



REVITALIZING WORSHIP IN THE POST-PANDEMIC CHURCH: TOWARDS A LITURGY OF THANKSGIVING

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Abstract: *Theological discussions related to the post-pandemic condition of the church have attracted significant attention. Generally speaking, those discussions focus on the mode of worship in the future: whether to remain online, back offline or adopt the hybrid mode of worship. In this article, the authors argue that the mode of worship in the post-pandemic condition should not be seen as operative per se, but it should be based on a deep reflection of the church on what is the essence of worship and how could the church reflect it to the congregations in the church and the world outside the church. To reflect the Gospel appropriately, the church should seek to revitalize worship in the post-pandemic condition. This article suggests that such a revitalization could be achieved through constructing a thanksgiving liturgy. The post-pandemic condition could be seen as a suitable opportunity for the church to reflect its joy and gratitude for the grace of God that renews and heals the creation.*

Keywords: *Liturgy, Post-Pandemic Church, Worship, Spirituality.*

INTRODUCTION

The church after the Covid-19 pandemic is often imagined as a church that will no longer be the same as the pre-pandemic church. The primary difference is often interpreted in the mode of worship, where the Church will continue to carry out online worship after the pandemic. During the pandemic, the Church is also forced by circumstances to reflect on the meaning of the sacrament of Holy Communion without a physical congregation meeting. Although not all churches agree, churches that continue to administer the sacraments during a pandemic online interpret the Holy Communion as not limited to understanding the sacrament as a mere rite. Holy Communion is seen as an act of sacrifice or an act of the congregation giving itself to the world; as Jesus Christ taught how He gave

Himself for the world at the last supper. Apart from theological reasons, there are also pragmatic reasons for the Church to continue carrying out online worship services after the pandemic. During the pandemic, online worship does not only prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus but also allows people who have certain health reasons to worship. Continuing online worship after the pandemic allows the Church to serve and reach congregations who have physical or health limitations. Besides health reasons, the implementation of online worship after the pandemic is very important for the Church's efforts to continue to be relevant to the progress of the times.¹

Theological discussions about Christian worship after the pandemic are quite developed. Unfortunately, the essence of worship as a bodily Christian community tends to receive less attention. Before thinking about practical matters such as worshipping in person or online, the Church as the body of Christ should first think about how bodily the body of Christ is. The main body of Christian spirituality can be seen through three things in Christian teachings: *first*, the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, where God Himself became human to provide a bodily existence amid His people; *second*, the bread and wine in the sacrament of Holy Communion, which is visible instruments of grace to reveal the invisible presence of God; *third*, how the term church as the body of Christ in the New Testament always refers to social interaction and fellowship in an embodied way. According to Bare, churches that emphasize physical Christian spirituality will express their longing to return to worship face-to-face. Meanwhile, those who lack an emphasis on physical spirituality will tend to be satisfied with continuing

¹ Fernando Tambunan, "Analisis Dasar Teologi terhadap Pelaksanaan Ibadah Online Pascapandemi Covid-19," *EPIGRAPHE: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 4, no. 2 (2020): 154–69, <https://doi.org/10.33991/epigraphe.v4i2.210>.

online worship after the pandemic without meeting face to face.² Between the two poles, some agree with hybrid mode of worship, which is doing both online and on-site. This mode of worship can accommodate both, but as stated earlier, before discussing the mechanism of worship, the essence of Christian worship must be discussed in depth.

In connection with the context above, the author argues that although it has many benefits, online worship cannot fully express an embodied Christian spirituality. Therefore, in imagining post-pandemic worship, one must hope for a possibility for the Church to be physically re-united. However, this is not just an invitation to return to the pre-pandemic period, but an invitation to revitalize worship after the pandemic. During the pandemic, the Church has lost many opportunities for physical fellowship. The pandemic period has also given the Church time to reflect on the essence of Christian worship and has encouraged the Church to teach the congregation how the opportunity to meet physically is very valuable. Beyond emphasizing the Christian concept of embodied spirituality, this article also proposes that constructing a liturgy of thanksgiving could be the first step to revitalize worship in the post-pandemic condition. This article also provides some practical suggestions on how to conduct preaching and sacrament of Holy Communion through the liturgy of thanksgiving.

METHOD

² Daniel R. Bare, "How Embodied is 'the Body of Christ?'" COVID-19 and Christian Corporeality," dalam *Religion in Quarantine: The Future of Religion in a Post-Pandemic World*, ed. oleh Heidi A Campbell (Texas: Digital Religion Publications, 2020), 36–38.

