

July 29, 2012  
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Pentecost 9 (Catechetical Sermon #5)  
Lord's Supper: One Body, One Loaf

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Besides never being a plumber. I will also never be a pilot. You see pilots have quite a bit of responsibility on their hands. They are in charge of safely guiding their passengers through the skies and getting them to their destinations. Pilots before they take off have a check list of what they to do before they can depart. Making sure everything is right...if they forget to check one thing it could mean disaster in the sky and the lives of perhaps hundreds could be in jeopardy.

So it is with the Lord's Supper. Sometimes I feel like a pilot guiding dozens of people to their destination safely. As your pastor I have a great responsibility. Now I am not guiding you through the air...I am guiding you through life. I have the responsibility to visit you when you are sick or in need of spiritual care (when I know about it). I have the responsibility to forgive sins and also yes to withhold forgiveness when one is not repentant. I have the responsibility to call out people when they are in open public sin. I have the reasonability to baptize and teach. One of my biggest responsibilities comes right here at the Lord's Table. It happens when I admit you to the Lord's Table. Martin Luther writes this: "For we do not intent to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come." Pilots go through a checklist...and now I am going to give you a checklist to answer the question: Am I able to come to the Lord's Table?

The checklist we will go through today is this: what it is, what benefits are there, and who is to receive it.

First what is the Sacrament of the Altar? There are many church bodies out there that are not in agreement of what the Lord's Supper actually is. Many church bodies will tell you that it is only a symbol, that the bread and the wine are merely symbols and the meal is only a remembrance meal. What is the Sacrament of the Altar? It is the true body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine, which we Christians are commanded by Christ's word to eat and drink." Why do we say that it is the true body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? We say that because Jesus Christ said that it is. He said when he instituted the Lord's Supper on the first Maundy Thursday, "Take Eat, this IS my body." "Take drink, this IS my blood." As recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul. No matter who comes to the Lord's Table, whether they know it or not truly receives the Lord's Body and Blood.

Did you know that this little word "is" split the protestant church right down the middle. We are not like a former president who doesn't know what the word is means. The word is means exactly that...it is. Such as on Easter Morning when we cry out...He is Risen. Jesus Christ really is alive. It's not does it represent something that is alive. It's he really is alive. Scripture teaches us much when it comes to the fact that in, with, and

under the bread and wine, the body and blood are truly there. 1 Corinthians 10:16 says this: "IS not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?"

Now with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, they believe that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ and only the outward appearance remains and there is no longer bread and wine.

This is one of the Key issues of the Lutheran Church. In all things we want the Bible to speak for itself. As we have already stated, all four biblical accounts Jesus says, "This is my body, This is my blood. The bible is also clear that the bread and wine do not disappear but are also received in the Sacrament. It's like baptism...the water is still water...but a water connected with God's Word, much like the bread and wine, are still bread and wine, but when connected with God's Word they in a sacramental union are so much more.

Now what are the benefits of this eating and drinking? "For it is most necessary that the we know what we should seek and obtain there. This is clear and easily understood from the words just quoted, 'this is my body and blood, given and poured out FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.'" We go to the Sacrament because we receive a great treasure...the forgiveness of our sins. Why? It's because these words impart it to us!

The Sacrament is appropriately called food for the soul...it nourishes and strengthens the new creature. Luther writes: "For in the first instance, we are born anew through baptism. However, our human flesh and blood, as I have said, have not lost their old skin. There are so many hindrances and attacks of the devil and the world that we often grow weary and faint and at times stumble. Therefore the Lord's Supper is given as daily food and sustenance so that our faith may be refreshed and strengthened and that it may not succumb in the struggle but become stronger and stronger. For the new life should be one that continually develops and progresses."

In this Sacrament one clearly receives forgiveness of sins and from that life and salvation. For God has the power and the authority to place forgiveness of sins when and where he pleases and one of those places is in this Sacrament based on his Word alone.

And how can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? It's not just the eating and drinking that do these things...but it is that combined with God's Word which imparts the forgiveness of sins.

Now we have gone through the first two pieces of the checklist. We now know that the Sacrament of the Altar is the True body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in, with, and under the bread and wine and that it provides the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation to the one who believes.

