

The Mystery of the Liturgy

Notes from Wolterstorff's "Acting Liturgically"

Chapter 1

If liturgies are a genus of ritual that have to do with God, with orienting ourselves toward God, what if you Don't do these things? You will try to orient yourself toward God in other ways. Why are OUR ways more beneficial or substantial than other ways? Why does our liturgy count as connecting with God more than any other liturgy counts as connecting with God?

When we pray a confession it "counts as" asking God for forgiveness. Why is it that in other contexts (like while driving down the road) saying that same prayer doesn't "count as" in the same way or better? Is it that those other ways are derivative? Which came first, the liturgical speech act that connects us to God or the connection to God that assigns that speech act?

What is at stake if you don't engage in the liturgy? This is the main question I'm asking in my book, "Take Me To Church"

What ontological significance does the liturgy have that requires my engagement with it?

NW says that the purpose of the liturgy is for being directly engaged with God. He says that you can engage with God in secondary ways like when you see a beautiful starry night sky or when you are with an image-of-God-bearing human. But the liturgy is direct engagement with God.

This doesn't make sense to me. IT still seems like the liturgy itself is like the starry night sky; it is a means by which we engage with God. It is not direct engagement with God. What makes the liturgy so special that it gets to call itself the "direct engagement with God"? Is it just faith? Is it that we all agree that that's what we are doing? Is it a summation of cultural normativity bent toward this or that specific liturgy?

On top of this, how do we really know we are actually in direct engagement with God? This question can lead to some morbid naval gazing and some self-righteous, "our liturgy is better than yours" attitudes.

Then, what do we make of the pluralism of the numerous liturgies out there?

JKA Smith would call it "direct engagement with the good life." Just saying.