This article uses library research method and liturgical study as the main theological perspective. Liturgy is understood as a vital means of reviving and strengthening the faith of the congregation within the Church and for spreading the love of Christ to those outside the Church. The liturgy is like a mirror that reflects the light of the Gospel to the church and the world. The reflection of the light is manifested in the appreciation and application of the faith of the congregation in the “form, appearance, atmosphere and color” of worship.³ This article will *first* discuss the essence of Christian worship; *second*, imagining the post-pandemic church; *third*, the liturgy of thanksgiving; then closes with a conclusion.

RESULT

This research has resulted in the concept of the essence of Christian worship, imagining the post-pandemic Church and a liturgy of thanksgiving. Restrictions on ecclesiastical activities during the pandemic need to be seen as an opportunity for the Church to reflect and improve. The results of this thought can then be fully applied in post-pandemic conditions later. The post-pandemic condition is not an opportunity for the Church to return to its pre-pandemic state, but an opportunity for the Church to revitalize Christian worship. To start such a revitalization, the Church should construct a liturgy that is relevant with the post-pandemic condition. This article shows how a liturgy of thanksgiving is suitable of revitalizing the post-pandemic worship, then it provides practical suggestions on how ministry of the word and Holy Communion could be conducted in the liturgy of thanksgiving.

³ G. Riemer, *Cermin Injil: Ilmu Liturgi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Komunikasi Bina Kasih, 2013).

DISCUSSION

In this section, the author will discuss how the post-pandemic revitalization of Christian worship can be pursued through a deep understanding of the essence of Christian worship, theologically reflecting on the image of the Church after the pandemic and constructing a liturgical construction of thanksgiving.

The Essence of Christian Worship

One of the common mistakes among Christians is understanding the term "Church" as a building or organization. This is not correct, because the building for worship and ecclesiastical organization is only an external expression of the true identity of the Church. The identity of the Church is the community of people united in faith in Jesus Christ.⁴ Communion is a very important word that defines the identity of the Church, both in the congregation's relationship with one another and the congregation's relationship with God.

In the New Testament, the Church is represented by several images: the family of God, the bride of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, and other images. A professor of Christian theology, Sung Wook Chung, argued that from the many images of the Church, there is one picture that can unite the others, namely the image of the Church as the body of Christ.⁵ The church is referred to as one body that has Christ as its Head, and as part of the body of Christ. Each congregation is seen as members of the body who have different spiritual gifts, but with the same goal, namely to build each other up and love one another (1Cor. 12). This metaphor explains the nature of the Church as a community of faith, where the community's fellowship with God is described by the relationship of the members

⁴ Gerald Bray, *God Is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012).

⁵ Sung Wook Chung, *Belajar Teologi Sistematis dengan Mudah* (Bandung: Visi Press, 2011).

of the body to Christ, the Head of the Church; and the relationship of the church to one another is described by the relationship of one member of the body to other members of the body, who are different but need each other.

In communion with God, the Church is called to worship. Worship is a form of service from the people to God. Paul advised the Corinthian Church to sing hymns with gratitude in the heart to God (Col. 3: 16). Worship is not just to strengthen the faith of the congregation as a preparation for other things, however, worship in itself is a fulfillment of God's main purpose for the Church. The belief that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth provides a basis that worshipping God is not an option, but an obligation of every human being.⁶

The congregations are commanded to always give themselves filled with the Holy Spirit and live praise and worship to God in their daily lives (Eph. 5: 16-19).⁷ Worship is a visible expression of the church's mystical union with Christ which is intimate, vital, and spiritual; through which each of God's people can find the strength to live a life that is blessed by God. The images for the Church in the New Testament strongly reflect the church's mystical union with Christ. For example, the depiction of the Church as the family of God emphasizes God's relationship as Father to His people, as the bride of Christ emphasizes Christ's intimacy with His people, and as a temple of the Holy Spirit emphasizes how the person of the Holy Spirit is powerfully indwelling each congregation. Besides these three images, there is also a picture of the vine and its branches, which

⁶ Tony Salurante dkk., "A Virtual Sacred Space: Some Theological Considerations," dalam *2nd International Conference on Social Science, Humanity and Public Health*, vol. 645 (Dordrecht: Atlantis Press, 2021), 144–46.

⁷ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: IVP Press, 2004).

explains how the church is like branches that cannot live without depending on Christ who is the vine (John. 15: 5).

