

THE REAL PRESENCE AND LITURGICAL PREACHING¹

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Imagine two advertisements in two different places. The first advertisement is by the side of a busy road through the countryside. It has two words on it: “Free Meal!” That’s all it says. It’s a good sign. Yet people don’t take any notice of it because it doesn’t tell them where to go to get that meal. The second is sign in front of a restaurant. And it has three words on it: “Free Meal Here!” Both these signs have the same message. Yet the second sign is quite different from the first because of where it is placed. Its location tells you where you can go to receive a free meal. The liturgical preaching of the gospel is like that second sign. Its location is as significant as its message. Since the preacher stands together with Jesus in God the Father’s presence, he can present God’s gifts to his hearers.

There is a chapel in a Protestant seminary in Australia that contradicts this most graphically. Behind the communion table in its sanctuary there are three lovely stained glass windows inspired by the words of the angel to the women in Matthew 28:5-6. The first left window has the words: “Do not be afraid!” The third right window has: “He is risen.” But the central window which dominates the sanctuary has: “He is not here.” That, sadly, does not just sum up the Zwinglian theology that is taught there, but, despite the Lutheran teaching on Holy Communion, it also could be said of the preaching of far too many Lutheran pastors. All too often they preach as if Christ were not with his disciples in the divine service; they preach as if they did not

¹ This first draft of this paper was given at The First Andhra Pradesh Lutheran Symposium at Guntur in India in January, 2007. It has been slightly edited for printed publication.

stand in the presence of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And that makes their preaching unreal, ineffectual, and unpastoral. They, quite unwittingly, promote a kind of practical Christological atheism in our preaching.

When we preach the word of God in the divine service, we proclaim a great mystery, something hidden from sight and all our other senses, something invisible and yet far more real than all that seems most real to us, the mystery of Christ present among us. St Paul speaks of it in this way in Colossians 1:25-27:

*I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the **mystery** hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of **this mystery**, which is **Christ among you** (plural), the hope of glory.*

Here the apostle Paul depicts himself as a mystagogue, a person who initiates others into a mystery by his preaching. That mystery is the real presence of the risen, glorified Lord Jesus with his people in the church. The mystery is located there. There Paul discloses the mystery of Christ's real presence to the saints, those who are united with Christ and so share in his holiness. There he reveals the hidden presence and activity of the risen Lord to them by preaching God's word to them, the gospel that proclaims Christ and brings 'life and immortality to light' for its hearers (2 Tim 1:10). Apart from God's word they have no access to the risen Lord Jesus; apart from it they have no knowledge or experience of him even though he is there among them. That word proclaims Christ's presence to them and introduces him to them. It initiates them into the mystery of Christ in that place, something that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has ever conceived (1 Cor 2:6-10). The disclosure of his hidden presence there in that assembly gives the faithful a glimpse of glory, a foretaste of heaven here on earth.

In 1 Corinthians 4:1 Paul describes himself and his colleagues as "stewards of the mysteries of God." That does not just apply to him; it applies to every pastor. We pastors are all stewards of God's mysteries. By our preaching we proclaim the

mystery of Christ. We do speak for an absent Christ; we speak for Christ who stands amongst us in the divine service and is there invisibly present with us.

The service of word and sacrament depends upon the presence of the risen Lord Jesus. It is located where he is located with the Father in the heavenly sanctuary.² It only works as it is meant to work because it is done there. Apart from him, it does not work properly, nor can it work properly anywhere else. He works in it and makes it work. We therefore make things difficult for ourselves as pastors by focusing on what we do when we preach. We concentrate on ourselves and on our message, rather than on Christ and his gifts to us. We speak and act as if we did everything. So something strange occurs. The same Lutheran pastors that believe in justification by grace and the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion all too often preach as if this was not true. They preach as if Christ were not present and active in the divine service. They preach as if they did not stand with the risen Lord Jesus in the presence of God the Father. And so the mystery of Christ is obscured; the gate of heaven is shut; present access to God's grace is lost. They get in the way of Jesus and shut him out. They dislocate themselves and their hearers from him.

