to us in a very close and intimate way. So we sing to him, we sing through him, we sing of him, we sing with him, the Psalms are Messianic.

Sixthly, the Psalms are uniting. There's nothing that will divide a congregation more than choosing worship styles and worship songs. At least with the Psalms, we know that we can unite and then we know they are of the Lord, and nobody can argue with that. But, I'd also like to make this point, that we're in danger of losing the Psalms. It would endanger losing them if we don't understand why we use them, if we just attribute it to

preference or the past tradition. Then our young people will grow up and they'll say, "Well that's just pure tradition, and they've got nothing and we'll go." No, we've got to learn the principles. But, what about the practice? Are we biblical in our practice of singing the Psalms? I'll touch on this a bit more on that in the next point, briefly.

But, this is something that's really struck me since I've left Scotland. When I was in Scotland we used the Scottish metrical Psalms--that's what I grew up with, what I was familiar with, I was comfortable with. Then I came here; they didn't use any Scottish Psalms. I felt very uncomfortable, very unfamiliar. Then I began to realize how much of my experience of the Psalms was cultural. There was a Scottish element to the way the words were framed and even the music that accompanied them. So now I come here, and after a couple of years here I begin to get comfortable and familiar with the Dutch Psalter. But it still raises this question: "How much of this is cultural?" Not that fact that we sing Psalms, but in how the Psalms are written; the music that's set to them. And one of the dangers is if we don't recognize the cultural element to our Psalm-singing, then we end up holding on to the culture at the risk of losing the Psalm-singing. Because cultures change, tastes change. And that's why oftentimes when people are brought up with exclusive Psalmody begin to want to outreach, begin to want to evangelize, and church-plant, and do children's camps. They come to our Psalms, as we did in Scotland, and people can't connect with them. It's alien, it's different, it's unfamiliar, it's uncomfortable. And so what happens? The Psalms are put aside, and non-Psalms are brought in.

If we want to keep our Psalms, we have to look at what elements are cultural, what elements are merely traditional. I don't want my own comfort zone, my own familiarity, what I'm used to, to have the priority. And then I'm responsible, maybe, for our churches losing the Psalms altogether. God forbid that any of us be responsible for that. We have to carefully look at preserving the biblical principle, but also translating the biblical practice, in our context, and in our own generation.

But, this brings us back to this point again: Holy worship is truthful worship. John Calvin said of the Psalms: "There's nothing lacking, which relates to the knowledge of eternal salvation." Calvin also said, "I've been accustomed to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul. For there's not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that's not represented here as in a mirror--an anatomy of all parts of the soul." What a treasure we have here! May God help us to preserve it for our generation and future generations to come.

But lastly, and very briefly, holy worship is joyful worship.

There are many emotions that should characterize our Psalm-singing. There's hope, confidence, love, contrition, lament, but there's also joy. We have to be very careful we're not overreacting against the modern excesses in worship. We look around; maybe we visit other churches; we might see some things and TV or video sometimes we hear other people in our workplaces talking. I think that worship is so superficial, it's so artificial, just happy, happy, happy, clappy, clappy, clappy, and we think we don't want

anything to do with that. And the danger is that we go to the other extreme, and we're never happy, happy, happy. And there's never even an impetus to be clappy, clappy, clappy--even with the hands of our souls, internally. We're always in this great danger of overreacting, and that we see all the--"Right, they've gone way to far over there, so we're going to go way far over here and focus on lament, and contrition, and mourning, and groaning." So we can have all the biblical content, but be totally lacking in this biblical spirit of joy.

There are over a hundred references to joy and rejoicing in the Psalms. A hundred times we're told to rejoice, to be joyful. And it's not just "Come on, be happy, be happy!" That's what you often get in modern worship, there's a sort of stirring up of the emotions. That's not we have in Psalms--it's always based on truth. It's be joyful, because this is true.

Now I listed a few just of these hundred here, but just a few of them. "Rejoice, because you defend us... Rejoice because we trust in you... Rejoice because of your mercy... Rejoice because of your great goodness... because of your righteousness... because you lift me up... because you don't let my enemies triumph over me... because you considered my trouble... because you know my soul and adversities... because of your justice... because you revive us... because we seek you... because you are our maker... because you've reversed my captivity... because your statutes are right... because you guide us to the desired heaven... because this is the day the Lord has made... because I'm going to your house." See that, that's what... fifteen or so. There's a hundred of these. We're meant to get a point here. Yes, let worship be careful, full of care, let it be truthful, full of truth. But let it also be full of joy and gladness, based upon the truth. God has given us multiple truths, multiple reasons, to be joyful.

