

# O Come, Let Us Worship – VI

## Serving God Acceptably

**Introduction** – Our goal in this short series has been to define this meeting, this assembly of believers, according to the scriptures and not according to pop-culture’s notions, nor our own personal preferences. As a result, we have made some small changes to our liturgy. More importantly, we hope we have instructed you to think more clearly and consciously about this corporate time of worship. In conversations with many of you, good questions have been brought up.

**Where Are We?** (Heb 12:18-29) – This passage contrasts where the people of God under Moses went as an assembly with where we have come. Hebrews summarizes the ornate system of the old covenant, atonement through blood in types and shadows, worship through various ceremonies and priestly service at an earthly sanctuary. This was all established in covenant at Mt. Sinai. But Christ has come and Christ has ascended into the heavenlies.

**Seated in the Heavens** (Eph 1:3, 2:6) – Covenantally, we were there, in Adam, when He sinned and plunged us all into sin. Covenantally, we are in heaven, in our new covenant Head, the second Adam, declared righteous and seated at the throne of God.

**The Contrasts** – God came down to Mt. Sinai, but we are brought up to Mt. Zion. Sinai established an earthly tabernacle and temple, but Zion is the true Temple, the heavenly Jerusalem. There were voices and trumpets, but now there is an innumerable company of angels. At Sinai, earth shook, but at Zion, the earth and heaven shakes.

**The Parallels** – Both speak of an assembly of believers. Both point to corporate gatherings and words of covenant from God. Both hear the voice of God. It was terrifying then, and we are to see how reverent and fearful we should be now.

**Only On Sunday?** – The people of God remained in His presence, even after the Sinai ceremony was finished. The people of God today are also always ‘in Christ’, in His presence even after this ceremony is finished. So, in one sense, this passage refers to our standing in Christ always; but let us not separate the individual and the corporate too far. We are in His presence as His people individually because we have been brought up into heaven as His body in Christ. And it is here, in our corporate worship service, that we hear the words of covenant renewal and partake of the covenant meal.

**“Should We Go to Church Today?”** (Heb 10:19-25) – The licentious answer this question depending on what else might be going on. “God has forgiven me and it’s really just about me-n-Jesus”, – they think. The legalist keeps attendance records in order to worry over the assurance of themselves and others. They think God has demanded that they hold fast in their good works – or else. But the faithful are exhorted to draw near because *He* is faithful. The veil, which is the flesh of Jesus, has been torn, and we have been sprinkled with His blood, washed in baptism (v 22). Our good works, our love, and even our church attendance, are all a result of His faithfulness. But *where* is He urging us to come? Why then would the faithful stay away? Instead, we ought to consider what we are doing to prepare ourselves for this *glorious privilege* (as we see in the Songs of Ascents – at least Psalm 120-134).

**Confession of Sin** (Psalm 139:1-6, 23-24) – Even though we are always before the face of God, we still fall into sin. The process of our sanctification is a work of God’s grace, it is not a single act. And so, when we gather together to worship, we must remember to ask the Lord to bring to mind any unconfessed sins that we might be clean members of the body of Christ. This is not to excuse constant and immediate confession of sin throughout the week; rather it is to encourage it. But at this weekly gathering, we also have the opportunity to confess our sin corporately, as ‘one body’ – “*we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts...*” (Dan 9: 5). Daniel, a righteous man, gave this prayer.

**Incarnational Worship and What We Wear** (Psalm 104:1-6, Is 61:10) – The Lord speaks of His act of creation and His acts of redemption in terms of clothing. That is because clothing (and hairstyles, and jewelry, and piercings) says something. On the one hand, our culture tries to teach that clothing styles don’t mean anything (and so it doesn’t matter what you wear). On the other hand, we try to ‘express’ our individuality with our clothing and styles, which means we don’t believe the former. Or we declare that wearing what is ‘most comfortable for me’ is most important, subtly showing our idolatry. Again, to what assembly are you gathering? To Whom are you coming before? This is what you should be thinking about as you dress. Wearing our finest would be appropriate. And all of this has to be thought through without sidelong glances, immodest dress, or one-upsmanship, fancy-shmancy stuff.

**The Church and Evangelism** – Some here have grown up with ‘altar calls’ or ‘invitations to accept Jesus’ as part of their Christian heritage. They come here and wonder why we don’t care about evangelism. We are reformed, but we are not pessimistic. We believe that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God and that all the nations will be brought into submission through the preaching of the Word. We believe that the church will best preach the Word when it gets its worship and doctrine right. And we believe that when it does, our confession of sin, our psalms of praise, the power of the preached Word, will be used by God to melt hard hearts and raise dry bones. In other words, these sermons have been preached with the idea that they will be effective tools in the evangelization of the lost when practiced by those who themselves live in the love of Christ and are equipped to give an answer for the hope that is in them, either here corporately, or in the marketplaces of life.

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