

Excellence in Worship

Part 2: We Worship with Our Heads

Excellent worship starts with the head – not the human head but Christ the Head. Colossians 1:18 refers to Him as *“the head of the body, the church”* (NKJV). As the Head, Jesus sacrificed Himself for the Body by His death on the cross. As the Head, He rose from the dead in triumph and ascended into heaven to prepare a place for the members of His Body. As the Head, He continues to strengthen and nourish the Body through the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments.

The Body is nothing without the Head; the Church is nothing without Jesus. All life flows from Him. All worship of God goes through Him. This is why Christians pray to God the Father “in Jesus’ name” and “through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord.” We are able to worship the living God because God the Father sent His Son to redeem us from our sin and death.

We show honor and thankfulness to Christ the Head by how we use our heads. It was on our heads that the water of Baptism was applied when we were cleansed and joined to Jesus. As the children of God, we want to honor Him with all our mind (Matthew 22:37). We gladly hear and learn His holy Word. We meditate on it and memorize it. We order our thoughts and plans according to His will.

When our thoughts turn to selfishness, anger, and pride, we bow our heads in humble repentance and confess our sins. Then we listen eagerly for the sweet words of Jesus’ absolution, sometimes applied with the touch of the pastor’s hand on our head: “By the authority of God and of my holy office, I declare to you the gracious forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The gracious forgiveness of all your sins! For this wonderful gift, we “fall on our face” in humble thanksgiving like the father of promise, Abram (Genesis 17:3), like the leader of God’s people,

Joshua (Joshua 5:14), and like the Samaritan healed of his leprosy (Luke 17:16). We joyfully acknowledge that every good gift comes from God, both in this life and for the life to come.

We worship with our heads by focusing on Jesus our Savior who gave Himself for us and continues to give us His forgiveness, grace, and life. We turn our faces in loving service to God and neighbor, and we bow our heads in humble gratitude for His blessings. When Jesus our Head returns in glory on the last day, He promises that on the heads of all His people He will place *“an imperishable crown”* (1 Corinthians 9:25, NKJV), *“the crown of righteousness”* (2 Timothy 4:8, NKJV), *“the crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10, NKJV).

And when, dear Lord, before Thy throne in heaven
To me the crown of joy at last is given,
Where sweetest hymns Thy saints forever raise Thee,
I, too, shall praise Thee.
(*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #292, v. 15)

Part 3: We Worship with Our Eyes



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Evangelical Lutheran Synod