

Evangelical Lutheran COMMUNION THESES

(Appendix to the Evangelical Lutheran Communion Theses SUMMARY adopted 8/31/2017)

In DETAIL ...

THESIS II

The Purpose of the Lord's Supper

⁴⁶ . . . “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,
⁴⁷ and that **repentance and forgiveness of sins** should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46–47 ESV)

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body **which is for you**. Do this in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:23–24 ESV)

²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, **all of you**, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for the forgiveness of sins**. (Matthew 26:27–28 ESV)

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins** and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8–9 ESV)

We confess that “These words, ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,’ show us that in the Sacrament **forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation** are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. . . . These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever **believes** these words has exactly what they say: ‘forgiveness of sins.’”¹

We reject all beliefs, teachings, and practices that diminish or deny the forgiveness of sins promised and given in the Sacrament, and likewise, that repentance and faith² are essential to a right reception of the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins.³

What does this mean? As Evangelical Lutherans we hold that this Sacrament is a means of God's grace essential to our faith as Christians, and thus it is of utmost importance that we eat and drink it as

¹ *Luther's Small Catechism*, CPH: St. Louis, 1986, p. 31

² *Concordia*, AC XII 3–5, 38. “³ Now, strictly speaking, **repentance consists of two parts**. ⁴ **One part is contrition**, that is, terrors striking the conscience through the knowledge of sin. ⁵ **The other part is faith, which is born of the Gospel [Romans 10:17] or the Absolution and believes that for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven**. It comforts the conscience and delivers it from terror.”

³ *Concordia*, Ap XII 60–63, 165–66. “‘With God's help,› we shall defend ‹to eternity and against all the gates of hell› that this **faith is truly necessary for the forgiveness of sins**, and so place it among the parts of repentance. . . . ⁶¹ Furthermore, . . . that **Absolution is received only through faith is proven from Paul, who teaches that the promise cannot be received except by faith** (Romans 4:16). **Absolution is the promise of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, it necessarily requires faith**. ⁶² **Neither do we see how the person who does not yield to Absolution may be said to receive Absolution. What else is the refusal to yield to Absolution but charging God with falsehood?** If the heart doubts, it regards those things that God promises as uncertain and of no account. So, it is written, “Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son” (1 John 5:10). ⁶³ . . . **Therefore, whatever receives the forgiveness of sins is correctly added to the parts of repentance.**”

29 Christ commands us and for the purposes for which He instituted it—forgiveness of sins, life, and
30 salvation.⁴ Likewise we hold that repentance and faith⁵ are prerequisite to receiving the forgiveness of
31 sins in the Sacrament.⁶ This repentance is for *all sins*, including those we are not aware of, as we
32 confess in the Lord’s Prayer, and those sins which we know and trouble us as we confess before the
33 pastor. “All sins” includes both sins against faith (false beliefs that depart from the doctrine and unity
34 of the Church), and gross sins (sins against God’s Law, or an ungodly life). The repentance and
35 forgiveness of *all sins* is essential to the integrity and unity of faith intrinsic to and expressed in the
36 holy Communion.

37 **THESIS II ... Therefore we hold that the purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to eat and to**
38 **drink the very body and blood of Christ under the bread and wine for the forgiveness**
39 **of sins, life, and salvation. Essential and prerequisite to receiving these blessings are**
40 **faith, and repentance of *all sins* of doctrine and life.**

⁴ *Concordia*, SD VII, 45, 570. ⁴⁴ Consider this true, almighty Lord, our Creator and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, after the Last Supper. He is just beginning His bitter suffering and death for our sins. **In those sad last moments, with great consideration and solemnity, He institutes this most venerable Sacrament. It was to be used until the end of the world with great reverence and obedience <humility>.** It was to be an abiding memorial of His bitter suffering and death and all His benefits. **It was a sealing <and confirmation> of the New Testament, a consolation of all distressed hearts, and a firm bond of unity for Christians with Christ, their Head, and with one another.** In ordaining and instituting the Holy Supper He spoke these words about the bread, which He blessed and gave: “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you,” and about the cup, or wine: “This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

Concordia, SD VII, 53, 571. ⁵³ Therefore, there is no doubt about the other part of the Sacrament. The words of Luke and Paul, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood,” can have no other meaning than what St. Matthew and St. Mark give: “This [namely, what you orally drink out of the cup] is My blood of the covenant,” **whereby I establish, seal, and confirm with you men this: My testament and new covenant (i.e., the forgiveness of sins).**

⁵ *Concordia*, SD VII 16, 565. ¹⁶ . . . Since St. Paul says even the unworthy partake of the Sacrament, they hold that the body and blood of Christ are also truly offered to the unworthy, and the unworthy truly receive them. This happens if the institution and command of the Lord Christ are observed. But such persons receive them to condemnation, as St. Paul says. For they misuse the holy Sacrament, because they receive it **without true repentance and without faith.** For it was instituted for this purpose, that it might testify that the grace and benefits of Christ are here applied to those who **truly repent** and comfort themselves **by faith in Christ.** They are incorporated into Christ and are washed by His blood.”

⁶ *Concordia*, AC XXIV 30–32, 49. ³⁰ But Christ commands us, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). Therefore, **the Mass was instituted so that those who use the Sacrament should remember, in faith, the benefits they receive through Christ** and how their anxious consciences are cheered and comforted.

³¹ **To remember Christ is to remember His benefits. It means to realize that they are truly offered to us.** ³² It is not enough only to remember history. (The Jewish people and the ungodly also remember this.)”