In addition to the form of people's service to God, worship is also a form of community fellowship between one another. The Gospel is first given not to individuals, but communities and the Church as a community of faith responds to the Gospel collectively through worship. When a person comes to worship God, he or she is spiritually united in faith to the entire community of believers still living on earth and those with Christ in heaven. That is why Hebrews 12: 22-24 explains that when worshipping, the congregation enters the presence of God along with all the other congregations whose names are recorded in heaven and with all the angels before Christ. This picture describes a spiritual unity that unites everyone who worships God in pure faith.⁸

In the New Testament, the term "worship" comes from the Greek word *latreia* which means "to serve". Paul uses this term in Romans 9: 4 to refer to the Old Testament rite of sacrifice; similarly, in Hebrews 9: 1, 6, the word refers to the sacrificial offerings made by the priest in the temple. But in Romans 12: 1, *latreia* is expressed in the form of a life offering which is understood as a Christian call to serve God. This is because Paul views the whole Christian life as a service to God.⁹ The term "worship" in the New Testament refers primarily to a Christian lifestyle rather than a specific liturgical practice.¹⁰

Although understanding worship in a broader sense is very important, worship must also get actual expressions that are tangible in daily practice.

⁸ R. C. Sproul, *What is the Church?* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2013).

⁹ Frank C. Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt22h6t80>.

¹⁰ Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

Therefore, in Revelation 7: 15 and 22: 3, the term worship, which comes from the Greek word *proskynesis*, finds its bodily expression in the form of the worshipers bowing down in the presence of God and the Lamb. The early church very often held meetings to eat together. Although terms like "worship" and "liturgy" may not have been clearly defined at the time, they clearly pray, worship, and give thanks together at one table. These gatherings to eat and worship together were very important, even according to *lathrop*, the emergence and development of the early Church as an influential movement was the result of the meal fellowship.¹¹

In Acts 2, it is explained that in table fellowship, the early Church was devoted to the teaching of the apostles and was active in preaching the Gospel. These worship practices then become customs regulated in religious rites. And when these practices continue to be carried out communally in public, these worship practices become standard and can be referred to as "liturgy".¹² Some of the manifest activities of the Christian liturgy in the New Testament are as follows: eating together (1Cor. 10: 16-17); baptism (Acts 2: 41); fasting (Acts 13: 2-3); praying (Acts 1: 14); teaching or evangelizing (Col. 3: 16); and helping the poor (Gal. 2: 10; Jam. 1: 27). All these forms of practice are expressed through words, body movements, and the use of certain objects.¹³

This corresponds to the embodied nature of the body of Christ. Although the body of Christ is a spiritual community of faith, the expression of that spirituality must always be tangible and visible as a Christian witness. The Church must live this understanding by reflecting Christ's love for the world with concrete

¹¹ Gordon W. Lathrop, *The Four Gospels on Sunday: The New Testament and the Reform of Christian Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

¹² Senn, *Introduction to Christian Liturgy*.

¹³ McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective*.

actions. The church must be the feet and hands of Christ so that the world can feel the love of Christ through God's mission carried out through the Church. As Matthew 9: 35-36 describes Jesus' four services on earth: teaching, evangelizing, healing, and giving to the needy; likewise, the Church is called to live Christian spirituality that is embodied in those four modes of service.¹⁴ Thus, it can be concluded that although the nature of worship is spiritual, the true scope of worship is not limited to spiritual things that occur within the Church, but also includes how the Church expresses the love of Christ outside the Church, through tangible and visible actions (see Jam. 1: 27).

Imagining the Post-Pandemic Church

The picture of the church after the pandemic can be said to be still vague. However, theological imagination is a very important practice for ecclesiastical life today. Theological imagination is not a mere intellectual practice, but a reflection upon theological visions based on the Bible, Christian tradition, and a Christian's personal experience with God. Theological imagination provides an ideal picture of the world and how the church should live today as God's people. Ecclesiology or Church doctrine itself is the articulation of a theological imagination of what the church means and how the Church should live as God's people. In addition to ecclesiology, a sound theological imagination must contain strong eschatological elements. Without a clear and strong vision of hope for the future, the ideal life of the Church for today is also difficult to imagine. Eschatological imagination, which is a picture of God's plan for the entire universe of His creation, from creation to re-creation, provides an impetus for the

¹⁴ Chung, *Belajar Teologi Sistematika dengan Mudah*.

