

Column

As with most newspaper columnists, from time to time I get mail. Some want to congratulate, others to castigate, still others come with thoughtful questions and insights. I appreciate all those who take time to write . . . yes, hate mail is better than no mail at all!

About a week ago, one person, responding to something I had said about the importance of being in the Lord's house on the Lord's Day, wrote that worship ought to be a seven day a week affair. Of course, he is right. In this way, worship is like prayer.

About the latter, Jesus says in Luke 18:1, "Men ought always to pray." The apostle Paul echoing our Lord's admonition in 1 Thessalonians 1:16 urges his readers to "pray without ceasing."

It seems obvious that neither Jesus nor Paul is saying that people should spend day and night in a house of worship reciting prayers. Rather, both are commending an attitude, an attitude where there is a

thankful awareness of the Lord's presence and where every thought is filtered through this awareness. Every sunrise and sunset, every pleasant exchange with a friend, every bit of delicious food is accepted as a gift and a cause for gratitude.

In like manner, in times of challenge, doubt and sorrow, the believer has a glad awareness he is not alone. With the psalmist, he cries out: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (23:4).

Worship works the same way. It's more than a formal, prescribed act done at a particular place one day a week. It is an attitude and state of mind. Our word "worship" comes from the Old English *weordhscipe* and with it the idea of ascribing worth. In Christian context, that worth is to be ascribed to God every hour of every day. Put another way, believers offer the honor due God's name in the sacrament of life.

Of course, ascribing worth to God as we plough a field or go about any other honorable task does not

preclude gathering one day a week with other believers. There is real benefit in so doing.

Why do we come together for corporate worship? Here are a few reasons. We gather to hear God's Word Written read and preached, to offer prayers for ourselves and others, to give thanks for the many blessings of life and to prepare for the battles of life.

Corporate worship is valuable. So valuable that the writer of Hebrews is moved to warn his readers against staying away from their meetings. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching," he writes (10:25).

As best as we can tell, the early followers of Jesus, in particular those who were Jews, continued for a time to gather on the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday), but eventually Sunday or the Lord's Day became the day Christians privileged. Why? Not the least because Jesus rose on the first day of the week. With this earth-shattering event, they believed God's

rest spoken of in Genesis 2 had ended and that they were living in God's new week, the eight day of creation, if you like. Jesus' resurrected body marked the beginning of new creation.

What this means to us is that when we gather on the Lord's Day we announce Jesus and His resurrection and our part in God's new creation. More than that, we prepare ourselves for worship (which includes work) the rest of the week. In the word of Fredrick Wenz: Christians are people "who come together like paratroopers for a briefing on Sunday before being dropped behind enemy lines on Monday."

I thank my reader for the timely reminder that worship is a seven-day, round-the-clock affair. Strive to make it so in your life.

O LORD, our heavenly Father, Almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day; Defend us in the same with thy mighty power; and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that all our doings, being ordered by thy

*governance, may be righteous in thy sight; through
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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