When we gather for worship Christ serves us and gives his gifts to us there and then, in that place. He involves us in his service of God the Father. Worship is divine service, God's service of us in Christ and our service of God through Christ. And that makes all the difference for us in our preaching. We do not proclaim an absent Christ who lords it over us from afar, but we proclaim the risen Lord Jesus

² For the importance of location for Luther see David S. Yeago, "The Catholic Luther," *First Things* 61 (March 1996), 37-41, and John W. Kleinig, "Where is your God? Luther on God's Self-Localisation," *Australian Journal of Liturgy* 11/4, 168-84, which is a revised version of the essay in Dean O. Wenthe and others (eds.), *All Theology Is Christology: Essays in Honor of David P. Scaer*. Concordia Theological Seminary Press, Fort Wayne, 2000, 117-31. This and my other articles may be accessed in John W. Kleinig Resources Publications at www.johnkleinig.com.

who is present with us to serve us. Everything is done in his presence. We pastors hand on what we receive from him, just as he gives us everything that he receives from his heavenly Father. He is the preacher and the liturgist in every service that we conduct. We work together with him. He uses our mouths to speak to the people of God, just as he uses our hands to hand out his body and blood to them. He is the speaker; he is the giver. We are his agents and instruments.

1. The Location of the Risen Lord Jesus in the Divine Service

The ministry of Jesus that began with his baptism did not end with his ascension. When he ascended he made it quite clear to his apostles that he would be present in the church with his disciples to the close of the age (Matt 28:20). After his ascension he became invisibly present with them in such a way that he was no longer bound by the normal limitations of time and space and matter. In the introduction to the book of Acts Luke goes one step further. He says: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus **began** to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.” The key word here is “began.” Luke claims that Jesus continues his work in word and deed through the ministry of word and sacrament in the church. That’s why we read from the gospels in the divine service. That’s why we preach from the gospels in our sermons. The readings from the gospels are so important for us in our worship because Jesus continues his work in the church. They therefore do not just tell us what Jesus said and did long ago; they tell us what Jesus says and does each Sunday when we gather together in his presence. They make sense there because they tell us what is happening there.

The story of the appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35 shows us how Jesus continues his ministry in the present

age.³ It happened, as you all know, on the evening of Easter Sunday. The two unnamed disciples had heard about the resurrection of Jesus, but did not understand the significance of what they had heard. When Jesus joined them on their journey, they did not at first recognise him. As far as they knew he was dead and gone from them. So Jesus made himself known to them in two stages in two locations. First, he preached himself to them from the Old Testament as he walked with them on their path. Yet, even though their hearts burned with joy as he spoke, they still did not recognise him. Then, when they had invited him to stay overnight with them as their guest, he acted as if he was their host when they sat down for the evening meal. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, just as he had done when he instituted his holy supper three nights earlier. They recognised him there in the breaking of the bread, Luke's term for Holy Communion (Luke 24:35; cf. Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7). As soon as they recognised him he vanished from their sight.

That story gives us the basic theology of worship in the Early Church. Each Sunday the risen Lord Jesus, who travels with us through life as our unseen guide, makes himself known to us in the divine service. This happens in two stages. First, Jesus uses the word of God from the Old Testament to preach himself as the crucified and risen Lord. Then he hosts a meal in which he feeds us with his own body and blood. We discover two things about preaching from this dramatic account. First, Jesus himself is the preacher in our congregations. He is also the message; he preaches himself to us in the divine service. By his word he speaks to us there in that place. We human preachers are merely his mouthpiece, his spokesmen. He says: "He who listens to you listens to me" (Luke 10:16). Second, the preaching of the gospel is closely connected with the Lord's Supper. What Jesus tells us about himself he gives to us in Holy Communion. The same Jesus who preaches himself to us in the gospels and in the sermon that proclaims the gospel gives himself and all his gifts to us in the

³ For a comprehensive examination of this theme, see Arthur A. Just Jr, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1997), 972-1020.

Lord's Supper. There he presents the body and blood that he offered up for us by his death on the cross. So preaching goes hand in hand with the administration of the sacrament. By preaching of the gospel we tell our people what Jesus gives to them in Holy Communion; by offering Christ's body and blood to them we give them what we have preached, Jesus and his gifts. In his Large Catechism Luther says: "For **here** in the sacrament you receive from Christ's lips the forgiveness of sins, which contains and conveys God's grace and Spirit with all his gifts" ⁴

2. Doing Heavenly Work on Earth

Jesus himself taught the twelve apostles about his hidden presence and work with them in the divine service in Matthew 18:18-20. He said:

*Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, **I am there with them.***

Since the early church, this passage has quite rightly been used to teach what happens in the divine service. It tells us three things about our location and task as preachers.

First, we pastors do not gather the members of our congregations; God the Father gathers them together. The congregation then is God's assembly, his church, the people gathered by him in his presence. We minister there in His assembly, the church of God.

Secondly, we pastors do not lead our congregations in worship; Jesus does that. We act in his name as his agents and representatives. He is present where two or three gather in his name. In the service of word and sacrament Jesus bridges the gap between heaven and earth and joins these two spheres for us. Thus, since Jesus is present and active in the assembled congregation, we pray together with Jesus and

⁴ LC V:70; Tappert, 70 = BSLK 721-22.

work together with him. We speak in his name and pray in his name. Together with Jesus and in his name we do heavenly work here on earth; we do the work of God the Father by praying to him and by speaking his word.

Thirdly, like the apostles we pastors work together with God the Father and the risen Lord Jesus in their mission of binding and loosing here on earth. We bind the conscience of people by teaching God's law and announcing God's judgment on sin; we loose people from guilt and condemnation by teaching the gospel and pardoning sinners (John 20:21-23). We bind the powers of darkness by praying for their deliverance from them; we loose people from the grip of Satan by proclaiming God's word and enacting the sacraments. Thus Jesus involves us in his administration of his Father's grace here on earth. In the divine service we pastors work with Jesus in judging sin and pardoning sinners. Together with Christ and in his presence we use his keys, the keys that open the door into the Father's house, the keys that pardon sinners and give them access to his grace (Matt 16:19), for only through the forgiveness of sins can sinners approach God the Father unafraid with a good conscience in the full assurance of faith. We admit forgiven sinners to the Father's presence by admitting them to the Lord's Supper. Because they have been pardoned and justified, they have unrestricted access to his grace in the divine service. Thus the forgiveness that we proclaim in Christ's name is the key that opens the door to the Father's gracious presence; it gives people access to heaven there on earth.

When we preach we do so under an open heaven. It is significant that Jesus only began to preach after his baptism. There, as had been prophesied in Isaiah 61:1-3 God the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit as the Messiah and commissioned him to preach the gospel. There, too, heaven was opened up for him and the people who were united with him in baptism (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21). He therefore preached under an open heaven. And so too do we! In John 1:51 Jesus promises that those who hear us will, like Nathanael, "see" heaven open before them in the divine service. In a sermon on this text Luther explains how this so:

Before the advent of Christ heaven was closed, but in and through Christ heaven stands ajar again. Now Christians see heaven opened, ... The Heavenly Father still addresses these words to us: "This is my beloved Son!" ... When you are baptised, partake of Holy Communion, receive the absolution, or listen to a sermon, heaven is open, and we hear the voice of the Heavenly Father; all these works descend on us from the open heaven above us. ... Still we hear God speaking to us from heaven; we call and cry to Him, and He answers us.⁵

Jesus continues his ministry of word and deed in the church today. It is true that he completed his work of redemption at his resurrection and ascension. That work is finished. But that is not the end of the story. Through the preaching of the gospel and the enactment of the sacrament he now delivers the benefits that he gained for us by his death. Just listen to how Luther helpfully distinguishes the ongoing work of Jesus in the church from the work of redemption:

We treat of the forgiveness of sins in two ways. First, how it is achieved and won. Second, how it is distributed or given to us. Christ has achieved it on the cross, it is true. But he has not distributed or given it on the cross. He has not won it in the supper or the sacrament. There he has distributed it through the Word, as also in the gospel, where it is preached. He has won it once and for all on the cross. But the distribution takes place continuously, before and after, from the beginning to the end of the world.⁶

3. The Location of Preaching in Christ's Presence

⁵ LW 22:201-2 = WA 46:71.7-22.

⁶ LW 40:213-14. He adds on p. 214: "If now I seek forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it given there, ... But I will find in the sacrament or gospel the word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me the forgiveness which was won on the cross." = WA, 18:203.28-204.

In 2 Corinthians 2:17 Paul explains the connection between preaching and the presence of Christ in the divine service:

*We are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.*⁷

Paul mentions two things about the context of his preaching as well as the preaching of Timothy and us.⁸ As preachers we, like Paul and Timothy, speak God's word **in Christ**; we speak as God's word **in the presence of God the Father**.

When we pastors preach in the divine service we stand in the presence of God the Father. He has called and commissioned us to preach his word. So we pass on what we receive from Him. We preach in His presence. This is symbolised by the architecture of our churches. They are usually divided into two parts, the nave which represents this world and the sanctuary which represents the heavenly world. The pulpit stands between God and the congregation. When we preach we bring the Father's word and His blessings to His people here on earth. We take what comes from Him and we offer it to our hearers. The impact and effect of our preaching comes from speaking His word there in His very presence.

God's word differs from human words because it is filled with his Holy Spirit. Because it conveys his Holy Spirit it is life-giving and effective; it does what it says.⁹ It does not just speak about forgiveness, it forgives our sins; it does not just speak about reconciliation, it actually reconciles us with God the Father; it does not just speak about eternal life, it gives us eternal life; it does not just speak about cleansing and holiness, it makes us clean and holy before God. So when we speak God's holy word, we speak the Holy Spirit to our hearers. In our preaching we enact God's word

⁷ The last part of this sentence is repeated in 2 Cor 12:19.

⁸ Note Paul's use of the ministerial "we" for himself and for Timothy as co-authors of this letter (2 Cor 1:1).

⁹ For more on this see John W. Kleinig, "The Work of the Holy Spirit in Worship," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 44/1 (2010): 15-22.

as law and gospel; we use the keys to bind and loose, to pronounce God's judgment on sin and to forgive sinners who repent. Our preaching opens the door to the Father's house and ushers people into his heavenly presence; it gives people access to the grace of God the Father here on earth.

We preachers can do all this because we were joined with Christ and united with him. His location determines our location. When we preach we do not stand in our own shoes and act by ourselves in the presence of God the Father. Since we are in Jesus we stand in his shoes; we represent him; we speak and act on his behalf.¹⁰ Our vestments remind us that we preachers, as it were, dress up in him and represent him. He speaks to the people through us. He uses our mouths to speak the Father's word and our hands to pass on the Father's gifts to his people. His presence makes us God's agents and ambassadors. Since he is present with us, we can, if we are faithful to our calling, administer the grace of God in our preaching.

All three persons of the Holy Trinity are equally involved with us pastors in our preaching. Through baptism and faith all God's people stand in the presence of the triune God; all members of the church have access to the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit. We pastors have an additional privilege. We have been appointed by the triune God to speak for Him in the divine service. More correctly, He has appointed us so that He can speak His life-giving word to others through us there in that location. This means that Jesus uses us to preach the Father's word to our people

¹⁰ The words of the condemnation in the German version of the fifth article of the Augsburg Confession refer to the ministry of the word in this way: "Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the embodied word of the gospel through our own preparations, thoughts, and works."; *BSLK* 58,11-15. The term "the embodied word," "*das leiblich Wort*," comes from Luther. By this vivid expression Luther connects the incarnate Son with the word that is heard in the readings from the Scriptures, spoken in the absolution, proclaimed in the sermon, sung in the liturgy, and enacted in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

and to give his Holy Spirit to them through his word. So when we preach we join with Jesus in delivering the grace of God the Father and his Holy Spirit from heaven to earth.

Note how Luther emphasises God's location in his vivid description of the involvement of Jesus in our preaching:

*... pastors are nothing but channels through which Christ leads and transmits His Gospel from the Father to us. Therefore **wherever** you hear the Gospel properly taught or see a person baptized, **wherever** you see someone administer or receive the Sacrament, or wherever you witness someone absolving another, **there** you may say without hesitation: "Today I beheld God's Word and work. Yes, I saw and heard God himself preaching and baptizing." To be sure, the tongue, the voice, the hands, etc., are those of a human being; but the Word and the ministry are really those of the Divine Majesty Himself.¹¹*

4. Liturgical Preaching

Since we pastors stand together with Jesus in the presence of God the Father, this has far-reaching consequences for our preaching. I would like to mention only one such consequence. Since we preach together with Jesus, we can be sure that, whatever he promises us in his word, he delivers to us in Holy Communion.¹² This means that the most obvious application for any text from the gospels is to be found in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. By our preaching we tell our hearers to go there to receive him and his gifts for themselves from him. There they can pray confidently

¹¹ *LW 24:67 = WA 45:521.7-522.1.*

¹² In his Small Catechism (VI,6) Luther summarizes this by speaking of "forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation," Tappert, 352, = *BSLK*, 520.

for those things that he has promised.¹³ Let me illustrate this briefly by considering the festive half of the church year in that light.¹⁴

In Advent we proclaim the two comings of Christ, his coming in his incarnation and his coming at the end of the world. The same Lord who has come and who will come comes to us as our judge and saviour in Holy Communion. So we sing, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,” and pray that our Lord Jesus will come to each of us personally in the sacrament by saying, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus!” (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20).¹⁵

At Christmas we proclaim the wonderful mystery of the incarnation, the embodiment of God’s Son. We preach the good news that the eternal Son of God took on a human body to save us bodily from death. The same Lord who became flesh for us (John 1:14) gives us his flesh (John 6:52-56). In the sacrament he gives us his glorified human body and blood to heal us in body and soul¹⁶ and make us clean and

¹³ Note the prayer for the “Divine Service, Setting Four” in the *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006) 209: “Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may faithfully eat and drink of the fruits of the cross and receive the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that come to us in His body and blood.”

¹⁴ This is inspired, in part, by B. von Schenk, *The Presence: An Approach to Holy Communion* (New York and Chicago: Ernst Kaufmann, 1945).

¹⁵ This prayer comes after the Words of Our Lord in “The Divine Service, Setting Two” of the *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House: St Louis, 2006), 179. See too Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 632-33, and Louis A. Brighton, *Revelation*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 657-58.

¹⁶ See the wording of the formula for the dismissal of communicants in *Lutheran Service Book*, 164, 181, 199, 210, 218, as well as Luther’s description in the *Large Catechism* (V, 68) of the sacrament as “a pure, wholesome, soothing medicine which aids and quickens us in both soul and body.” Tappert, 454 = *BSLK*, 721.

holy for life with God the Father (Heb 9:14; 10:29; 13:12). There we, in turn, offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to him (Rom 12:1).

During the season of Epiphany we proclaim the theophany of God the Father, his visible appearance to the world in the humanity of Jesus. We therefore see God the Father in Jesus as he says: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). The same Lord who disclosed the glory of God to his disciples long ago still discloses the glory of the Father to us in Holy Communion. Like Simeon, we receive our Saviour and see our salvation with our own eyes when we take the body of Jesus in our hands (Lk 2:25-32). We see the glory of our God right there for us to contemplate as we receive Christ’s body and blood.

During Lent we proclaim the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins and the forgiveness of sins through faith in him. Jesus, the Lamb of God who suffered for us and died for our sins, gives us his blood to drink for our release from sin. In Holy Communion he takes away our sins and gives us his own righteousness. His blood, which he sprinkles on our hearts (Heb 12:24) cleanses us from sin (Heb 9:14) and makes us holy (Heb 10:29); it protects us from the devil and gives us the victory over him (Rev 12:11).¹⁷ As we celebrate it we proclaim his death until he comes at the close of the age (1 Cor 11:26).¹⁸ Before we receive his body and blood we ask him as God’s Lamb to have mercy on the whole world and to grant us and all people peace.

During the Easter season we proclaim the victory of Jesus over death and his gift of eternal life to us here and now in this life. The same Lord Jesus, who appeared to his disciples on Easter Sunday by standing among them (John 20:19-23) and ate with them (Luke 24:36-43; Acts 10:41), makes himself known to us in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:13-35). There we meet with him. There he gives us his own eternal

¹⁷ See John W. Kleinig, “The Blood for Sprinkling: Atoning Blood in Leviticus and Hebrews,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 33/3 (1999): 124-35.

¹⁸ These words are given after the Words of Our Lord in the “Divine Service, Setting Two” of *Lutheran Service Book*, 179.

life through his life-giving body and blood as he promised: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (John 6:54^a).¹⁹ By that he not only dwells in us, making our bodies living shrines for him (John 6:57; cf. 1 Cor 6:19), but he also ensures that he will raise us bodily from the dead on the last day (John 6:54^b).

On Ascension Day we proclaim the exaltation of Jesus as the King of heaven and earth and his invisible presence with us, free from all the restrictions of time and space. Raised bodily from the dead, he entered His Father’s presence with his blood (Heb 9:12). In Holy Communion the same Jesus who has been exalted as our Lord and our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, so that he could give his body and blood to all people all over the world, ushers us through a new and living way, the way of his flesh, into the Father’s presence in the heavenly sanctuary; there we now can approach the Father’s presence, the throne of grace, through his flesh and with his blood (Heb 10:19-22).

At the Feast of Pentecost we proclaim the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church fifty days after Easter. On that Sunday Jesus poured out his Spirit on all his disciples who had gathered together in one place. And he continues to do that every Sunday in the divine service. There Jesus offers us his Holy Spirit as we hear his word and as we receive Holy Communion. There he stands among us, as he did on Easter Sunday, and says: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). There he gives the same Spirit for “all” of us to “drink” that he gave at Pentecost (1 Cor 12:13).²⁰ His body and blood are our

¹⁹ Note Melancthon’s assertion in *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (XXII,10): “The sacrament was instituted to console and strengthen terrified hearts when they believe that Christ’s flesh, given for the life of the world, is their food and that they come to life by being joined to Christ.” Tappert, *Book of Concord*, 237f. = *BSLK*, 331,21-27.

²⁰ While most commentators restrict this to the gift of the Spirit in baptism, it makes better sense to regard this as an allusion to the Lord’s Supper which, in the ancient church, baptized adults received for the first time in the same service as their

“spiritual”²¹ food and drink (1 Cor 10:3f.); as we eat his body and drink his blood we receive the Holy Spirit again and again.²²

4. Conclusion

Pastors preach liturgically when they connect the sermon with the location of Christ in the divine service. That emphasis on the liturgical location of preaching is something that I learnt from my teacher Dr Sasse.²³ It is true that the gospel can be preached apart from the liturgy as a word of witness to anybody anywhere and as missionary preaching to the world. But the proclamation of the gospel in evangelism reaches its goal in the baptism of its hearers and their incorporation into the liturgical assembly. The preaching of the gospel does not just initiate people into the church; it takes its proper place there in the service of the church. Sasse drove this point home dramatically on one occasion by referring to the location of the pulpit between the font and the altar in the church. In liturgical preaching, he said, pastors first lead people from their place in the world to the font and their union with Christ in baptism. Then they lead their people from the font to the altar and the presence of the Father in the heavenly sanctuary. After that they send them back with Christ and his Holy Spirit

baptism. Paul’s use of the perfect passive may indicate that this is an ongoing gift from God.

²¹ Spiritual here means that it has to do with the Spirit; it is Spirit-filled, Spirit-giving. See Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 322 and 325-36.

²² For a discussion on the ongoing reception of the Holy Spirit, see John W. Kleinig, *Grace Upon Grace: Spirituality for Today*, (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 46-49, and “The Work of the Holy Spirit in Worship,” *Lutheran Theological Journal* 44/1 (2010): 15-22.

²³ John W. Kleinig, “Sasse on Worship.” Pages 106-22 in *Hermann Sasse: A Man for our Times?* Edited by John R. Stephenson. St. Louis: Concordia, 1995.

to serve as holy priests where God has located them in the world, in their God-given station and vocation.

Liturgical preaching presupposes the real presence of the risen Lord Jesus in the congregation of the faithful people of God and his delivery of salvation to them from heaven to earth. Preaching is done under an open heaven. Pastors stand there with the angels and the whole communion of saints in the presence of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They speak God's word to their hearers and deliver God's gifts to them there. They proclaim the free gift of God's grace in the place where it is given. They announce: "Come and get it! Free salvation here and now!"