



Issues, Etc.TM
Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

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"Reverence in Worship"

Guest:

Pastor William Weedon

**Director of Worship, Chaplain of the International Center
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

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WILKEN: Silence is part of the thing that we call "reverence in worship." You can tell a lot about what people think worship is on Sunday morning if you walk in and there's a lot of chatting. Kind of like a potluck dinner atmosphere before the service, maybe even extending into the service – people checking their cell phones, getting up and walking around. It's not just the casual atmosphere; perhaps it's an irreverent atmosphere. Where does this come from and what is proper Christian reverence in worship?

Greetings, and welcome to *Issues, Etc.* We're coming to you live from the studios of

Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, Illinois. I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for tuning us in.

Joining us to talk about reverence in worship, Pastor Will Weedon, a regular guest, Director of Worship and Chaplain of the International Center for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Will, welcome back.

WEEDON: Hey, thank you, Todd. A joy to be with you today.

WILKEN: Somebody says, "I look at the worship that is depicted in the Bible, and in particular the Old Testament, and I see there's a lot of very formal ceremony. There [are] a lot of things that really strongly

indicate, almost at times, a severe kind of reverence in the Old Testament peoples' worship. A call for reverence, 'Take off your shoes, the ground you're standing on is holy,' even beginning with things like that. But this is the New Testament, Pastor. This is now marked by throwing off all the shackles of those things. It's about freedom and spontaneity and liberating ourselves from all of that of the Old Testament." What's your basic response to that?

WEEDON: I have two basic responses to that. First of all, we need to look in the New Testament and see what it says. And if we do, we find that perhaps the greatest book of worship in the New Testament is Revelation, and the second greatest book is Hebrews. And in the book of Revelation, John—very much in the New Testament—has an encounter where he gets to see what's going on in worship. He sees it with his eyes, the invisible reality before which we gather. And this is what happens: "Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning, I saw seven golden lampstands. And in the midst of the lampstands one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of His chest were white like white wool, like snow. His eyes like a flame of fire, His feet like burnished bronze refined in a furnace. His voice was like the roar of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars and from His mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in full strength. And when I saw Him..." I drank my latte and talked to my neighbor. No! "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last and the living. I died and behold, I am alive forever more. And I have the keys of death and Hades.'"

There's New Testament reverence for you. It knocked him flat on his face. This is John, who in the Lord's Supper, laid against the

bosom of this one that he's now seeing. But when he sees Him in His unveiled, resurrection, ascended glory, John is terrified and falls down. This shows us an awful lot about New Testament reverence and worship, and just in case we missed the point, I would also refer people to Hebrews 12. We're going to look at this in much more detail, but for right now, just to answer the question [when] people say, "That's the Old Testament, not the New." Hebrews 12:28: "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and let us offer to God acceptable worship with reverence and awe. For our God is a consuming fire."

If you're trying to drive a wedge between the God who is revealed in the pages of the Old Testament and the God who takes on flesh in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are driving a wedge between something that you cannot drive a wedge between. For the Lord Jesus is Himself the Eternal Word through whom all things were made. And that He takes on flesh and approaches us and comes to us who could not come to Him, that He provides us safe access to His Father, this we can give glory to God for. But we can never forget that it is safe access only in Him, and therefore we continue to worship with reverence and awe.

WILKEN: Okay, so that lays the foundation here. What you're saying here is that in the New Testament, yes, the way has been opened now. The dividing curtain has been split, and now we have access by grace to the throne room of the Father Himself. But it's still the Father's throne room. It isn't the movie theatre. It isn't the potluck downstairs. It is the Father's throne room. And our attitude, our gesture, our—what shall we say?—our everything that happens there should reflect that.

