

Worship Service

BY BURT L. BURLESON

Call to Worship

Leader: Grace and peace to you in the name of the Lord our God,
 Creator of all things, the One who knit our very beings together.

**People: We come to worship God, whose vastness is
 beyond our knowing but in whom we are fully known.**

Grace and peace to you in the name of our savior, Jesus Christ.

**We gather to worship in the name of Christ,
 who lived and died among us, imparting life to each of us.**

Grace and peace to you, by the living power of the Holy Spirit.

**We open our hearts to this Eternal Spirit,
 who moved over the face of the deep and who is with us now.**

Chiming and Silent Meditation

I, God, am in your midst.
 Whoever knows me can never fall,
 not in the heights,
 nor in the depths,
 nor in the breadths,
 for I am love,
 which the vast expanses of evil
 can never still.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Unison Invocation

Almighty and Merciful One, Lord God of all Creation,
 receive our worship this day.

May our respect and humility
 honor your transcendent holiness.

May the attention we offer
 mirror your immanent presence.

May each word of prayer and proclamation
 point to your truth.

May every thought
 be large enough to be worthy of your mystery.
May the lives we live
 be as loving and full as the one you lived...
 in Christ and for your kingdom's sake. Amen.

Hymn of Praise

"Holy, Holy, Holy"

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Reginald Heber (1826)

Tune: NICEA

Scripture Reading: Psalm 139:1-18

First Reader: O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
Second Reader: You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from far away.
Third Reader: You search out my path and my lying down,
 and are acquainted
 with all my ways.
First: Even before a word is on my tongue,
 O LORD, you know it completely.
Second: You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.

Third: Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is so high that I cannot attain it.

First: Where can I go from your spirit?

Second: Or where can I flee from your presence?

First: If I ascend to heaven,
All: you are there;

First: if I make my bed in Sheol,
All: you are there.

First: If I take the wings of the morning
 and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
All: even there your hand shall lead me
 and your right hand shall hold me fast.

Third: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
 and the light around me become night,"
 even the darkness is not dark to you;
 the night is as bright as the day,
 for darkness is as light to you.

Second: For it was you who formed my inward parts;
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.

First: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

All: Wonderful are your works;
 that I know very well.

First: My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Second: Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
 In your book were written
 all the days that were formed for me,
 when none of them as yet existed.

Third: How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
 How vast is the sum of them!
 I try to count them—they are more than the sand;
 I come to the end—

All: I am still with you.

The Silent Prayers of God's People

In the quietness of this moment, will you offer your prayers to God?
God is here, above all and in all and through all.
God is listening as we pray for our world.
And as we pray for one another.
And as we pray for ourselves.

Hymn of Reflection

“Be Still, My Soul” (verses 1, 2, and 4)

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side;
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
leave to your God to order and provide;
in every change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: your best, your heavenly Friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: your God will undertake
to guide the future, as he has the past;
your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know
his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
when we shall be forever with the Lord,
when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Katharina A. von Schlegel (1752); translated by Jane L. Borthwick (1855), alt.
Tune: FINLANDIA

Offertory Prayer

Teach us, God, to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost.
To labor and not ask for reward,
save in the knowledge that we do your will.

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556)

Offertory Hymn

“Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life thou givest to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish—but naught changeth thee.

Great father of Glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render; O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee!

Walter C. Smith (1876)
Tune: ST. DENIO

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

New Testament Reading: Acts 10:9-23

The Word of the Lord for God's People.
Thanks be to God.

Song of Preparation

"Break Thou the Bread of Life" (verse 4)

O send thy Spirit, Lord, now unto me,
that he may touch my eyes and make me see:
show me the truth concealed within thy Word,
and in thy Book revealed I see thee, Lord.

Alexander Groves (1913)
Tune: BREAD OF LIFE

Sermon

Reflection and Response

At this point in my thinking,
it is not enough for me to proclaim
that God is responsible for all this unity.

Instead, I want to proclaim that God is the unity—
the very energy, the very intelligence,
the very elegance and passion that makes it all go.

Barbara Brown Taylor

Hymn of Commitment

“My Deepest Prayer”

Burt L. Burleson

Tune: DAYSPRING (pp. 48-49 of this volume)

Benediction: Ephesians 3:14b-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit and your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—

that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.



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