

*Let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe...* (Hebrews 12:28)

It's fairly common for us Lutherans to speak of our interactions with God in the Divine Service in terms of 'reverence'. We understand in some sense that, in God's presence, in God's house, we should be reverent. But, we Lutherans usually define that simply as quiet and reserved. As long as we show up and keep our heads – and voices – down, we're being reverent. If we know the right stuff, and say the right stuff, and do what we need to do when we do it, then we're being reverent.

What we forget sometimes – as our human nature tries to get us to do – is that our external actions should be signs of an inward reality, not an end to themselves. For example, we can forget – or ignore – that God has called us to be holy as he is holy. Instead, we divert our attention from the holy and the heavenly to the mundane. We can speak the words – “I, a poor, miserable sinner...” – but we may ignore what that should mean for our lives. What, really, does it mean for us – beyond external words and actions – to stand in the presence of a holy God each and every week?

Imagine if we always acted as if God really was the Judge of the living and the dead. What would it look like to stand in his presence? What if we really took seriously all the sinful things that have ever gone through our minds, even if they never made their way to our lips? What if, even more, those thoughts were read back to us in the courtroom of God? Would we be embarrassed? The truth is, we sometimes forget what the real situation is. How is it that we come into the presence of a holy God? As people with sinful lips, and even with sinful hearts. There is no ignoring our situation. There is no justifying our thoughts, words, and deeds.

In June, we celebrate Trinity Sunday. It's a day when we remember one of the central teachings of the Bible – that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This God is holy, described as a *consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29). Truly, none of us sinners can stand in the presence of this holy God and live. But, the Father didn't send Jesus among us to condemn us, but to save us. How does he take care of our sin? By experiencing the fiery wrath of God on the cross of Calvary. Even more, just as Isaiah's sinful lips were purified by the coal from the altar of God, our lips – and minds and hearts – are purified by Jesus' very body and blood when we approach the altar to eat and drink his body and blood. True reverence doesn't stop with words and actions. True reverence means coming before the Lord with nothing to offer. But, when we receive the gift of God in Christ, Jesus brings his people together around himself as a people reborn, cleansed, and pure. Then, as we remain gathered together, we offer our thanks and praise for God's eternal mercy, forgiveness, grace, and love!

-Pastor Squire

“Fount of every blessing, purify my spirit, trusting only in Your merit. Like the holy angels, worshipping before You, may I ceaselessly adore you. Let Your will ever still rule Your Church terrestrial as the hosts celestial.”

(“God Himself Is Present,” *LSB* 907, v. 3)