WEEDON: Yeah. Now, this gets to the very heart, I think, of—what is it that provokes reverence? Something that old Piepkorn

said once, “There’s really only one basic rule of good form: be courteous.” Similarly, there’s really only one basic rule for those who lead the church in worship—and I’d add, those who gather in the church for worship—“be reverent. Every other rule is simply a practical application of that basic charge.” Be reverent. What does it mean, to be reverent? What is reverence? I would argue that reverence is a sense of holy fear evoked by the presence of God in the midst of his people. Let me say it one more time: “Reverence is a sense of holy fear evoked by the presence of God in the midst of His people.”

So this really invites us to ponder the unseen realities that happen when we gather in worship. Do you remember the Lord Jesus’ promise in Matthew 18? “Wherever two or three come together in my name and to my name, there am I in the midst of them.” This is what John got to see on Patmos! Christ standing in the midst of the lampstands! He tells us that the lampstands are the churches, so standing right there in the midst of the churches, actually present with His people. If He is truly there, if you believe He is truly there according to His promises, it will affect how you behave in His presence.

WILKEN: The converse of that, of course, is if you don’t believe He’s there, that will also have an impact on the behavior in His absence.

WEEDON: It will. Absolutely. You mentioned the chatter in the beginning. So imagine, “Hey, guys, the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him. Well, if He’s not in His holy temple; if He’s up in heaven and we’re here and we’re gathered here to remember Him and to learn from His teaching, but He’s not actually here.” If he’s not in the room with us—except in the same way that He’s out on the golf course—then the way we behave towards one another shifts and the

focus stays on us. This, I think, is the key between reverence and irreverence. Irreverence keeps the focus on people. Reverence never forgets that everything that’s happening in that room is happening in the presence of the God who took on flesh and suffered and died and rose again to atone for our sin, and who will return again in glory, but the God by whose very will we have life. This confession, then, changes how we are in that space, [and] what we do.

When the Lutheran Confessions were being written, one of the things that the Roman Catholics at the time charged Lutheran churches with, they said, “You all got rid of the mass.” And I think it’s very significant to hear how the Lutherans answered that. Listen to these words. “Our churches are falsely accused of abolishing the mass. The mass is held among us and celebrated with the highest reverence. Nearly all the usual ceremonies are also preserved.” The mass—that is, the Lord’s Supper—celebrated among us with the highest reverence. That is, with maximal ceremonial confession of where you are gathered into the presence of the one—the body that laid in the manger, the blood that poured from Calvary’s cross. The body and blood of Him who even now, stands at the right hand of God interceding for you. This body and blood, there, on the altar, and into your mouth. If you are gathered before that one—and if He is actually there, the one speaking when you read His words... Our liturgy does everything it can to help us capture and keep this vision. So before the Gospel reading is announced, the people cry out in joy at the one who is coming into their midst: “Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!” And then as soon as the reading is announced, “The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew...” The people cry out or sing out, “Glory to you, O Lord!” Because He is there. And as soon as the reading is finished, “This is the Gospel of the Lord.” The people cry out, “Praise to you, O Christ!” He is

present, not an absent Lord. A Lord who is actually there in the midst of the assembly, according to His promise in His words, in His body, in His blood.

WILKEN: So that is the basis for all of this. Christ is present in His Word and in His Sacrament, on the Lord's day, and that changes everything about how we comport ourselves in that. Here's an analogy, and I want to know what you think about it. The analogy is the president holds a press conference. They've got a special room for this in the White House. Before he comes in the room, it's just reporters jibber-jabbering. They're assembling; they're not even seated. There are people running to and fro making preparations. Then the minute he walks in the door, everybody stands up. He takes the podium, he has them sit, he says what he has to say. In due course, they'll ask their questions, but he makes his statement first. Unless he says, "I'll just go straight to your questions," and then they start asking their questions. Even in that very mundane setting, there are gestures of reverence there. Now, I want to take this into Sunday morning. We talked a little bit before about the latte-drinking, crossing the pews, milling about before the service. Is there a reverence that begins in preparation that would separate it from the mundane of the White House pressroom, where people just do as they please before the "big guy" shows up?

