

Sermon – 08/28/22
(The Lord's Supper)

Text – 1 Corinthians 10:16

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

Theme – “Who’s Hungry?”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we will finish our yearly re-examination of the catechism with the Sixth Chief Part: The Sacrament of the Altar. In many ways, this sacrament is the crown jewel, the cherry on the top, the pinnacle of all the Means of Grace. Not because it is better, or more important, or gives extra grace. But rather because it is a foretaste of the eternal banquet of heaven. So, today we will ask — and answer — the question: “Who’s Hungry?” (pause)

On His last night on earth before His crucifixion, Jesus gathered His disciples and there gave them His last will and testament. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and said: *“This is My Body, which is for you”*. He took the cup and gave it to them, saying; *“This cup is the new covenant in My Blood”*. In these two things — the bread and wine — Jesus gave His disciples everything that His body and blood accomplished for them: the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. And these same things are given to you and me when we come to the Lord’s Supper here, for as Jesus told the Twelve: *“Do this, in remembrance of Me”*.

As Christians we believe that Jesus is the Son of God come down from heaven to be our Savior. We believe that He took on our human flesh and blood, took on our human nature, took our place under the Law and its demands. We believe that He lived the perfect, sinless, holy life that God demands from us – the life we could never lead ourselves. We believe that — in His life — the Law and

commandments have been kept for us. We believe that Jesus then went to the cross, where He suffered the full penalty for all sins, enduring hell itself there, taking all that you and I deserve because of our sins. We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, has done everything to save us by His life and death and resurrection. We believe what that Gospel word teaches.

And yet sometimes that belief is a cold, dry, intellectual thing. Sometimes we know it with our heads, but we forget to ponder it, to **remember** it as Jesus tells us to do in this Supper. So let's take a moment today to do just that – to remember, to dwell upon what Christ Jesus has done for us in that life, death, and resurrection; to focus and recall what that Body and Blood which we eat and drink endured for us and for our salvation. (pause)

It was on the night in which He was betrayed that Jesus began this Holy Meal, this Sacrament of His Body and Blood. The night in which one of His own trusted Twelve would hand Him over to the Jewish priests and their mob who wanted Him dead and out of the way. The night in which the other eleven would prove their love and devotion to Christ Jesus by turning tail and running away. The night in which Simon Peter — that great rock of faith — would deny even knowing the Man, so frightened was he by a servant girl at the warming fire in the high priest's courtyard!

Jesus knew full well just what would happen that night, and the next day too. He knew of Judas' plot to betray and of Peter's weak-hearted denial and of the fearful desertion of the rest. And yet He tells them how He has longed to eat this meal with them, to share with them what He has to give them: His own Body and Blood, the same Body and Blood which would soon hang on a cross to pay for their sins as He endured their hell for them. But instead of being angry at what He knows they will do so soon, instead of giving up in the face of the infinite punishment He would soon have to face, Jesus rejoices to do this for them. He loves them, and He wants them to have the benefit, the salvation, which only His

Body and Blood can bring. And so it is that Jesus truly rejoices to give Himself for — and to — the disciples on the cross, but also in this Meal.

But, remember, it is not just for the Twelve that Jesus did this. It's also for you and me. It is your sins and mine — no less than Judas' and Peter's and the those of the other disciples — that caused Jesus to be arrested, to suffer, to die, to face hell on that cross. And so it is that Jesus rejoices to give His Body for and to us as well – on that cross and here, at this communion rail.

At Calvary Christ's body was broken for our salvation: He was beaten and mocked, He was whipped and crowned with thorns, He was nailed to the tree. The Lamb without spot or blemish is bruised and crushed and wounded and broken for you and me. The weight of sin which He bears so mars His body that He becomes hideous and repulsive; as Isaiah foresaw:

His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form so marred beyond human likeness...He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised and we esteemed Him not.

All that because of **us**, because of our sin and because of God's great love for us, the love which caused Him to give everything for our salvation!

And so it was that on that night, Jesus took the bread and broke it – just as He would soon give Himself over into the hands of those who hated Him and allow His body to be broken. Not that Jesus was unable to save Himself, but rather it was that He chose to save **us** by sacrificing Himself. And so Jesus took that bread, which *is* His Body, and broke it and gave it to the Twelve, saying: "*Take and eat, this is My Body given for you for the forgiveness of your sins*". (pause)

Take and eat, Jesus says. Eat. Just as that bread (which is His Body) is consumed, so is Christ Himself consumed on that cross. Chewed by God's justice, crushed by the Law, ground between the

jaws of the guilt of our disobedience, Jesus is consumed and eaten alive by the punishment that we deserve. There, on that cross, Jesus endures our hell as He is burned for us – just as the Old Testament sacrifices were burned, consumed, eaten by fire for the good and salvation of the Jews. Jesus is the True Sacrifice, the only One that can save – all those lambs and goats and grain offerings and all the other offering and sacrifices of the Old Testament only point to Him who *is* the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And that Lamb who was roasted and sacrificed on the cross – His flesh and blood we eat and drink in this Sacrament, for the forgiveness of our sins and for our life. (pause)

