Excellence in Worship

Part 3: We Worship with Our Eyes

The devil told Eve (and Adam with her) that their eyes would be opened if they ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then they would be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:5). It was a half-truth, which Satan excels at. Their eyes were certainly opened when they ate, and they learned the difference between good and evil. Now they were no longer good "like God." They were evil, separated from His gracious presence.

But God looked upon them with mercy. He promised to send a Savior for them and their descendants who would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). This promise was repeated through the prophet Isaiah who wrote that at the coming of the Christ, "*the eyes of the blind shall be opened*" (Isaiah 35:5, NKJV). This promise was fulfilled when the Son of God took on flesh and brought healing to many, including those who were blind. But more than that, He came to deliver the world of sinners from spiritual blindness.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, our eyes have been opened both to our own sinfulness and to our salvation through Jesus. The design of a church building and its furnishings underscore the Gospel truth. We see the baptismal font where the Triune God claimed us as His own. We look at the pulpit where our pastor proclaims and applies the Word of God for our salvation. We view the altar where our Savior's body and blood are distributed for the remission of our sins.

As we look around the church building, there is still more to see: crosses, stained glass windows, banners, paintings. These all depict the saving truth that Jesus died and rose again to save sinners. We also see the object of our Savior's love—the people around us, our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a privilege to worship together each week and to encourage one another. Our gathering together becomes more and more important as we see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

While these visible things all enhance and edify our worship, there is also a proper time to close our eyes. We close them when we pray to our holy God. As we pray, we take comfort that "*The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry*" (Psalm 34:15, NKJV). He sees our troubles and promises to deliver us.

We worship with our eyes by looking in faith to Jesus, and Jesus only, for our salvation. We look at our neighbors as Jesus looks upon us, with compassion and love. We also give thanks for the visible signs of His grace that He instituted for us—His Gospel dispensed through Word and Sacrament.

Here stands the font before our eyes,
Telling how God did receive us;
Th' altar recalls Christ's sacrifice
And what His table doth give us;
Here sounds the Word that doth proclaim
Christ yesterday, today, the same,
Yea, and for aye our Redeemer. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* #211, v. 6)

Part 4: We Worship with Our Ears

Prepared by the Worship Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod