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Worship 101: Giving Witness to the Unseen

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WORSHIP 101| GIVING WITNESS TO THE UNSEEN

Thursday Seminar A8

Paul Ryan, Eric Mathis, and Students from Calvin College and Samford University
Calvin College Chapel Undercroft

SEMINAR OVERVIEW AND SCHEDULE

Thursday AM: Worship 101 // Giving Witness to the Unseen

A fundamental task of worship leadership is giving witness to God. Although we do not see God, we do see evidence of God's work in the world. We bear witness to God's work in worship through songs, stories, prayers, and words, and we prompt the congregation to do the same as they embody each action of worship. In this seminar, we will explore the ways worshipping communities name, or give witness to, those things that are seen and unseen. Then, we will imagine how communities similar to or different from our own might teach us about our own faithful witness.

Seminar Outline

Introduction	10:15-10:25
Part 1: Giving Witness to the Unseen: The Trinity	10:25-11:00
Part 2: Giving Witness to the Unseen: The Church	11:00-11:30
Part 3: Giving Witness to the Unseen: Creation	11:30-12:00
Closing Worship	12:00-12:15

Thursday PM: Worship 201 // Giving Witness to the Urgent

A critical task of twenty-first worship leadership is to name pressing issues, and give confident witness to the reality of God's presence in sometimes difficult circumstances. In this seminar, we will identify pressing issues in local and global worshipping communities. Then, we will engage past and present worshipping communities as case studies to identify their approach to urgent issues. Finally, we will imagine how these communities might teach us about giving confident witness to those issues that are urgent in our time and place.

Seminar Outline

Introduction	1:30-1:40
Part 1: Giving Witness to the Urgent: Key Questions, Dialogue, and Framework	1:40-2:35
Part 2: Giving Witness to the Urgent: Case Studies and Application	2:35-3:15
Closing Worship	3:15-3:30

Part 1 // The Trinity

“You may ask, ‘If we cannot imagine a three-personal Being, what is the good of talking about Him?’ Well, there isn’t any good talking about Him. The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life, and that may begin any time—tonight, if you like. What I mean is this: An ordinary simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He is trying to get into touch with God. But if a Christian, he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God: God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the Man who was God—that Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him. You see what is happening. God is the thing to which he is praying—the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on—the motive power. God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that whole threefold life of the three-person being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary Christian is saying prayers.” (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, Book IV, chapter 2)

Biblical texts that explain the Trinitarian dynamics of our speech to God:

- **The Father is the One who receives our worship:** “the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23)
- **Jesus Christ perfects our worship:** Just as Hebrew priests represented the people of Israel before God, so Jesus represents us before God. “Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:23-25). [The priest represents the people. Jesus is the perfect priest]
- **The Holy Spirit is the One who prompts our prayers in the first place:** “[by him] we cry ‘Abba, Father’” and when we are too weak to pray, “The spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom. 8:15, 26).
- **Both the Son and the Spirit are interceding.** Basically, the Son prays on our behalf, like we might ask a good friend or pastor to pray for us. You might say that the Son prays with us. The Spirit prays for us giving us the words to speak and empowering our words.

Biblical texts that explain the Trinitarian dynamics of God’s speech to us:

- **The Father is the One who sends the Spirit to prompt us:** “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:6)
- **Jesus Christ is the content of God speaking to us:** He is the “Word” who comes to us full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14), “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:13)
- **God the Holy Spirit is the One who prompts us to hear God speaking to us:** “We have received...the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” (1 Cor. 2:12).

Questions for Reflection

1. How might a worship leader find worshipping a Trinitarian God freeing?
2. How might a worshiper find worshipping a Trinitarian God freeing?

Applications for Worship Leaders

How do we make what is unseen seen for worshipers?

1. Speak with a Trinitarian grammar.

2. “Trinity Song” (Sandra McCracken)

Holy Father, Son and Spirit

Holy Communion, Three-in-one.

Come with your peace,

With your invitation

Bind us together in Holy love.

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3. Additional examples in accompanying resource handout.

NOTES

Part 2 // The Church

The Generations Are Asking Questions: How Does Worship Help Us Answer Them?

*Adapted from a presentation by Gordon MacDonald
Forming Hearts, Creating Art Conference | Fuller Theological Seminary*

The Teens: A Decade of Identity

- Who am I?
- Do I matter?
- How do I belong?

The Twenties: A Decade of Dreams

- What will I do with my life?
- Can I love long term?
- What parts of me need repair?
- Who/what will organize my life?

The Thirties: A Decade of Coping

- How do I cope with all the demands made of me?
- Why is there a gap between my intentions and disciplines?
- Why do I often feel that I can never please?
- Where did all my old friends go?
- How can I live with uncertainty?
- Why am I impatient?

The Forties: A Decade of Calculation

- What happened when I was a child - what formed me?
- What are some people doing better than me?
- Why am I disappointed with myself?
- Why are limitations beginning to outnumber opportunities?
- Why do I feel so insecure?

The Fifties: A Decade of Renovation

- Why is time moving so fast?
- Why is my body becoming unreliable and unattractive?
- How do I deal with failure and success?
- How do my spouse and I adjust to changes in marriage?
- Why do I have this feeling that I am no longer marketable?
- Why do I have less enthusiasm and more cynicism?

The Sixties: A Decade of Contemplation

- When must I stop doing the things that have defined me?
- What does old age feel like and am I ready for it?
- Why do I feel separated from a large part of the population?
- Where have I left a spiritual legacy?
- Am I financially secure?
- How will I die and with whom?

The Seventies and Eighties: Decades of Obscurity

- Does anyone know who and what I once was?
- How much of my life do I still control?
- What value do I offer anyone?
- Why this nagging irritability?
- Is God really present?
- When is life no longer worth living?
- When I die will I be missed?

“The worshipper, however lonely in appearance, comes before God as a member of a great family; part of the Community of Saints, living and dead. His own small effort of adoration is offered ‘in and for all.’” (Evelyn Underhill, *Worship*)

Questions for Reflection

1. What groups might be in the worshiping community, and what “unseen” elements might be present as a result of their presence (e.g.: cultural groups, learning styles and behaviors, etc.)?
2. How do you make the unseen elements of the gathered community seen in worship (e.g.: different abilities in the gathered community, the faithful witnesses in the heavenly community, praise and laments of creation in the cosmic community, etc.)?

Applications for Worship Leaders

How do we make what is unseen seen for worshipers?

1. “Gather Us In” (LUYH 529, or see next page for text)
2. Communion of Saints Tapestries, Our Lady of Angels Cathedral, Los Angeles.
3. Additional examples in accompanying resource handout.

Gather Us In

Here in this place the new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away;
see in this space our fears and our dreamings
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

We are the young, our lives are a mystery,
we are the old who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart, so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away—
here in this place the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever,
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Words and Music (GATHER US IN 10.9.10.10 D): Marty Haugen
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Part 3 // Creation

“The beauty of God is the beauty of love; love in creation, love in recreation of a world spoiled by sin. It is the same love; which is why all the beauty of the world the beauty that calls forth our admiration, our gratitude, our worth-ship at the earthly level, is meant as a set of hints, of conspiratorial whispers, of clues and suggestions and flickers of light, all nudging us into believing that behind the beautiful world is not random chance but the loving God He who made the eye, does he not see? He who made the ear, does he not hear? He who created all beauty, is he not himself beautiful? Woe betide those who offer to the creature the worship due to the creator alone; but woe betide those who fail to read the hints, who fail to hear the subtext, who have the experience but miss the meaning, who are deaf to what may be heard, half-heard, in the stillness between two waves of the sea.” (N.T. Wright, For All God’s Worth)

“Humans are made to worship the God who created them in his own image and so to be sustained and renewed in that image-bearing capacity. Like many scholars today, I understand the idea of the “image,” as in Genesis 1:26-28, to mean that humans are designed to function like angled mirrors. We are created in order to reflect the worship of all creation back to the Creator and by that same means to reflect the wise sovereignty of the Creator into the world. Human beings, worshiping their Creator, were thus the intended key to the proper flourishing of the world. “Worship” was and is a matter of gazing with delight, gratitude, and love at the creator God and expressing his praise in wise, articulate speech. Those who do this are formed by this activity to become the generous, humble stewards through whom God’s creative and sustaining love is let loose into the world. That is how things were meant to be.” (N.T. Wright, The Day the Revolution Began)

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you make the unseen elements of creation seen in a worship gathering that is primarily indoors?
2. Where might your congregation need to grow in its use of imagery and wording about creation during the worship event?