As Jesus blesses the cup, He gives it to the Twelve and says: “*This cup is the new covenant in My Blood*”. Gone is the old covenant of Law by which God had related to the Jews – on Mount Sinai God had promised that if the Israelites kept His Law and commandments, then He would bless them. That relationship was a two-way street: if Israel did something, then God would do something. But Israel could not keep the Law; none of us can. We are all sinners from conception, having inherited that fatal condition from our parents and they from their parents, all the way back to Adam and Eve.

But Jesus has come to replace that old covenant of Law with the new covenant of grace. This new covenant, sealed and given with His own blood, is a one-way affair: He does everything, we simply receive. Jesus lives for us, obeying the Law and commandments. Jesus dies for us, paying the price for our sins. Jesus rises for us, opening heaven’s gates to us and proving that He truly is the Savior. And all we do is believe. Believe it and it is yours – drink it in, swallow that sweet cup of salvation poured out with the Blood of the Lamb for *you*. (pause)

There is this old woodcut portraying the crucifixion which is truly a theological marvel: in the picture the Christ has died, the spear wound in His side is clearly shown, and from that wound pours forth blood and water (as St. John tells us in his Gospel). But two angels are also seen, catching the blood and water in chalices – the water for Baptism, the blood for the Lord’s Supper. From the crucified

Christ, then, comes that which gives life to God's people – life in these Sacraments and the forgiveness of sins they convey. God's love for you pours forth – it gushes forth, really – from Christ crucified. Indeed, nowhere is God's love more clearly shown than in the cross, in that crushed and bloody Man left alone to die with the weight of world literally upon Him. And it is His Blood, the Blood which flowed from His head and hands and feet and side, which is given you to drink today in the Supper. How do you know God loves you? Look in the cup and you will see. (pause)

But before Jesus gives the broken bread of His Body, or the cup of His spilled Blood, St. Luke tells us that Jesus gave thanks. Imagine that. Giving thanks for the suffering He was about to endure, the hell He was about to face, the desertion He was to suffer (from both God and man)! But such is His love for His Father and for us, that Jesus could and did give thanks. Thanks for the opportunity to share one last meal with His disciples, thanks for the life He would soon lay down for us, thanks for the love of His Father and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, thanks for the salvation and forgiveness He would bring about by His Self-sacrifice, thanks for being the Servant of all in His life and in His death.

How many of us thank God for unpleasant things, hard things, suffering things? Instead we cry out for deliverance, for rescue; we complain and ask why. But not so with our Lord. No, He *thanks* His heavenly Father, and then goes on to the cross! Such faith in His Father! Such love for us! And as we come to the Sacrament of the Altar, to the Lord's Supper, His very Body and Blood strengthen **our** faith and **our** love, so that we too can give thanks to God even when we are called to suffer and to serve because here we know His suffering and serving for us. (pause)

In his first letter to the church at Corinth, St. Paul says that whenever we eat and drink this Meal we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He returns. When you come to this communion rail, when you eat Christ's Body and drink His Blood here, you are making a proclamation to all the world, whether you realize it or not. You are confessing that you are indeed a sinner. And you are confessing

that Jesus Christ is your only Savior, that only in His flesh and blood, only in His work in living and dying *for* you, do you have any hope of eternal life. Here you take in your own mouth or hand the Body which was born of Mary **for you**, the Body which kept every single commandment **for you**, the Blood which was poured out on the cross to pay the price of sin **for you**, the Blood in which your robe has been washed and made white **for you**. (pause)

All that takes place here, in this humble setting, in this church in little far-off Crookston/Eldred, as you eat a tiny disc of bread and drink a thimbleful of wine. No eye can see it, but it truly happens. It *is* a miracle, yet one we so often take for granted because it happens here and because it happens so often. A new covenant. One in which your Savior gives YOU everything He won by His holy and precious death. One which is repeated, from Christ to YOU, every time that Supper is celebrated. A celebration which joins us to all those Christians who have gone before us, and all those who will come after us. A celebration which happens here, and in countless other churches all over the world. A celebration which connects us to our Lord Jesus Christ in the most personal way. A celebration which will continue without end, as we join the Bridegroom for His forever feast in heaven. No wonder we hunger for the Lord's Supper and its gifts! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Wed — Hymn (“*Feed Thy Children, God Most Holy*” LSB #774)

OS — Offertory/Offering/Prayers

FE — Offertory/Prayers