

It has been almost 160 years since the founders of the Lutheran-Church Missouri Synod signed the charter for the new church body down at 1<sup>st</sup> St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Chicago. In the 160 years we have had only four official hymnals: the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* of 1889, *The Lutheran Hymnal* of 1941, the one most of us grew up with. Then came *Lutheran Worship* of 1982 and now *Lutheran Service Book* of 2006.

Each generation has received that which was given it and added something of its own. *Lutheran Service Book* is no exception. The 160 year old traditions of Missouri-Synod worship, the nearly 500 year old traditions of Lutheran Worship, the 2000 year old traditions of Christian worship are all preserved in this book. But there are a few new things and perhaps, the greatest new thing in LSB is in the name itself; *service*. Many in the Church today struggle with the concept of our lives being lives of service. We do not live for ourselves but we live for Christ who lives within us. Our constant struggle is to push the

sinful, prideful, “me-first,” part of us down and to raise up the child of God who also lives within us.

Please take a hymnal from the pew rack and look at the introduction to LSB on Roman numeral page 8.

*“Our Lord is the Lord who serves. Jesus Christ came into the flesh not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. On the cross He offered Himself as a spotless sacrifice for the sin of the whole world. Through His perfect life and death, He accomplished forgiveness and salvation for all before the Father in heaven. By His empty tomb and ascension into heaven, He declared His victory over sin and death to all the world. Seated now at the Father’s right hand, He graciously serves His Church with the gifts of salvation. On the Last Day, He will come again to gather His elect from every nation to celebrate the feast that will have no end.”*

That is the basis of our worship and that is in fact the basis of our lives because worship is not just what we do here.

Worship is EVERYTHING we do EVERYWHERE. Our whole life is worship. Some Christians don’t like to hear that because it puts

the pressure on us. Many of us would rather compartmentalize our world so that we can come here, do our hour, and then feel good about ourselves, but the hour we do here is not our payment to God so that we can go have fun for the rest of the week. GOD HAS ALREADY BEEN PAID! Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross to pay God for all the hideous things we do and fail to do.

Now every one of us either believes that or we don't. If we don't, then we will continue living lives of debauchery, vanity and self centeredness. We will continue throwing a measly pittance into the offering plate to assuage our guilt. We will continue showing up for worship just a little as we must to keep the pastor, or parents or friends off our backs. We will continue living lives of sin and justifying our sinful choices with phrases like, "well I'm no saint," or "I'm not a religious fanatic."

But if we do.... If we do believe what the introductory paragraph of LSB says, that Jesus Christ suffered all for us and then accomplished our forgiveness on the cross, that he now sits at the right hand of God interceding for us, and that he even

comes to us in His Word, in Baptism and in the Holy Supper. If we truly believe that...WE WILL BE CHANGED.

His service to us will call forth our service. This is not something we MUST do, not even something we CAN do. But it is what happens when we stop trying to keep a foot in both worlds and let ourselves fall into Jesus. It is what happens when we stop trying to put down our cross and run off into the dark alleys to play and, instead, keep our eyes on Jesus and march on behind him. Jesus CHANGES US. He calls forth our service and as he calls forth our service, the *Lutheran Service Book* is here to guide us in that service.

We will serve him in our song. "Next to theology," Luther wrote, "I accord to music the highest place and the greatest honor." It is not necessarily cause and effect, but it is cyclical. As we come to understand and then embrace Jesus' service to us in the Divine Service, we cannot help but sing and speak words of praise. This is the Church's Song – the sound of God's people bursting forth with praise because at some point we WAKE UP

and realize what he has done for us, who he has made us, WHO WE ARE!

And then comes the next step. The service of Christ, which calls forth service in us, overflows into the lives of others. The Great Commission is not perhaps as much of a commission as it is an explanation of what will happen. As Christ grows in you, you will GO into the world and the world will see Jesus Christ bubbling out of you and the world will want to know what you've gotten into! And you will have the opportunity to serve even as Christ first served you.

And even then we are served – because I absolutely promise you one thing – you cannot out give God. Even as we, who are filled with service, begin to serve others, we receive. There is no greater gift in this world than to be the one to make Jesus Christ real for someone else. There is no greater joy than seeing that light come on when someone has moved to a new level in his relationship with Christ and a whole new world of service has just been opened up.

That is what this new hymnal is all about. We as a greatly blessed church body need to make the next step. We are Lutherans, a group of Christians in God's army who have been given an understanding of and a confession of the grace of God that continues to unfold before us and bless us in ways that we struggle to comprehend. We are the Missouri-Synod, a particularly stubborn, hard-headed platoon of Lutherans who will not be dissuaded or distracted by whatever worldly baubles are being dangled in front of our eyes today. And we are the English District – the Marines of the Missouri-Synod who are the first to land, going where others will not go, doing the dirty work others shun and keeping service to the Church and service to God above our comfort and our security. And in *Lutheran Service Book*, we have a new and wonderful tool as we march forward. AMEN.