

The Prelude to Worship

About 5-10 minutes before the worship service begins, music is played in the sanctuary. This is called the Prelude. Music is played to help people get into a more prayerful and worshipful set of mind.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture where we hear music when we go shopping, stand in elevators, and drive with the car radio on. Music often becomes background noise for us and doesn't always elicit a sense of calm and meditation. But that is what the prelude music is intended to do: to put us into a different frame of mind.

Technically speaking, the narthex (our fellowship area) is intended to be the place where people meet and greet one another. The sanctuary (where the pews are) is the area for worship. People can talk and meet each other in the sanctuary, but it is expected that they will keep their voices down and speak softly so not to interrupt those who want time to pray and hear God's Spirit through the music.

Preparing oneself for worship is an ancient biblical concept. In the Old Testament, the Temple of the Lord had a courtyard where people gathered together and sang psalms and said prayers before they entered the building to worship. In the New Testament, King Herod the Great expanded the Temple so it had three courtyards so even more people could worship there. There was the Jewish courtyard; a small courtyard directly in front of the Temple building where men who were heads of Jewish households gathered to enter together for worship. A larger courtyard was for the women and children who were not allowed inside the Temple building. This courtyard had ritual bathing pools where women ritually and symbolically cleansed themselves for God's forgiveness and there were psalms sung and prayers said. The largest courtyard was called the "Gentile courtyard". This was for Jewish men and women who were not from the Israel area who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem from foreign lands to worship God. These men were not allowed inside the Temple to worship, but were

allowed to give tithes and sacrifices for their family and community and there were large bathing pools for women and men to ritually purify themselves. The Gentile courtyard was where Jesus spent most of his time at in the Temple.

Read Psalm 150.

- This psalm was traditionally sung in the Temple courtyard.

Read Job 33:30-33.

- Being silent before God is an act of reverence.
- Prayer is not just talking to God. It also involves listening for God's presence.

Read Mark 11:15-19.

- The Cleansing of the Temple took place in the Gentile courtyard.
- Jesus was angered by people treating it as a marketplace to cheat visitors out of their money for tithes and sacrifices. It was to be a place to set your hearts on God.

Read all of John 9.

- This also took place in the Temple courtyard where even the blind and deaf were welcome.

Conclude with your own personal prayer. Try sitting in silence and concentrating on the name of Jesus for five minutes. All of the other thoughts that come up are to be offered to the Lord for forgiveness and healing.