Third, who can receive the sacrament? The answer to that question...everyone who comes to the altar of the Lord and receives the body and blood of our Lord, receives the Sacrament. The question really should be, who can receive the sacrament worthily?

1 Corinthians 11:27 says, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of our Lord."

Those that receive the sacrament worthily are those who have faith in these words, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. There is much to be said about this, for there is a subtext here that needs to be checked off.

The question sometimes comes up...do we have to fast before receiving the Sacrament. It is fine outward training...but God does not command such things for receiving the sacrament.

However, we are called to examine ourselves as St. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 11:28, "Let a person, examine himself, then, and so eat the of the body and drink of the cup." We are to examine ourselves to see if we are truly sorry for our sins, we believe in Jesus Christ and in His words in the Sacrament, we plan, with the Help of the Holy Spirit to change our sinful lives.

Are there times then we should refrain from the Lord's Table? Absolutely...when we are not sorry and refuse to amend our sinful ways.

When we are sorry and do amend our sinful ways we are welcome to come back to the Lord's Supper and receive that sweet nectar of Christ's forgiveness for us.

There is more to be said about who should not receive the Lord's Supper. Contrary to public opinion even in some aspects of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, not everyone can come to the table of the Lord. The table is not open for all, come as you please. For the Lord's Supper or as it is often called Holy Communion is also a testimony of faith. It's a confession of faith. It's a sign of unity.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake in of the one bread." And in Acts 2:42 "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer.

So in accordance with ancient and Biblical practices of the apostolic Christian church we follow the principles of close communion.

We have heard those words before, but what entirely do they mean? It focuses around the confession of faith. There are many issues in the church today that the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has its set principles as drawn from the Holy Scriptures.

First, we believe that the Bible is the Word of God, not that it contains the Word...but it is the word of God...as is recorded in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness."

Second, we hold to the teaching that women are forbidden to hold the office of the called and ordained pastor as recorded in 1 Timothy 2 "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man..." and also from the order of creation that God created man first.

Third, we believe, teach and confess, that homosexuality is a sin in the eyes of God and is not a morally neutral or acceptable lifestyle choice. It is a sin and needs to be forgiven like any other sin and one needs to amend from that sinful way and conform to the expressed will of God.

Fourth we know that God values all life and forbids the "Choice" of euthanasia and abortion.

Fifth, sexual intimacy outside the boundaries of marriage, including that indulged in by those living together also needs to be repented of and amended to conform to the expressed will of God.

Sixth, the lodges and clandestine nature of secret organization obscure and conflict with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Finally, The public doctrinal confession and teaching of an individual Christian's congregation and Church body ought to be in harmony with the Word of God before participation in the Lord Supper. For 1 Corinthians 10:18 says, "Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar."

These seven areas are just a token, but the main issues that come up when dealing with the thoughts of closed communion.

With those in mind we answer the question: Who must not be given the Sacrament. Those who are openly ungodly and unrepentant, including those who take part in non-Christian religious worship. Those who are unforgiving, refusing to be reconciled. They show thereby that they do not really believe that God forgives them either. Those of a different confession of faith, since the Lord's Supper is a testimony of the unity of faith. And finally, those who are unable to examine themselves, such as infants, people who have not received proper instruction, or the unconscious.

God has set this in place to protect you from eating and drinking condemnation on yourself. We continue to hold this practice here as we conform with the ways of Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the confessions of the book of Concord, and most importantly Scripture itself. These rules are set in place to protect you from harm.

For Pilots a checklist is a way to make sure that everything is checked before they take their plane into flight so as not to miss anything which could cause much harm to the people in his care. Scripture as well as the catechism provides pastors as well as the laity a checklist before coming to the table of our Lord to receive the body and blood of our Lord. Scripture provides us with this so that we do not cause much harm to ourselves...or in my case that I do not bring harm to the people in my care.

Remember, we are all sinful, we all need God's grace, but we must be willing to repent and amend our ways and receive the sweet nectar of God's saving forgiveness. Forgiveness that he won for us on the cross so many years ago.

Here we who are broken and contrite sinners will come and are welcome at the table of the Lord to receive God's forgiveness that was won for us on the cross. In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.*