WEEDON: Yeah. Certainly there should be reverence and preparation beforehand. Not just by the pastor, but also by the people. In the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*—which all of our listeners should own and use, not in the way of the Law but in the way of the Gospel—there is a beautiful preparation for communion. Listen to these words: "If we earnestly believe that we receive the true body and blood of our Savior, true God and Man in one person, in holy communion, and not mere bread and wine, we shall then approach the table of the Lord not

thoughtlessly and lightly, but in deepest reverence and humility of heart, saying, as did the centurion, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.'" And then prayers are given that you can pray before coming.

I want to turn to a prayer of preparation that [Johann Friedrich] Starck gives that I think is just a stunning prayer to pray before we come to the Lord's Table. Listen to this. "O Jesus, now that I am to partake of Your holy feast of love, I receive it also in remembrance of You. I remember Your love, how for my sake You came into the world to make me an heir of life everlasting. I remember Your anguish, pain, and wounds by which my sins and punishments have been removed from me and Your righteousness bestowed on me. I remember Your death and Your resurrection by which life and salvation have been imparted to me. I know, O Jesus, that for Your sake I obtain grace, sonship, peace, and heaven's joy. I shall be lost unless I abide in You, O Jesus, and You abide in me. O abide, then, in my heart. Dwell in my heart, live and run in it. Let me Yours in time and eternity. Let Your holy body be my food, Your holy blood my drink, and refresh me unto life everlasting. Grant that I may never lose this treasure, but that You, my Jesus, henceforth may live, rule and dwell in me. Israel's manna had to be gathered in a clean vessel. Oh, that You would then purify my heart by true faith, genuine repentance, love, and humility, so that I may worthily receive this pledge of Your love and constantly keep it for the strengthening of my faith, the sanctification of my life, and the assurance of salvation."

WILKEN: Let's take the prayer up on the other side of the break. We'll take it apart a little bit because it's an excellent way to prepare, in reverence, for worship on Sunday morning.

On this Thursday afternoon, October the 15th, Pastor Will Weedon is our guest,

Director of Worship and Chaplain of the International Center for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. We're talking about reverence in worship.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: I'm Todd Wilken. This is *Issues, Etc.* We're talking about reverence in worship. Pastor Will Weedon is our guest.

Will, before the break, you read a prayer from a great devotional writer in the Lutheran tradition, of preparation before the service. I was really struck by this "manna was to be gathered in a clean vessel, cleanse my heart," because we're about to receive something here. When you're about to receive something, that kind of gives us a logic for the preparation in reverence.

WEEDON: Absolutely. That is a powerful picture that he paints there. The same one who poured out the manna for Israel becomes manna for Israel, becomes manna for you and me and every human being, comes to be the Bread of Life! How do we receive Him? And He's going to have to do the cleanup. He's going to have to do the preparation. We can't make our vessels clean. And so the begging attempt to do that, "So that we may receive the sacrament in a worthy manner." It's a beautiful prayer.

WILKEN: So this goes along with something we probably should just mention in passing, and that is that for much of the church's history, the observation of the Lord's day actually began the night before with a fast. There was much preparation that was aimed toward reverence that came to its culmination there in that hour or two on Sunday morning.

WEEDON: Yeah, the tradition of the church was that you didn't eat on the Lord's day till you'd received the Eucharist. That was the first food you ate. So when the catechism says "fasting and other bodily preparation are fine outward training," they're referring

to that practice of actually not receiving food 'til you'd received the Eucharist on the Lord's day. And I think that does tend toward reverence, because it is irreverent for us to believe that our temporal bodily needs of the moment are the biggest and most important thing in the world. No. The Church invites us, "Stop. Remember. This is what you need. This is what you need like you need nothing else in the whole world. You need Jesus: His body, His blood, His forgiveness for all your sin. This is the true need." And He comes to meet it. He comes. That's at the heart of reverence.