I remember a family, that the father was a bit of a bully, and when he wasn't around the children were quite happy and cheerful and free, but when the father appeared they suddenly changed, and they were cowed, their posture visibly changed and their face changed. Hardly talked. It was sought of a withdrawing, stepping back. It was very obvious, they were in utter terror. And you could only say inside, "Thankful he's not my dad." And then when the father disappeared there would be a return of this freedom and liberty and joy again.

Well, here's the big question. What do people think of our heavenly Father when we are in his presence? What do they conclude when they see our conduct and our spirit when we are in his presence publicly? Are we like these bullied children? Does our posture and our expression, our tone of voice, does everything change so much that anyone looking on would say, "Phew, I'm glad he's not my Heavenly Father"? Surely we want to communicate to one and all and everyone, "I'm so glad this is my Heavenly Father." Look at the liberty, look at the freedom, look at the joy, look at the confidence, look at the hope that thrives and grows in his presence, never freer, never more joyful, than when in the presence of my Heavenly Father.

True worship is joyful worship. And of course it begins in the heart. But if it's in the heart, it's going to bubble up and overflow in our lips, in our words, in our tone, in our volume, in our facial expression, even our posture. And notice it's not joyful, full stop. It's in this context of careful, truthful, joyful. That's the recipe, the formula, the biblical mixing, that's so pleasing to God. Is it Psalm 100 that says "We joy in trembling, with our joy"? True worship, holy worship, is joyful worship.

In conclusion, let me say this: Let's try and study and understand what we do. Hope our young people will at least be able to explain why we do what we do. I don't want anyone going out and attacking other churches, critiquing and just being generally nasty. Let's know what we believe, let's be able to defend it, let's be able to give a reason for what we do. Let's do this humbly, let's recognize that although for 200 years after the Reformation, the whole Reformed church was a Psalm-singing church. Now, we're just a tiny minority. The day may come again, let's hope so--let there be an increase, and I believe there is in many parts of the world, an increase of Psalm-singing, again.

Let's keep reforming. Let's not think this is a "We're done, no more change required." The whole ethos of the Reformation was "Semper Reformanda--Always Reforming." There's always, in all worship, as in all human activities, there's a tendency to corruption--a tendency to add in what shouldn't be there and take out what should be there. We need to be constantly examining this. Always reforming, and always doing what we do do better. Seeking to improve upon it, trying to learn from others, maybe not so biblical in their principles, but more biblical in their practice.

And above all, let's just be amazed, let's just be amazed that we are allowed to worship God. That we are permitted to come into his presence and sing, and pray, and hear his Word, and not be consumed by a holy God. How is this possible? It's only through Jesus Christ. We can't deal with God directly, none of us can. This is why you and I need Jesus, for our worship as well as for our salvation. That all we do is offered to him, through him, in his name, because of his merits. And that he would cleanse our worship, even no matter how biblical we get, in our content and our conduct, it's still marred, it's still sinful, it still needs forgiveness. We offer up our praises today, and our prayer, and our reading, and our preaching, and we say, "Lord, forgive it all, and accept it for Jesus' sake." And that's a wonder, that he and cleanse, not just of every sin out there, but of every sin in here, and make our worship whiter than snow and acceptable in his sight. This is truly amazing, truly humbling, and hopefully, truly endearing, and enticing, as he draws us to himself through the Lord Jesus. Amen, let us pray.

Oh Lord, our God, we confess that we have never truly worshiped thee in spirit and in truth. Forgive us, even for the sins of this day. But encourage us with that forgiveness, to keep coming, to keep praising, keep praying, keep reading, keep preaching, keep hearing, offering everything in Jesus name. Oh Lord help us; we want to be a church where thou art enthroned in thy worship, for thou art lifted up, thou art exalted, thou art glorified. We want to be a church that is always reforming, seeking to get closer and closer to the biblical pattern and formula. Oh Lord, do help us, and continue to forgive us, in Jesus' name, Amen.