Church to serve God and all of His beloved creation. Through this service, the eschatological hope is expressed by God's people in a bodily expression; be a witness to the public outside the church.¹⁵ Theological imagination is not an invitation to enter the world of imagination or fantasy but refers to what McGrath calls the *imaginarium* in the Christian tradition, namely a capacity to see the reality that has been transformed by repentance (*metanoia*), using imagination and common sense to see work of God in the world from the right perspective.¹⁶

The term "New Normal" and the lack of emphasis on God's renewing grace when imagining the post-pandemic condition of the church is very unfortunate. The church is an eschatological community which means that the church is a community united in one hope in God. From this eschatological perspective, the Church is a community called to be a witness to the hope that God's grace will continue to renew and restore creation, including from the Covid-19 pandemic. The word "post" in the term "post-pandemic" itself implies optimism that this pandemic will end, and the task of the church is to take part in that optimism and contribute to expressing that optimism within the framework of sound Christian theology.

Neo-Calvinism is a Christian theological tradition that emphasizes that God's grace does not destroy nature, but renews and restores. This theme is very central in the thought of the theologians of Neo-Calvinism, such as Abraham

¹⁵ Scott MacDougall, *More than Communion: Imagining an Eschatological Ecclesiology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

¹⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of A Christian Natural Theology* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).

Kuyper and Herman Bavinck.¹⁷ According to Kuyper, we cannot understand the richness of God's grace if we do not understand how it permeates the entire universe of God's creation. Grace and creation are interrelated and inseparable. Christ's work is not only restoring the soul of the believer, but also the body of the believer, even the entire creation. The pinnacle of Christ's work is not the salvation of the souls of believers alone, but Christ's throne in the new heaven and the new earth.¹⁸

The complete restoration and renewal of all creation will only be achieved at the end of time, when God makes the entire creation into a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21). However, this does not mean that the church is called to wait passively for the renewal. Instead, the church is called to take an active part in God's work of renewing all creation. In other words, there is a spiritual power, given by God to the Church to be God's agent of renewal. Bavinck stated that the Church must be a witness to God's renewing power in all spheres of life: the realm of the arts, the realm of science, the realm of the family, the realm of government, and in society at large. The church must have a desire that all spheres of life are subject to the principles of God's Word.¹⁹ The church must join God's mission to the world by seeing how the power of God's grace works among architects, artists, and politicians alike. As part of the body of Christ, every believer is called to work for the welfare of the city in which he lives, until the

¹⁷ David Kristanto, "Is the Creation under Destruction?: Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck on New Creation," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 19, no. 2 (28 November 2020): 189–200, <https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v19i2.394>.

¹⁸ Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World Vol. 1*, trans. oleh Nelson D. Kloosterman (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2015).

¹⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume*, ed. oleh John Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

Kingdom of God reaches its full fulfillment.²⁰ The task of the Church as the body of Christ is to translate the Christian hope of God's restoring grace into a bodily expression, both in internal service to fellow believers and in service to the world outside the Church.

As an agent of God's renewal, the Church is also called to continue to improve itself and to continue to reform itself. The church must also continue to ask God for the power of God's grace to continue to renew His church. Without God's renewing power, the Church would be dead and lose its spiritual authority. One of the things that must be renewed in the internal Church is ecclesiastical worship. The Covid-19 pandemic has dealt a hard blow, where the church, in its unpreparedness, was forced to practice physical distancing and worship online. Despite going through a fairly long and not easy process, in the end, the Indonesian government and church leaders agreed to choose the technology path in carrying out worship.²¹ In the post-pandemic state, the church will no longer experience this "compulsion". The way ecclesiastical worship is carried out will be wider than usual, some of the options available to the Church at that time are to continue to carry out online worship, return to on-site worship, or run both, which is also known as a hybrid. In addition to thinking about the three options, the reduced ecclesiastical activity during the pandemic should be used by the church as a time of reflection and self-improvement for future post-pandemic services.

Christians need to reflect on whether the pandemic has made the Church a better community of faith or has caused the Church to experience a spiritual

²⁰ Michael J. Berry, "Re-Imagining Ecclesiology: A New Missional Paradigm for Community Transformation" (Ph.D Diss., Portland Seminary, 2021).

²¹ Amos Sukamto dan S. Panca Parulian, "Religious community responses to the public policy of the Indonesian government related to the covid-19 pandemic," *Journal of Law, Religion and State* 8, no. 2-3 (2021): 273-83, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22124810-2020006>.

decline. In other words, the emphasis on the need to return to a physical worship fellowship in post-pandemic conditions should not be judged as merely returning to what happened in pre-pandemic conditions; rather, it should be seen as a new opportunity to apply the good things that were obtained when the Church reflected during the pandemic, to revitalize Christian worship in post-pandemic conditions.

