

Evening Worship

The Lord has set apart one day in seven as the Holy Sabbath (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8-10) for the purpose of worship and rest. The church throughout history has observed the first day of the week as this Holy Sabbath for the purpose of reading the Word, administering the Sacraments, and corporate prayer.¹ This day is called the Lord's Day in remembrance of the day that Jesus Christ rose from the dead (John 20:1, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2, Rev 1:10).

The New Testament does not directly command the allotted start time, duration, or frequency of Worship on the Lord's Day. The Psalmist writes, "It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night," (Ps 92:1-2 cf. Ps 134:1) Daily offerings were made in the morning and evening under the shadow and types of the Old Testament (Num 28:1-10; Ex 29:38-39). On one occasion, the early church met late into the night (Acts 20:7). Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea described the church's practice of the fourth century,

"For it is surely no small sign of God's power that throughout the whole world in the churches of God at the morning rising of the sun and at the evening hours, hymns, praises, and truly divine delights are offered to God. God's delights are indeed the hymns sent up everywhere on earth in his Church at the times of morning and evening."

We believe the whole day should be set apart as a day for the Lord. It is not a Lord's morning or Lord's hour, but rather the whole day should be set apart as a Holy day. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The sabbath is not legalism, but a delight and enjoyment found only in Christ. It should encourage works of necessity and mercy (Matt 12:1-13). It should also give Christians, as pilgrims in this wilderness, the opportunity to be fed with the ordinary means of grace; to feed on the Word of God, to pray and to receive and observe the sacraments.

As believers, we should seek to rest from worldly employments and pastimes, filling our time with public and private worship of God. Morning worship and evening worship help create bookends on the Lord's day, helping us frame our day with the worship of God as the focus. Both serve to prepare our hearts for the eternal sabbath rest found only through Christ (Heb 4:7-11).

We believe setting apart the whole day as the Lord's day helps set the foundation of the week and the rhythms of life, glorifying and enjoying God forever.

Let us delight in the Lord's day (Is 58:13) and seek to worship the Lord both publicly and privately, unless providentially hindered (Heb 10:25).

¹ "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place" Justin Martyr, "The First Apology of Justin," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 186.