

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER – November, 2018

⁹And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.” Revelation 19:9

I had the joy of officiating at three weddings this past year and being invited to all their receptions. It’s a joy witnessing two people become one in Christ. However, while many are honored to be invited to a wedding, many love it more for the reception than the wedding itself. Why? The free meal, free drinks, and partying as they celebrate with the bride and bridegroom.

While I enjoyed the weddings and receptions this past year, I recognize that there is a bigger and better one coming. The “marriage supper of the Lamb.” This is the end-times banquet bash. All are invited who have been kept by God’s grace in the true faith, united to Christ as their bridegroom.

What a day to look forward to. We have the privilege of being invited to an everlasting wedding banquet with all the company of heaven. We will sing hymns and rejoice forever in the salvation won for us by the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, Jesus Christ.

Even right now, we have a glimpse, a taste of that eternal marriage supper. It’s right here each and every Sunday at our Divine Services! Christ lays out a feast before us every Sunday that our pastors distribute to us as stewards. His true body and blood is the delicacy each and every week. And by eating it, we receive great benefits. We are nourished, forgiven, strengthened to walk the walk of this journey called life. We are devoted! Devoted to His gifts we receive each and every time we gather. Devoted to a life together forever at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom which has no end. Thanks be to God!

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for being our bridegroom. We receive your supper now, faithfully devoted to you, and we look forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb forever with you. In Jesus’ name.

DEVOTED

Fully Devoted to Christ's Gifts



“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42



Board Devotions for Christ Lutheran Church

2018

By Pastor Jonathan Huehn

As you prepare for the Fully Devoted devotions this year in your board meetings, please review the major texts concerning the Lord's Supper: Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. Please use the notes in your *Lutheran Study Bible* to help guide you.

Also consider what our Lutheran Confessions teach: 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 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." (FC SD VII 44)

WHO IS WORTHY? – October, 2018

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29

How can LCMS Lutherans refuse the Lord's Supper to those who are not confirmed in the Lutheran church? Isn't that unloving? Before you try to answer that, look at the Lord's words you just read. That's where we get our answer. Some medicines can be helpful to some and have a terrible reaction for others. Some will even get sick and die if they have a severe enough allergy. Christ's true body and blood given for the forgiveness of sins is a strong medicine that's intended to bring healing and salvation. However, it can be very harmful, even lethal, if taken in an unworthy manner and without proper examination. If someone takes the medicine without recognizing that it is the true body and blood of Christ in this Sacrament, you see in 1 Corinthians 11 what could happen. This isn't just any meal, this is the meal of immortality. This is strong medicine.

Pastors who are stewards of the mysteries of Christ (the Sacraments) have a great responsibility then not to give what could be lethal to those who are at the Lord's Supper. Examination through catechism instruction is essential just like it is for anyone, even our 7th and 8th graders before they receive their first Lord's Supper. If a person can't examine themselves properly on their own, the Pastor must first do it for them by taking them through the Small Catechism. It would be unfair for a visitor from a non-Lutheran congregation to receive the Sacrament and not be properly instructed and required to believe Jesus' Word.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Grant us grace to always approach your table as poor sinners, hungering for your grace and trusting your Word, discerning the mysterious true bodily presence of your body and blood, so that we are not judged guilty, but worthy to receive. In Jesus' name. Amen.

OFTEN – September, 2018

²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:26

How often should I receive the Lord's Supper? That's a good question that many have pondered. The Bible doesn't say specifically. Some people will say, "Four times per year is how often Luther said to receive the Sacrament, right? That's good enough for me." But, that's not what Luther said. He wrote in the preface to his Small Catechism, "When someone does not seek or desire the Sacrament at least four times a year, it is to be feared that he despises the Sacrament and is not a Christian, just as a person is not a Christian who does not believe or hear the Gospel. For Christ did not say, 'leave this out, or, despises this,' but, 'Do this, as often as you drink it' (1 Cor. 11:25), and other such words."

Our Lutheran Confessions teach us to distribute the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day. That is, offer it every Sunday. Martin Luther himself was known to tell other pastors to give the Lord's Supper two times on Sundays and one time during the week if any members wanted to receive it.

We should certainly recognize the benefit in receiving this Sacrament every time it's offered to us. However, there is no mandate that you have to receive it every time you gather.

As often as you do partake, note that you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. This is another reason to receive this gift often. Even though you may struggle to proclaim the Gospel to unbelievers in your daily life, you do proclaim it boldly when you are a public witness in receiving it faithfully in Church every Sunday.

Prayer: Almighty God, help us to receive this Holy Supper as often as it's offered to us, so that we can continually proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DEVOTED! – February, 2018

⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42
What are you devoted to? Your spouse, kids and career are probably at the top of the list.

Are you devoted to your community?

Are you devoted to your church? In what ways are you devoted and not as devoted as you'd like? How can you as a leader in the church encourage others to be more devoted in receiving Christ's gifts? Are you setting a good example for your kids and your congregation?

