

This Supper is the Lord's

✠ To give in His remembrance (vv.23-26)

✠ To bless with His worthiness (vv.27-29)

In the name of Jesus, our Savior and our Brother, dear fellow disciples:

“Go ahead and try it. Just make sure I’m not around when you do.” That’s what my Dad used to tell me if I asked about doing something foolish. When I’m not around, go ahead and test how strong family values are in our culture. We’re so scattered from the dinner table that people think we don’t care about eating together. But you can test the reality in a restaurant. Find a large group of people you’ve never seen before, and just sit down and start eating. See what they do. In Minnesota they might even be polite at first. But some places in our country you might be lucky to wake up on the sidewalk out front.

If our American culture has certain rules of engagement for family meals, is it any wonder that on Maundy Thursday our dear Lord Jesus chose His words very carefully? Is it a surprise that Christ’s holy Apostle Paul spoke very directly about abuses among the Christians in Corinth? He said their meetings did *“more harm than good.”* (1 Corinthians 11:17) This is not just any meal. **This Supper is the Lord’s...**

✠ To give in His remembrance (vv.23-26)

Some meals are very important, like the reception after a wedding. Some couples have to lock down their cards. Hollywood’s movie, *Wedding Crashers*, is not too comical if someone walks in and helps himself to your wedding gifts. Recently, some brides borrowed a bird cage for loved ones to place their cards. With relatives from both sides, who knows if a stranger might be from the other family?

Now what if the special meal was for someone’s funeral when his will would be read for all to receive their family legacy? Whoever read the will would not be able insert his own phrases and personal opinions. Family elders would make sure. Judges might need to enforce the will of the deceased. To make a legal will requires precise and simple language that means the same to everyone.

Can you see why Paul is so clear and specific when he deals in the Lord’s Name with Communion problems back in Corinth. **This Supper is the Lord’s**, so Paul writes, *“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 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.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”*

People cannot remember what they have not learned. This is why we take so much time with our own children in two years of Catechism class to teach them what Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection mean for them. When they learn our Savior’s words about His Holy Supper just the way He spoke them, they simply believe what He says without question. Churches and denominations have tried to hard to explain or understand some other way, *“This is my body....This is my blood.”* But faith receives the words as simply as you receive the bread or the cup from the pastor. One frustrated pastor said, “No matter how many times I tell them this only represents Christ’s body and blood, they keep believing it is!” Thank God that Jesus’ disciples believe what He says. That’s faith!

The Lord’s instructions about His Supper are different from what He says about Baptism. There Jesus says to give the Sacrament of Word-powered water to all nations, literally, *“all ethnic groups,”* without distinction of age. Jesus’ instructions show that God brings people into His family through Baptism. But only Jesus’ disciples were gathered that Maundy Thursday evening to eat the Passover which was only allowed for Jews. Family restrictions applied. Even more than being members of

Christ's family by faith, we need to be able to remember and clearly proclaim His death until He comes. We need to understand how Christ's death shows us the seriousness of our sin and the certainty of our His forgiveness. Even those who have been instructed may lose this cognitive ability while suffering from a coma. **This Supper is the Lord's – To give in His remembrance, and...**

† **To bless with His worthiness (vv.27-29)**

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.” If someone thinks he's worthy because he's been pretty good, he's missing today's Second Lesson: ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....”*** (Romans 3:23 NIV84) The most religious athlete still falls short of God's perfection and lands in the deep, dark valley of sin that separates us from God. We need to trust the other righteous that comes from God and is received by faith. ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 3:23f NIV2011)

Permit to read one of my favorite Luther quotes about this other righteousness that God gives:

It is also [the devil's] habit to set against us those passages in the Gospel in which Christ Himself requires works from us and with plain words threatens damnation to those who do not perform them. If here we cannot distinguish between these two kinds of righteousness; if here by faith we do not take hold of Christ, who is sitting at the right hand of God, who is our life and our righteousness, and who makes intercession for us miserable sinners before the Father (Hebrews 7:25), then we are under Law and not under grace, and Christ is no longer a Savior. Then He is a lawgiver. Then there is no salvation left, but sure despair and eternal death will follow.

“...When I have this righteousness [from God, by faith – Romans 3:21ff] within me, I descend from heaven like the rain that makes the earth fertile. That is, I come forth into another kingdom [that of my Lord Jesus Christ], and I perform good works whenever the opportunity arises. If I am a minister of the Word, I preach, I comfort the saddened, I administer the sacraments. If I am a father, I rule my household and family, I train my children in piety and honesty....In short, whoever knows for sure that Christ is his righteousness, not only cheerfully and gladly works in his calling but also submits himself for the sake of love to magistrates, also to their wicked laws, and to everything else in this present life – even, if need be, to burden and danger. For he knows that God wants this and that this obedience pleases Him.”¹

One more thing our Lord says **To bless with His worthiness:** ***“A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.”*** We have Confession and Absolution to help us examine ourselves. And with the wisdom God gave him through the Word, Martin Luther adds:

“We must turn our devotions and thoughts to our conduct toward our neighbor, and examine ourselves in this mirror with all seriousness. The sacrament is to act upon us so that we may be transformed and become different people. For God's word and work do not intend to be idle, but are bound to produce great things, [i.e.] set us free from sin, death, and the devil, and every kind of fear, and make us servants even of the least among men on earth, and this without the slightest complaint on our part, rejoicing rather to find someone in need of our help, and fearing only lest after receiving so much we may not apply it all. Whenever the Lord's Supper fails to produce this result there is reason to fear it has wrought injury....If you experience nothing, go to God and tell him of your shortcomings and troubles; we all must do the same thing as long as we live, for...not one of us is perfect.”²

This Supper is the Lord's – To give in His remembrance, To bless with His worthiness. May our Lord and Savior ever keep it so among us that we may receive our legacy of grace in Him. Amen.

¹ *Luther's Works*, American ed., (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 26:11f.

² *Sermons of Martin Luther*. J. N. Lenker, ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, re-printed 1988, Vol. II, p.214.

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