WILKEN: Now, you defined it earlier as "a sense of holy fear evoked by the presence of God in the midst of His people." That was your definition.

WEEDON: Yes.

WILKEN: Can we deal first with that concept of holy fear? Someone says, "I don't go to church out of fear. I shouldn't be afraid of God."

WEEDON: You should be. If you're not, you're an idiot. Let's not cut any corners here. It's the truth. This is the one who is an all-consuming fire. Did we not hear that from Hebrews, that God before whom we worship is a consuming fire? And there is no safe access to Him except in Jesus. But the one whom Jesus gives you safe access to is that selfsame God. You are with Isaiah. "Woe is me." Remember what happened—I can't remember his name. He reached out and touched the ark...

WILKEN: Yeah, you're asking for Old Testament names out of me at 3:30 in the afternoon. *[chuckles]*

WEEDON: I'm sorry. I used to be able to remember all this stuff, and the older I get the more the memory fades. But he reached out and touched the ark—and it'll come to me in the middle of the night—and he's struck dead. As though God needed help!

David, remember, got all upset. It's like, "Well, He's so holy, I can't bring this ark into Jerusalem. What will happen to me?" So this is the same God. This one and the same, who in Jesus Christ takes on flesh and then gives us His body and blood so that we may have this safe access to the Father.

I always use the example of electricity. I think that just brings it right home to us. Is electricity bad or good? Well, as long as it's being channeled and properly mediated to you, it will warm you, it will cook your food...

WILKEN: Give you light.

WEEDON: Give you lights, yeah, it does all these wonderful things for you. What happens if you reach out and grab it without the mediation? You fry! It will destroy you! Not because the electricity is bad, but because you cannot survive that electricity running through your body. In the same way, no sinner can survive the presence of the all-holy One. His holiness has to be wrapped up and channeled to us in forgiveness. That's the key to why reverence makes sense.

WILKEN: I seem also to remember that at least in Paul's reading of the Old Testament Scriptures, a lack of fear toward God is one of the hallmarks of man's fallen state. "There is no fear of God in their eyes." This kind of casual or perhaps even haughty approach to God.

WEEDON: Yeah. "God is my good buddy" or whatever. It's very sad. That's not the picture that we get from the sacred Scriptures.

WILKEN: You say it is "holy fear evoked by the presence of God" and this is something you keep driving home here in our conversation. In essence, if we believe that Christ is truly present, this will change how we behave in His presence.

WEEDON: Indeed. And on this, I wanted to hit a... It is not necessary that everybody behave in the same way toward that presence when you acknowledge it. Every once in a while, these terms get thrown out: "high church," "low church." I never really understood what was going on with this until—when I was a student at Concordia Bronxville I had an Anglican friend who used to drive me crazy. He was always explaining to me that we Lutherans really didn't have the Eucharist even though we really wanted to because our priest wasn't in orders the way his priest was in orders. Anyway, one day he introduced me to a deacon in his church, and the deacon in his church said something that really amazed me. He said, "You guys really are quite low, except for your hymnal. I read your hymnody and it's quite high." It finally, like a light bulb, went off in my head—oh! In the Anglican church, high means you're confessing the real presence. It's a doctrinal statement, and in that sense, all Lutherans are high to an Anglican! We all believe that in the Eucharist, what we receive is the body and blood of Christ. But people have come to use that word for more or less ceremony. Lutherans just say whatever ceremonies you use, let them be reverent, let them be fitting, let them confess what we say about the Supper. I personally believe that the ceremonies usually characterized as "high" do a better job of that than not using ceremonies at all.

WILKEN: Or, then, certainly the kind of frivolous, casual approach to holy things.

