

The Liturgy of Salvation: “Just Words” in the Divine Service

In his book, Just Words (CPH:2000), Jacob A. O. Preus delineates and illustrates the rich diversity of language used in the Scriptures to communicate the Good News of our salvation in Jesus Christ. He groups together 23 biblical words or word-patterns in six broad categories of metaphor to demonstrate this diversity. He also shows how these metaphors are not understandable in or limited to only one culture, but describe realities that are true for every human culture and language. One goal of the book is to encourage pastors to make full use of the multitude of Gospel metaphors in their preaching, and all Christians in evangelism, whatever their particular cultural situation might be. What is remarkable is how the Liturgy of the Church employs almost all of these categories of metaphor in the language of the Divine Service. What a profound testimony to the catholic nature of the Liturgy! Crossing all cultural and linguistic barriers – indeed, uniting these various cultures – is the traditional language of the Church’s worship. The brief summary below highlights how and where these diverse salvation-metaphors are used in the language of the Church. The page numbers correspond to Divine Service II (First Setting) in Lutheran Worship.

CHRIST THE LIFE-GIVER: CREATION METAPHORS

Birth

- Nicene Creed (167): “I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins...”

Life

- Gospel (165): “Alleluia. Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia. Alleluia.”
- Nicene Creed (166): “On the third day he rose again ...”
- Nicene Creed (166): “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life...”
- Nicene Creed (166): “And I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”
- Apostles’ Creed (167): “the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.”
- Proper Preface for the Passion and Easter (147).
- “Eucharistic” Prayer (171): “Given your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- Blessing at Distribution (173): “The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting. Go in peace.”

Salvation

- Nicene Creed (166): “who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man...”
- Nunc Dimmittis (173): “My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people.”

Light

- Nicene Creed (166): “God of God, Light of Light . . .”
- Nunc Dimmittis (173): “My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of every people. A light to reveal to the nations...”
- Benediction (174): “The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.”

Bread and Water

- This is the Feast (161): “This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia. Alleluia.”
- Offertory (168): “Let the vineyard be fruitful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of blessing. Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life...Grace our table with your presence, and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.”
- Offertory (169): “I will take the cup of salvation and will call on the name of the Lord.”
- See also the Proper Preface for Lent (147)
- The Lord’s Supper – Words of Institution

CHRIST THE REDEEMER: COMMERCE METAPHORS

Ransom

- Absolution (158): “Almighty God in his mercy has given his Son to die for you ...”

Redemption

- This Is the Feast (162): “Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.”
- “Eucharistic” Prayer (171): “We give you thanks for the redemption you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ...And prepare us joyfully to remember our Redeemer and receive him who comes to us in his body and blood.”
- Post-Communion Canticle (173): “Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and proudly bear his name. He recalls his promises and lead his people forth in joy with shouts of thanksgiving.”

Property

- This Is the Feast (162): “Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.”
- Post-Communion Canticle (173): “Let all who seek the Lord rejoice and proudly bear his name.”

Forgiveness/Remission

- Confession (158): “But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins...”
- Absolution (158): “Almighty God in his mercy has given his Son to die for you and for his sake forgives you all your sins...”
- Nicene Creed (167): “I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins...”
- Words of Institution (171): “this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins...”
- Distribution (172): “Take, eat; this is the true body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, given into death for your sins. Take, drink; this is the true blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins.”

CHRIST THE JUDGE: LEGAL METAPHORS

Justification

- Confession (158): “But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins...”

Intercession

- Gloria in Excelsis (161): “You are seated at the right hand of the Father, receive our prayer.”
- Nicene Creed (166): “And ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father...”

Adoption

- Invocation (158): “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
- Announcement of Grace (159): “To those who believe in Jesus Christ he gives the power to become the children of God and bestow on them the Holy Spirit.”
- Post-Communion Collect (174): “We thank you that for his sake you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament and we ask you not to forsake your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit ...”

Inheritance

- Words of Institution (171): “Drink of it, all of you; this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

CHRIST THE RECONCILER: PERSONAL METAPHORS

Reconciliation

- Kyrie (159): “For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all...”

Peace

- Kyrie (159): “In peace let us pray to the Lord . . . For the peace from above . . . For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all...”
- Gloria in Excelsis (160): “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.”
- Pax (171): “The peace of the Lord be with you always.”
- Agnus Dei (172): “Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace.”
- Blessing at Distribution (173): “The body and blood of our Lord strengthen and preserve you steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting. Go in peace.”
- Nunc Dimmittis (173): “Lord, now you let your servant go in peace...”
- Post-Communion Collect (174): “we thank you that for his sake you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament and we ask you not to forsake your children but always to rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit ...”
- Benediction (174): “The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.”

Forgiveness

- Lord's Prayer (171): "Forgives us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."
- See also above under "Forgiveness/Remission"

Marriage

- This Is the Feast (161): "This is the [wedding] feast of victory for our God."

CHRIST THE PRIEST, CHRIST THE LAMB: SACRIFICIAL METAPHORS

Expiation/Priestly Mediation

- Proper Preface for the Passion (147).
- See also below under "Sacrificial Lamb"

Sacrificial Lamb

- Gloria in Excelsis (161): "Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world..."
- This Is the Feast (162): "Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God."
- See also the Proper Preface for Advent and Easter (146)
- Agnus Dei (172): "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world..."

Hallowing/Cleansing

- Confession (158): "But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness..."
- Apostles' Creed (167): "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints..."
- "Eucharistic" Prayer (171): "Send your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that he may establish in us a living faith..."
- Lord's Prayer (171): "Hallowed be thy name..."

CHRIST THE SAVIOR: DELIVERANCE METAPHORS

Salvation

- Kyrie (160): "Help, save, comfort and defend us, gracious Lord."
- Lord's Prayer (171): "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Liberation

- This Is the Feast (162): "Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God."

Victory

- This is the Feast (161): "This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia. Alleluia."
- Proper Preface for the Passion (147).