Lecture 15- Planning a Worship Service

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord...

Isaiah 6:1

Key Concepts
- Planning worship with Gospel progression in mind

Lecture Objectives
- Review worship seminar by Dr. Chapell
- Apply the regulative principle and Gospel-flow of worship to the task of planning

Preliminary Questions
- What impact does the knowledge of Christ leading worship have upon the way the planning of worship should be approached?
- Why is the flow or structure of worship important for the congregation? Why – with regard to the congregation – should one not simply ‘toss’ the elements together?

Planning a Worship Service
Introduction – Additional discussion of women in worship and church

I. Five-fold Approach to Regulative Principle of Worship (Review)
   A. Commanded elements
   B. Biblical content
   C. Gospel shape or arrangement
   D. Variety of valid expressions
   E. Circumstances unique to local churches

II. Format Approaches to Worship Services
   A. Dialogical
   B. Flowing praise
   C. Content-driven or thematic

III. Dr. Chapell handout on Gospel worship (see Appendix D)
   A. Re-presenting the Gospel (page 5)
   B. Aspects of a worship services
      1. Gospel in form (page 6)
      2. Purposeful in format (page 6)
   C. Components of worship services (page 7)
      1. Calls (Scriptural, pastoral, choral, congregational, responsive)
      2. Prayers (collects, forms, Scriptures, extemporaneous, hymns)
      3. Readings (pastor, congregation, choral, antiphonal, responsive)
Christian Worship

4. Music: Hymns, solos and choral pieces
5. Offerings and collections
6. Benedictions and charges
7. Transitions (explanations and rubrics (i.e., instructions))
8. Sermon
9. Sacraments
10. Other? (e.g. fellowship, testimonies…)

D. Practical instruction in leading worship
   1. Intangibles of worship (pages 8-9)
   2. Miscellaneous worship concerns (pages 9-10)

IV. Basic Structure of Worship Services (Five-fold Pattern)
   A. Call to worship – God’s initiative taking hold of His people
   B. Confession and forgiveness – God separates His people from sin
   C. Consecration – God speaks to His people: Scripture reading and sermon
   D. Communion – God gives tangible signs and seals: The Lord’s Supper
   E. Commission (benediction): God arranges for succession

V. Worship Elements or Building Blocks
   A. Prayer – I Timothy 2:1
   B. Offering – 2 Corinthians 9:7-9
   C. Reading and preaching Scripture – 2 Timothy 4:2
   D. Singing – Colossians 3:15-17 and Ephesians 5:8-20
   E. Sacraments – I Corinthians 11:23ff
   F. Other - Confessions of faith, oaths, vows, testimonies – I Co. 14:26

VI. Choosing and Arranging Elements and Expressions of Worship
   A. Re-presenting the Gospel in way you arrange elements and choose content
   B. Shaping worship to follow the Gospel storyline that flows from Scripture into the lives of congregation
   C. How does the presence of Christ (Hebrews 2:11-12) impact choices?
   D. Is worship dialogical?
      1. Dialogue is built into the Gospel flow
      2. Is worship about what we get or what we give? Yes! Both!
   E. Ask question of everything: Why am I planning to do this?
   F. One page diagram from beginning of class - evaluate what you planned

VII. Example of Music in Choosing Resources for Worship
   A. Great old hymns with great old tunes (which can be arranged according to preferred instruments)
   B. Great old hymns with great new tunes (also arranged according to preferred instruments)
   C. Great new hymns with great new tunes (ditto)
   D. Great contemporary choruses bridge between other songs and/or elements (I Love You Lord, He is Exalted, etc.)
   E. Great historic “choruses” as bridges between other songs and/or elements (Doxology, Gloria Patri, etc.)
   F. Songs from the nations

VIII. Example of Presbytery Service (see Appendix E)
   A. Ohio Valley Presbytery context
   B. Creative use of historic and contemporary – convergent worship

IX. Grid of Questions for Worship Planning in a Local Church
   A. How does the session oversee the worship of the church?
   B. Who makes up the worship planning team?
C. The biblical elements
   1. Are they present?
   2. How are they arranged?
   3. Is there room for creative and fresh expressions?
   4. Do they support each other?
   5. Do they support the overall focus of the service?
   6. Are they given appropriate time and weight in the service?
   7. Is each element “Word-centered” and “Christ-centered” and does it serve the Gospel purpose and storyline of this specific worship service?

D. What is the overall structure of the service?
   1. Liturgical
   2. Thematic
   3. Flowing praise

E. The sermon and the rest of the service
   1. What is the role of the sermon?
   2. What is the role of the non-sermon elements?
   3. Where do the sacraments fit in?

F. Representing of the Gospel each week through the sermon and other elements

G. Does our worship invite participation?

H. Do we make changes with proper instruction and patience?

I. Does our service engage the whole person?

J. Does the music express reverent joy in content and style?

K. Does our worship bring us into each other’s presence as well as God’s presence (horizontal and vertical)?

L. Do we draw on both richness of past and freshness of present?