WEEDON: I'll give you an example. I was at a conference recently, and we were gathered for worship. And somebody literally walked into the sanctuary with a coffee in their hand and marched on down and sat down. And I was like, "Have we fallen that low?" That it doesn't even register that you don't gather here to satisfy your bodily wants now. And you know me—Craig said today when I arrived, "I knew it was you because you were holding the coffee in your

hand.” You know I always have a coffee in my hand. But I don’t have a coffee in my hand when I’m coming into worship in the sanctuary! This is a place where we need to say, “No! That’s not what needs to happen now.”

WILKEN: Okay, let’s take another break and when we come back, we’re going to talk a little bit more about reverence. And we’re going to take a question from David. He asks, “What about people who say that the greatest reverence is faith, not ceremony, silence, etc.?” We’ll get Pastor Will Weedon’s answer to that question on this Thursday afternoon, October the 15th, as we talk about reverence in worship.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: We’re talking about reverence in worship. I’m Todd Wilken. This is *Issues, Etc.* Pastor Will Weedon is our guest. He’s Director of Worship and Chaplain of the International Center for the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

This is an email from David. He asks, “What about people who say that the greatest reverence is faith, not ceremony, silence, etc.?” What do you say, Pastor Weedon?

WEEDON: I’m so glad that David asked that question, because you have to ask the question, “Where does faith”—well, number one, he’s right! Faith is what counts. Where does faith come from? “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.” And if you are never silent, you will never hear the Word. That’s why the First Commandment to Israel was “Shut up,” or actually, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” In other words, listen. Listen! So when we gather together for worship, when we gather together in the presence of the Holy One, above all, we gather together to hear Him speak to us promises. The promises that He speaks to us are what actually engender the faith, which is the worship of God.

WILKEN: Let’s talk about Christians worshipping. This has been true of every culture, but I think especially so of 21st century American culture: Christians live and worship in the midst of a culture that is decidedly, intentionally irreverent. What are your thoughts there, Pastor Weedon?

WEEDON: Can we not say that in our entire culture right now, when people visit the White House wearing flip flops, comfort has become—and by that, we understand “me being comfortable”—that’s become THE standard way for operating, the modus operandi of the American people. And they don’t understand why it would be any different when you bring it into the assembly. But, wow. We need to help people see what’s actually happening in the assembly. Granted, if you just look at it with your eyes, you’re not going to make any sense of it. You need to be able to look at it with the eyes of faith. So I’m going to drive us back to this passage that you and I have done only a thousand times before, but it’s so critical, so crucial. Look at Hebrews 12 again. If our hearers pull out their Bible, pull it out and listen. You know what—before we do Hebrews 12, go back and pick up 1 Deuteronomy 5, where the Ten Commandments are given. Because the peoples’ response to hearing the voice of God is crucial. They hear God lay out His demands upon them, His commands, and when they heard His living voice speaking, they said, verse 24: “Behold, the Lord our God has shown us His glory and greatness and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire. This day, we have seen God speak with man and man still live. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us if we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have and still live? Go near and hear all that the Lord our God will speak, and speak to us all the Lord our God will speak to you. And we will hear and

do it.” Talking to Moses, saying, “You go up there and listen to Him, because it’s going to wipe us out!”

Listen to the Lord’s response: “And the Lord heard your words when you spoke to me, and the Lord said to me, ‘I have heard the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a mind as this always to fear me and to keep all my commandments.’ Oh, that they had such a mind as this always. This picture, Sinai’s shaking, God’s coming down in the fire and speaking, this is what is picked up in Hebrews 12. Look at verse 18. “You’ve not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire in darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words that made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. For they could not endure the order that was given: ‘if even a beast touch the mountain it shall be stoned.’ Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’ But you have come”—past tense, right? “Have come”—“to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering.”