A Liturgy of Thanksgiving

Liturgy is one of the most vital elements to revitalize post-pandemic Christian worship. As defined in the previous section, liturgies are worship practices carried out communally by the Church before the public in a standardized form. However, it is important to note that the liturgy is not a mere ordinance of worship, but is a mirror that reflects the message of the Gospel both to the congregation within the Church and to the world outside the Church. Thus, to revitalize Christian worship, it is important to consider what the liturgy of worship wants to reflect in the post-pandemic situation?

This article argues that the theme of thanksgiving is a very relevant theme for the Christian liturgy in post-pandemic conditions. When interviewed by *Times Magazine* about what the Covid-19 pandemic means according to the Bible, N. T. Wright replied that he could not explain it rationally. Instead, Wright points out that the tendency of Christians to demand rational answers to everything is evidence that many Christians have been influenced by Christian rationalism. Then, he also highlighted one tradition that starts to lose its influence in Christianity, namely the tradition of lamenting. During a world full of suffering and being hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, Christians are not required to give

rational explanations but to lament before God for the world.²² Wright's explanation is also useful for post-pandemic conditions. In imagining the world's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is appropriate for the Church to think of a liturgy to reflect thanksgiving to God. Just as the congregation must truly lament over the pandemic-stricken world, the congregation also needs to be truly grateful to God for the recovery that has occurred and also for the possibility to meet again in a physical worship fellowship in the post-pandemic time.

This liturgy of thanksgiving proposed here is different with thanksgiving in the regular worship service, because it emerges in a unique context which is the post-pandemic world, where the Church could freely gather on-site without any restrictions. And the content of thanksgiving is specifically dedicated to the grace of God that restores creation from the pandemic.

To apply the theme of thanksgiving to the liturgy, it is necessary to assure that every element in the liturgy of worship reflects how the congregation gives thanks to God. However, since this article has limited space to describe all the elements in the liturgy further, it will only discuss how the theme of thanksgiving is reflected through the two main elements of the liturgy, namely in the ministry of the Word and Holy Communion. These two elements are clearly seen in the liturgy of the early Church in Acts 2: 41-47; apart from two other liturgical elements that can be identified, namely baptism and praise.

For the ministry of the Word, the theme of thanksgiving could be reflected by using Bible texts such as Ezra 6: 13-22, which narrates the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem that once had been destroyed by the Babylonians. The book

²² N. T. Wright, "Christianity Offers No Answers About the Coronavirus," *Time*, diakses 21 Juli 2021, <https://time.com/5808495/coronavirus-christianity/>.

of Ezra begins with the story of Cyrus defeating Babylon in 539 BC, then he was moved by God to command the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Based on the decree issued by the king of Persia, the Israelites then returned to the city of Jerusalem to clean up the ruins of the city and began the construction of the Temple. However, the construction was confronted by resistance from the nations around Jerusalem. Although it was not easy, in the end, by God's grace and the tireless work of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the construction was able to start again in the time of King Darius and be completed around 520-516 BC.²³

Ezra 6:17 tells of the dedication of the new Temple in an atmosphere of thanksgiving. The author of the Book of Ezra paid great attention to the number of sacrifices offered at this dedication. They sacrificed one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and twelve male goats as a sin offering for the twelve tribes of Israel. The priests and Levites carried out the ordination ceremony correctly according to what was written in the Book of Moses.²⁴ The actual number of offerings mentioned is relatively less than the dedication of Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings 8:62-63. However, what I want to emphasize here is how the twelve tribes of Israel united to carry out the ceremony (symbolized by the twelve goats that were sacrificed) and how the sacrificial offerings were carried out according to God's Word. It expresses the desire of the Israelites to faithfully have faith in God who faithfully keeps His promises (Deu. 7:9).²⁵

Ezra 6: 20-22 describes how the Israelites celebrated Easter which was followed by a seven-day feast of unleavened bread. Actually, that day is not

²³ John Goldingay, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Exploring Text, Approaches & Issues* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

²⁴ Lester L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (London: Routledge, 1998).

²⁵ R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2015).

