

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Tim. 2:1-15 (ESV)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. [3] This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5] For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. [7] For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

[8] I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

[9] likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, [10] but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. [11] Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. [12] I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. [13] For Adam was formed first, then Eve; [14] and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. [15] Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

“Instructions on Worship”

I. Introduction

Some of you may know that our denomination, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, is planning its triennial convention this summer. Every three years pastors and lay people from around the United States gather to discuss the issues that matter most to our congregations.

Every three years there are resolutions that are passed that are rather mundane. Someone will propose that we do more about evangelism. Everyone will agree, “Yes, we must do more about evangelism.” Then things will go on as they always have, business as usual.

But when issues pertaining to worship come to the floor, people will start getting hot under the collar, voices will rise, some people may be asked to step away from microphone after they have spent two minutes lambasting their opponents.

Why do people get so excited about worship? I suppose it is because it is the primary thing we do in the Church. People want to be able to worship *their* way. Not only that, many people want other people to worship *their* way. But the important thing to remember about worship is that we need to worship God’s way, not our way.

Today our epistle reading gives us some guidelines on worship. It doesn’t answer everything we want to know about worship but it does get us started in understanding worship.

II. Prayers for Everyone

The first thing that Paul tells us about worship is that prayer should be an important component. Paul asks that prayers be made for everyone but especially for those in positions of authority. This even included the Roman Emperor Nero who ruled when Paul wrote this. Nero was depraved and delighted in things that I can't repeat here but Paul still orders that prayers be said for him. As Jesus put it, "...pray for those who mistreat you." (Luke 6:28)

III. Prayers through Only One

The second thing that we learn about worship is that prayer should be offered exclusively in Jesus' name. We can't pray with people who offer prayers in the name of Buddha, Vishnu, Baal or any so-called "god."

We can't pray in the name of saints either. People say that they are only asking St. Mary or St. Christopher to pray for them but this text makes it clear that they should not act as mediators for us. "There is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

Because Jesus gave himself as a ransom for all, we may approach God the Father boldly. Without him, we would not be able to approach the Father at all.

IV. Men Should Pray

Verse eight tells us that men should pray publicly. The word used here does *not* mean mankind or humans but specifically means males (*andras*). There is another word (*anthropon*) that Paul uses when he is talking about humanity in general. He just used the gender neutral term in verse five but now he shifts to a gender specific word.

Why did Paul signal out men alone in this verse? That's a good question. Is he saying women should not pray publicly? Is he saying that they should not *lead* public prayer? Or is he simply saying that men need to pray? Other verses in this chapter will help us understand his original intent.

V. Women and Worship

A. Modesty

Paul offers more advice to women about worship than he does to men. Men need to stop quarreling and getting angry but that is pretty self-explanatory.

Women need to worship by dressing appropriately, especially when they come to church. At my first congregation, we had women who came to church dressing so scandalously that they caused quarrels among the women themselves. You might think I am talking about teenagers too. I am not. These were women in their fifties and sixties.

These women gossiped among themselves so much that I had to give them some guidelines for worship. Tight fitting clothing that shows off your shape really isn't appropriate for worship, neither is showing cleavage. In most countries, women will not wear shorts to church. At the Vatican, women can't enter without wearing a dress or skirt that covers their legs completely.

The Lutheran Church is not the Taliban but we do need to follow what the Bible teaches about modesty.

B. Submissiveness

Verse eleven says, "Let a women learn quietly with all submissiveness." Submissiveness is not a virtue that our culture

respects. We are taught to be number one. Women in particular are told to reject submissiveness in favor of liberation.

Paul continues, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” Remember that this is within the context of worship. We are not talking about math or geography teachers here. We are talking about religious teachers, or in other words, pastors. Paul does not permit women to be in position of authority during worship.

What roles are positions of authority? That is a thorny question. There is no question that the pastor must be male. How could a woman be in submission and be the leader of a church? How could she remain silent while she preaches the word?

Besides the pastoral ministry, other roles aren't so clear. What about an usher? An acolyte? What about a woman voter at a voters meeting? Is a woman exercising authority over men if she votes on something that influences the way the pastor leads worship? I won't even attempt to answer these questions today. There are definitely shades of grey here about what constitutes having authority and being submissive.

Paul goes on to argue that Eve was created after Adam. Even before the fall into sin, Adam was the head and Eve was the helper God gave him. That truth needs to be reflected in our worship. Males need to be most prominent in leadership because God created men for that role.

(This is unpopular today. I don't like exposing myself to criticism but this is what this Scripture means.)

C. Childbearing

Paul's final comments in this section are the most mysterious of all. "Yet she will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." Is Paul saying that women can only be saved by having children? This is Mothers Day. This is the day when we say thank you to mothers for all their hard work and sacrifice. But is Paul really saying that it is by having children that women are saved?

The more traditional Lutheran interpretation of this verse is that women (and men) will be saved through the bearing of a child. It is not by having children that women are saved but it is because Mary bore Jesus that he could die for our sins. Mary was God's instrument to bring Jesus into this world. She is not our Savior (or co-Savior) but she is an obedient servant of God who deserves our respect.

VI. Conclusion

We have been saved through the bearing of a child, our Savior Jesus Christ. He has called us to faith. He has given us the desire to worship him. And he will preserve us in that faith until he comes again.

May that peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.