

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Date: February 27, 2022

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Exodus 12:1-14

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Gospel Reading: Mark 14:12-25



Sermon Text: Mark 14:12–25

Sermon Title: What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

Introit: Psalm 119:98-104; Antiphon: Psalm 119:97

Hymns:

LSB 710 – The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want

LSB 527 – O Savior Precious Savior

LSB 582 – God's Word is Our Great Heritage

LSB 618 – I Come, O Savior, to Thy Table

LSB 955 - Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

LSB 634 – The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord

Songs:

I Love You Lord

Father Make Us One

Come to the Table

Child of Love

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Prayer and Praise I

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Mark 14:12–25

And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.” They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” He said to them, “It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

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Grace to you and peace in Jesus' name. Amen.

Today, as we continue our trek through the Catechism, we begin with our study and understanding of the Lord's Supper. Throughout our work we've been looking through Luther's Small Catechism. We use that book not only because of what is in it, but also because of the way the material is presented in that book. Luther was able to teach this information in a way that is clear, and a way that makes sense. It is not high academic speech. Luther used simple language to explain very lofty subjects.

At the beginning of this series I explained a written language is the way we draw sounds. I helped you understand when you read that book you are hearing Martin Luther's voice with your eyes. So for a moment I'd like you imagine Luther is hear right now, as a guest preacher, to help you understand this subject.

Imagine his voice: He might start out by saying, "Good morning. Today we are going to talk about the Sacrament of the Altar."

"What's that?" you might ask.

"It is Christ's Body and Blood."

"What do you do with it?"

"What do you think? You eat it."

"Eat it? You mean really eat Jesus' real Body and drink Jesus' real Blood?"

"You really eat it."

"How do you know?"

"Jesus said so.¹"

You see Luther's Catechism has great value not only because of what it says, but because of how it says it. Listen to how it speaks to you.

What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink.²

How do you know? (...or *Where is this written?*)

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul

1 John 6:55-56

2 Luther's Small Catechism

write: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and... took the cup...³”

You see Luther’s Catechism is valuable not only because it tells us the truth, but also because it tells us the truth in a way that is helpful and easy to understand. It is helpful to: teachers, students, pastors and parents. The Catechism is helpful for all the people of God. It is helpful to people who have questions like:

- † “Is this really Jesus’ Body and Blood?”
- † “What about the bread and wine?”
- † “What about faith?”
- † “What does it mean to receive the Sacrament in a worthy manner?”

Since this book is so useful and helpful for you to understand how Jesus saves you and feeds you let’s look at what Luther teaches us. The first thing to notice is that he organized this section around three questions.

1. What is it?
2. What is it for?
3. Who is it for?

What is it? It is Christ’s Body and Blood, but that brings up a couple other questions.

What do you do with it?

and

Are you sure?

It is given to eat and to drink. Jesus Christ gave His Body to save us from sin, death and the devil. He poured out His Blood to pay for our sins. In this Sacrament Jesus gives His Body and pours out His Blood for us to eat and drink. That is what He did, and that is what He says. Once we understand that we can answer other kinds of questions.

For example:

What about the person who doesn’t believe?

What if they think the whole thing is a joke. Are they receiving Jesus’ real Body and real Blood? Yes they are.

It is Jesus’ real Body and Blood not because of your faith but because of Jesus. It is Jesus real Body and Blood not because you say so, or because I say so, but because Jesus said so. So, in faith, or faithlessness, this Meal is still this Meal. It is still Jesus’ Body. It is still Jesus’ Blood.

*What happens if you don't eat it?
What happens if you don't drink it?
What if I take it home and put it in a box?
What if I make a necklace out of it, or put it on a chain and hang it from my
car mirror?*

To answer those questions listen to Jesus. What did He say to do with it?
“Take and eat.”
“Take and drink.”

If you don't, it's like playing with your food. You can do it but you'll have to contend your mother because that's not what it's for. So that's what it is. It is Jesus' Body and Blood for us to eat and drink.

Then comes the second question: **What is it for?**

Is it just something to do?
Is it given to us just to test our faith, to see if we will do what we are told?
What is it for?
What's the point?
What's the purpose?

It is to give to you for the forgiveness of sins. It is to assure you of eternal life. It is to promise you a future of salvation. That is shown to us by the words of Holy Scripture,

“...given and shed, for you, for the forgiveness of your sins.”⁴

In this Sacred Meal forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given to us through these words.

With that understanding you can answer questions like: Is that all there is to it? Well it is not like eating broccoli and brown rice. Whether you know it or not eating broccoli and brown rice are good for you. Is the Sacrament good for you if you do not know what it is? The answer is, “no.”

Yes it still is Jesus' real Body and real Blood, but it is not the equivalent of spiritual broccoli and brown rice. You have to listen to the Words, “given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.” The benefit is offered to all people to eat and drink. All are invited, just as God desires all people to be saved,⁵ but not all people are saved.

4 Matthew 26:28

5 1 Timothy 2:4

This Sacrament is beneficial only for those who know what it is for. It is for those who hear the Word of God and keep it;⁶ who hear the promise of Jesus and believe it. They are the ones who are benefited by it, not only in their mouth but for their faith. That is what it is for. Not just to fill your stomach, but to fill your faith, to feed your soul, to give you life.

That brings us to the third question: **Who is it for?** If this is such a great and powerful thing who should get the Body and Blood of the Son of God? If it gives such great things like: forgiveness, life and salvation, who is worthy of it? Luther writes:

The person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”⁷

Now it becomes easier to answer questions like: Who is worthy?

And

What is worthiness?

Worthiness is not a matter of being right, or having a right, but rather being repentant and declared righteous before God. You see when you get a passing grade on a test it is because you earned that right by being right when answering the questions right, on the test. When you get a paycheck it is because you earned that right when doing the work required and doing the work right. It is not that way with Jesus’ Body and Jesus’ Blood.

If that was how we measured worthiness no one would be worthy. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.⁸ This is Jesus’ Body and Blood. This is the Body and Blood of the very Son of God. It is for forgiveness, life and salvation. No one who has ever sinned has the right to such a Precious Gifts.

True worthiness is not a matter of being right or having a right. It is a matter of repentance which makes you righteous. The only ones who are worthy are those who know that they are not worthy, and never could be. To put it the way Jesus did:

The first shall be last,
and the last shall be first.⁹

To be worthy is to know none of this is yours, except that Jesus says so. It is only yours because Messiah has come and placed into your mouth the precious gift

6 Luke 11:28

7 Luther’s Small Catechism

8 Romans 3:23

9 Matthew 20:16

of life giving salvation. His Body and His Blood, for the forgiveness of your sins, for the hope of everlasting life, for the absolute assurance of eternal salvation from the horrors of Hell.

This Sacrament is here, for you, to give you hope in a hopeless world and to free you from doubt in a world that loves to breed doubt in your mind. This Sacrament is here to feed you and nourish you on the one thing this world was never able to corrupt: Jesus, the holy Christ of the living God. The One whom you meet here in His Sacred Supper.

When you meet Him here remember He has made you worthy, and here hear His Words: This is given “for you.”

Amen.

**Proclaim God’s Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God’s love and
Serve all people**