We’ll pause there. Innumerable angels. Remember how often St. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11, tosses off that comment that the ladies should have the veil on their heads, for the sake of the angels. *[Chuckles]* Over and over again in the New Testament we have this confession that when we worship, we’re not worshipping alone. We see it in Revelation: when you gather, there are myriad angels, archangels, all around the throne, and all those other critters that God made. “So you have come to innumerable angels in festal gathering and to the assembly of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.” So when you gather together in church, you’re not just there with those you see. They’re no longer

breathing and walking around here in this world, but they live in Jesus and they’re gathered there with you when you gather at the throne of the Lamb. And you have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. You stop and think what that means. On that altar, in that chalice, after the words of the promise of Jesus are spoken over it, you have the blood that that came out from his body on the cross to wipe away the sins of the world. You’re gathered in the presence of that blood. How do you treat it? How do you confess it? How do you show it?

I once was at a service with the man who now is my pastor. We begged for the privilege of actually being able to clean up the Sacrament because the way it was distributed there was in plastic throwaway cups that were thrown into the trash. And the pastor at that place, he was very kind, let us do that. I never will forget Pastor Ball and I trying to clean up this horrific mess lining the bags. And I don’t think—I’m not sure that the pastor was following a very... A standard Lutheran line you sometimes hear, “Hey, the blood of Christ is present as you receive it. The rest of the time, you don’t need to worry about it. It doesn’t matter. You can toss it away. It’s not a problem.” Even if you grant that, you have to grant that this wine, then, participated in the blood of Christ and having been made the blood of Christ. Do you treat it as a common thing that you toss it into the trash, into a plastic trash bag and haul out to the streets? No! Not if you really confess and believe this. Contrast this with Dr. Luther. Do you remember the story, when he was very, very old, he’s shaking, it’s the last time he celebrated the Supper. And as he’s celebrating, shaking with his hand, he spilled some of our Lord’s blood onto the floor. And he carefully set the chalice back down on the altar. He got down on his hands and his knees and he licked up the blood. Some had spilt onto a lady’s jacket.

He cut the piece out and had it burned. Some had hit the edge of the chair. He had the chair shaved and the wood shavings burned. Anybody watching while this happened? What would be confessed about the Supper?

I once had a conversation with an Orthodox archdeacon who was not impressed that our actions actually met up with what we confessed. And what he did when he would go to a Lutheran church for worship, he says, "I would go into the sacristy and watch what they did with what remained. And then I would decide whether or not they really believed that it was the body and blood of Christ by how they treated it." How do we handle these holy things? How do we handle them? I think it confesses something if our handling of them shows the people who see that, "Hey, that's totally congruent with what the man said he believed about them." Similarly, we know that the power in Baptism is the Word of God that's joined to the water as it's poured over the person, right? There's nothing particularly holy about that water after the baptism's over. But I still love that we tend to take care of that water. We walk out and pour that back upon the earth. We don't throw it down the drain. Back upon God's earth.

WILKEN: Pastor Will Weedon is our guest. We're talking about reverence in worship on this Thursday afternoon.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: I'm Todd Wilken. This is *Issues, Etc.* We're talking about reverence in worship. Pastor Will Weedon is our guest.

What's next in our conversation? What do we have to get out here in the next ten minutes as we conclude our conversation on reverence in worship, Pastor Weedon?

WEEDON: I want to give a few citations that I think are helpful in this regard. A little bit more from the Lutheran Confessions, okay?

From *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Articles 7 and 8, paragraph 33. "It's pleasing to us, for the sake of peace, when universal ceremonies are kept. We also willingly keep the order of the mass in the churches, the Lord's Day, and other more famous festivals, with a very grateful mind. We include the beneficial and ancient ordinances, especially since they contain a certain discipline."

A little further on in that same document, Article 24, paragraph 1, again, "Masses are celebrated among us every Lord's day and on other festivals. The Sacrament is offered to those who wish it after they have been examined and absolved, and the usual public ceremonies are observed. The series of lessons, prayers, vestments, and other such things." And finally, from the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article 15. This one is one that I think we really need to listen to. "Nothing in customary rites should be changed without a reasonable cause. So to nurture unity, old customs that can be kept without sin or great inconvenience should be kept."