Applications for worship leaders

How do we make what is unseen seen for worshipers?

1. “Easter” by George Herbert (on following page)
2. Science as a gateway to celebrating creation.
3. Additional Examples in accompanying resource handout.

Easter

George Herbert

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing his praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With him mayst rise:
That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross taught all wood to resound his name,
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings, what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long:
Or since all music is but three parts vied
And multiplied;
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.

I got me flowers to straw thy way:
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.

The Sun arising in the East,
Though he give light, and th'East perfume;
If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.

Can there be any day but this,
Though many suns to shine endeavour?
We count three hundred, but we miss:
There is but one, and that one ever.

Case Studies and Examples

Songs

- Trinity:
 - “Come, Holy Ghost” (LUYH 232)
 - “Trinity Song” (Sandra McCracken)
 - “Come, Thou Almighty King (LUYH 492)
- Creation:
 - “Rejoice in All Your Works (Psalm 104)” (Wendell Kimbrough)
 - “All Creatures of Our God and King” (LUYH 551)
 - “In Labor All Creation Groans” (Dufner/Bifrost Arts)
- Church:
 - “Gather Us In” (LUYH 529)
 - “All Are Welcome” (LUYH 269)
 - “All the Poor & Powerless” (All Sons and Daughters)

Prayers

- Trinity: The Worship Sourcebook (Trinity Sunday section)
- Creation: The Worship Sourcebook (Creation section)
- Church: The Worship Sourcebook (Communion of the Saints section)

Art

- Trinity: Rublev Icon of the Trinity; Trefoil and Triquetra (Steele-Halstead)
- Creation: capture both its praise AND lament
- Church: Banners at the L.A. Cathedral; Scott Mutter, Untitled (Church Arise)

Poetry

- Trinity: “The Trinity,” Neil Booth
- Creation: “Easter,” George Herbert
- Church: “A Boy in Church,” Robert Graves

Architecture

- Trinity: Stained glass, seating configuration in the round
- Creation: Windows, fountains, foliage, stained glass, building materials, etc.
- Church: Old/New; pews vs. chairs; horizontal & vertical elements

What is projected or seen on the platform?

Closing Worship

GATHERING

Psalm 150 (*Calvin Worship Media Team*)

Uyai Mose / Come, All You People

(Shona)

Uyai mose, tinamate Mwari;
uyai mose, tinamate Mwari;
uyai mose, tinamate Mwari;
uyai mose Zvino.

(English)

*Come, all you people, come and praise your Maker;
come, all you people, come and praise your Maker;
come, all you people, come and praise your Maker;
come now and worship the Lord.*

Come, all you people, come and praise the Savior;
come, all you people, come and praise the Savior;
come, all you people, come and praise the Savior;
come now and worship the Lord.

Come, all you people, come and praise the Spirit;
come, all you people, come and praise the Spirit;
come, all you people, come and praise the Spirit;
come now and worship the Lord.

Words: st. 1 Alexander Gondo (20th c., Zimbabwe), tr. I-to Loh (b. 1936)

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PRAISE

Psalm 8

How Great Thou Art

(Bridge)

Then sings my soul to my savior God;
to thee we sing, how great thou art!

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

(Refrain)

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;

But when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin.

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Prayer of Praise

WORD

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. 17 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

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This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSE

Behold Our God

Who has held the oceans in His hands
Who has numbered every grain of sand
Kings and nations tremble at His voice
All creation rises to rejoice

(Refrain)

Behold our God seated on His throne
Come let us adore Him
Behold our King nothing can compare
Come let us adore Him!

Who has given counsel to the Lord
Who can question any of His Words
Who can teach the One who knows all things
Who can fathom all His wondrous deeds

Who has felt the nails upon His hands
Bearing human guilt and sinful plans
God eternal humbled to the grave
Jesus, Savior risen now to reign!

(Bridge)

Men: You will reign forever!

Women: Let Your glory fill the earth!

Music and words by Jonathan Baird, Meghan Baird, Ryan Baird, and Stephen Altrogge.
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SENDING

Blessing: 2 Corinthians 13:13

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

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