Easter, but Easter here is celebrated in connection with thanksgiving for the completion of the rebuilding of the Temple. The relationship of Easter with the dedication of the Temple is also seen in Hezekiah's time (2Ch. 30: 13-15) and Josiah's (2Ch. 35: 1). The connection between Easter and the feast of unleavened bread for seven days was made by Hezekiah alone. The connection between the two is done to express gratitude to God for His goodness through worship. In the context of Ezra, God's goodness is manifest through how He moved the heart of the King of Persia to decree the construction of the Temple, and how the work was finally completed well.²⁶

Holy Communion, also known as the Eucharist, is one of the central sacraments of the Christian life and is suitable for teaching the congregation on how to give thanks to God. The record of the rite of the Lord's supper is recorded in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26, where Paul exhorts the congregation to do it properly and appropriately, to follow the example and commandments of the Lord Jesus. Holy Communion is an active act of remembering Christ's death and resurrection based on what Christ did at the last supper.²⁷

Although the sacrament of Holy Communion was passed at the last supper, theological teachings about the meaning of the Lord's Supper were given by the Lord Jesus when He fed five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish. In that account (John 6), Jesus taught that He is the bread of life. Whoever eats ordinary bread will continue to experience death, but whoever eats the bread of life will receive eternal life. With this teaching, Jesus established

²⁶ Jacob M. Myers, *The Anchor Bible: Ezra-Nehemiah* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1q26s1p>.

²⁷ Martin Davie dkk., ed., *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Sytematic* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016).

himself as greater than Moses. For the forefathers of the Israelites ate the manna bread, yet they died; but whoever eats the living bread of the Messiah will not perish, but will have eternal life (John 6:48-50). It is this teaching that gives meaning to the sacrament of Holy Communion in Christian worship.²⁸

The connection between the sacrament of Holy Communion and the teaching of the bread of life can also be seen from the term "eucharist". The Eucharist comes from the Greek word *εὐχαριστέω* (*eukharisteo*) which means to give thanks. John 6: 11 explains how Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish, then gave thanks and distributed them to the crowds. The term "to give thanks" in the text uses the verb "*eukharisteo*".²⁹ To construct a liturgy with the theme of thanksgiving, the congregation needs to understand how the sacrament of Holy Communion is rooted in the active act of giving thanks to God in John 6: 11.

In 1Corinthians 5: 8, Paul exhorts the congregation to "celebrate" based on Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The commemoration of Christ's death is not an act of mourning, but a suggestion for celebration or "feast," because it is also accompanied by the memory of Christ's resurrection. In the context of the early Church, Holy Communion was administered on Sundays, providing a connection between Christian Easter (the resurrection of the Lord Jesus) and the joyful celebration of Holy Communion.³⁰ Holy Communion is not seen solely as a memory of a friend who has left the world but is also seen as a fellowship with the risen Christ. By taking part in the Lord's supper, the congregation believes that

²⁸ Lawrence Feingold, *The Eucharist: Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2018).

²⁹ Frederick William Danker, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

³⁰ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

they have taken part in the new creation. In addition, Holy Communion is also celebrated as a form of proclamation that the resurrected Jesus will come again in glory.³¹ According to Geoffrey Wainwright, an emeritus professor of theology at Duke Divinity School, by tasting the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper, the church has spiritually tasted the new creation in Christ.³² In the context of post-pandemic worship, the ministry of the Word based on the story of rebuilding the Temple in the book of Ezra 6 and understanding the sacrament of Holy Communion as an active act of giving thanks is very relevant for the construction of a thanksgiving liturgy.

CONCLUSION

The choice of Christian worship mode in post-pandemic conditions is not merely a pragmatic issue but is a theological reflection of an understanding of the essence of Christian worship. Christian worship is not about mechanisms or church buildings, but about the attitude of the heart that wants to be connected to God through worship and to fellow congregations, through an attitude that wants to complement and build one another. Although worship is about the attitude of the heart, the embodied or tangible expression of Christian worship needs to be reflected both within the Church and outside the Church. This became the basis for the liturgy of the early Church which always worshiped together and also performed a ministry of mercy to the poor. In post-pandemic conditions, the Church must think about how Christian worship can have a true essence and be reflected in an embodied spirituality. The post-pandemic church must be better

³¹ Ben Witherington III, *Biblical Theology: The Convergence of the Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

³² Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

than the pre-pandemic church. The pandemic period is a time given by God for the Church to reflect and improve itself to serve God and others in a better way. The deep reflection that the Church obtained due to the restrictions on Church activities during the pandemic needs to be implemented to revitalize Christian worship in post-pandemic conditions in the future. After the pandemic is over, the Church must reflect its gratitude through a liturgy of thanksgiving. Through that, God's grace which always renews and restores creation is expected to be reflected clearly, both to the congregation within the Church and to the wider community outside the Church.

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