Old ceremonies. What's he talking about there? The kind of ceremonies that accompanied the service. For example, there was a custom that when you came to the Creed, when you came to the words of the Creed that confess the incarnation, that the people knelt. Listen to Luther on this. He says, "When the congregation came to the words, 'from the Virgin Mary, and was made man,' everyone genuflected and removed his hat. It would still be proper and appropriate to kneel at the words 'and was made man,' to sing them with long notes as formerly"—it's the whole piece slowed down right at that point—"to listen with happy hearts to the message that the divine majesty abased Himself, became like us poor bags of worm, and to thank God for the inevitable mercy and compassion and reflect it in the incarnation of the deity." Now, Luther has a whole bunch of ceremonies that he says, "Yeah, we're not

going to get our knickers in knots over this.” Whether or not you kiss the Bible—he says, “That’s a matter of freedom.” Whether or not you kneel before the Sacrament, a matter of freedom. But yet, everything we do finally confesses something, and that’s what’s important.

WILKEN: You wanted to get a little Walther in here before our time ends.

WEEDON: I did indeed. Walther really does a beautiful job of this. Listen to this. Walther, by the way, is the first president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He writes, “It’s a pity and dreadful cowardice when a person sacrifices the good, ancient church customs to please the diluted American denominations just so they won’t accuse us of being Roman Catholic. Indeed, am I to be afraid”—he says of a Methodist, we would say maybe of an Evangelical—“who perverts the saving Word, or be ashamed in the matter of my good cause? And would not rather rejoice that they can tell by our ceremonies that I don’t belong to them? It’s too bad that such entirely indifferent ceremonies prevail in our Synod and that no liturgy at all has been introduced into so many congregations.” He talks about the prejudice against the back-and-forth chanting, which he found to be really sad. He says, “Whenever the Divine Service once again follows the old Evangelical Lutheran agendas or church books, it seems that many raise a great cry, ‘It’s Roman Catholic!’ It’s Roman Catholic when the pastor chants, ‘The Lord be with you,’ and the congregation responds by chanting, ‘And with thy spirit.’ It’s Roman Catholic when the pastor chants the collect and the blessing, and the people respond with a chanted, ‘Amen.’” Well, for Pete’s sake, even the simplest Christian can respond to this outcry: “Prove to me that chanting is contrary to the Word of God,

then I’ll too call it Roman Catholic and have nothing more to do with it. But you can’t prove this to me. Not at all. If you insist on calling every element of the Divine Service ‘Romeish,’ that it’s been used by the Roman Catholic church, then it must follow that reading the Epistle and Gospel is Romeish. Indeed, it’s mischief to sing or preach in church since the Roman church has done this, too. Those who cry out should remember that the Roman Catholic church possesses every beautiful song of the old orthodox church: the chants and antiphons and responses were brought into the church long before the false teachings of Rome crept in. The Christian church since the beginning, even in the Old Testament, has derived great joy from chanting. For more than 1,700 years, orthodox Christians have participated joyfully in the divine service. Should we today carry on by saying that such joyful participation is Roman Catholic? God forbid. Therefore, as we continue to hold and restore our wonderful Divine Service in places where it’s been forgotten, let’s boldly confess that our worship forms do not tie us to the modern sects or with the Church of Rome. They join us with the one, holy, Christian church that is as old as the world and is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”

And I didn’t have it on here, but he has another quote where he says, “And you can tell by the very worship style of our churches that in our churches, the great God is served before all the world with praise and thanksgiving.” And he says, “At their churches”—he’s talking about the Methodist kind of churches, he says it looks like a lecture hall. Today, he’d say it looks like a theatre, where people are entertained rather than lectured.

WILKEN: Pastor Will Weedon is our guest.

[CLOSING REMARKS]

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