As we focus this year on being fully devoted to Christ's gifts, we learn much from the Early Church. The first Christians were devoted to four things (teaching, fellowship (not coffee hour), breaking bread, prayers). These can essentially be broken down into two main focuses. They devoted themselves completely to the Service of the Word and the Service of the Sacrament. Sound familiar? They were fully devoted to receiving the Lord's gifts each and every time they gathered. Fully devoted to being in church, where the Holy Spirit calls them to be.

In our core values we are devoted to the same things as the Early Church. We must continually evaluate as boards if we are truly focusing on these values like we should? Are we devoting ourselves to nurturing disciples through the preaching of the Word and administration of the Sacrament? Are we devoting ourselves to catechizing/teaching the faith? Are we devoted to receiving the Lord's Supper, highly valuing what benefits and blessings we receive through this precious Sacrament each time we gather? By God's grace, and as we are led by the Holy Spirit in the Good News of His perfect life, death, and resurrection delivered to us through the Means of Grace, we will continue to be devoted. God grant it for Jesus' sake.

(Please discuss some of the questions above with your board members)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as you are fully devoted to us as your children, continue to encourage us to be fully devoted to faithfully receive all your gifts, that we may continue to be nurtured as your disciples in faith and respond in love toward our neighbor.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

REST – March, 2018

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Are you getting your rest? Are you getting a good night's sleep? With all the activities that fill our day and week, it's no wonder that we are a culture of people that are constantly tired and reliant on coffee, pop and other stimulants to keep us awake and functioning each day. We hardly have time to get the rest we really need, physically, emotionally and mentally. We daily battle an evil foe who will never give us any rest either. We are worn out by our conscience that is constantly trying to burden us. Where will we find the rest we need?

Jesus invites us to come to Him. We who are weary from the daily grind and weighed down with guilt over our constant failures find true rest in Him. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He bore the weight and burden and all our weariness on the cross. As He draws us to come to Him, he calls us to come and receive the rest we need by feeding us daily with his Word, and every Lord's day with His food and drink for our souls as we are given His true body and blood. This gives us rest and gets us through the week to come, giving us refreshment and encouragement for daily living. Thank Jesus for giving you these precious gifts that give you rest in Him.

As you find yourself weary and worn down in life, where are some places you look for rest? Are they always the best places to look? What is the best place to find true rest for your soul?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, as you call us to come to you for rest, help us to be fully devoted to finding that rest in your Word and Sacraments that will leave us refreshed and ready for service and to lead others to come to Jesus for rest. In Jesus' name. Amen.

PARTICIPATION IN JESUS – August, 2018

¹⁶ 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? 1 Corinthians 10:16

What things do you participate in? When you think of fellowship, do you first think of the coffee hour at church, having potluck meals together, and pizza at lock-ins with the youth? Is the fellowship hall the place where fellowship truly takes place? Or, is it somewhere else according to God's Word?

We are devoted to fellowship. Devoted to *koinoinia*. But, the Biblical definition of fellowship is different than what me might think. We are devoted to the participation in receiving the Lord's gifts in the body and blood of Christ. We are united together as one in Christ in this Sacramental mystery. The bread and wine that is consecrated in the words of institution is the participation that God's Word speaks of. The Lord's table is the true place of fellowship for us unworthy sinners to gather. We have fellowship together or participate in something so intimate and beneficial that we can't think of our week going by without it. For there is no way to get closer to Jesus than this participation He calls us to be a part of. Fellowship with Christ, fellowship with fellow believers, participating together in receiving this meal of forgiveness, life and salvation is what unites us. Let us receive this meal faithfully and often.

Prayer: My Lord and my God, guard your dear Christian Church against the seduction of the evil foe who would desire that we not participate often in this meal of unity and fellowship. Continue with us in your pure Word and Sacrament, and grant that therein we may seek and find the forgiveness of sins. In Jesus' name. Amen.

SATISFIED - July, 2018

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:6

What are you hungry for tonight? American, Chinese, Mexican, Thai, Indian? There are lots of choices. What are you thirsty for? Water, milk, juice, soda, or maybe an adult beverage?

Do you also hunger and thirst daily for righteousness as much as you hunger and thirst for the things above? Probably not. We desire other things in our daily lives more than the righteousness of Christ. Where is the longing desire for that which will never leave us hungry or thirsty again? Where is the longing for that which will make us truly satisfied?

Martin Luther wrote that there isn't a person who is better prepared for receiving the Lord's Supper than “a soul troubled by sins, death, and temptation and hungering and thirsting for healing and strength.” (AE 53:34)

In this sacrament is found a buffet and oasis of divine gifts that give us righteousness and satisfy us completely. We can't be truly satisfied with anything we could hunger or thirst for in our lives. Nothing will ever fulfill our cravings more than what Christ gives us to be truly satisfied, namely His perfect righteousness. All who believe in Christ have that righteousness already. It's imputed to us by grace through faith. You need not hunger or thirst anymore. Now you must hunger and thirst for a righteousness which you are to practice in your everyday life. Doing right for God and your neighbor. But you don't succeed very well in this, do you? Your Old Adam gets the best of you quite often. And so you continue to hunger and thirst until the Lord takes you home.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, give to me your grace that I may not hunger or thirst any more. Help me to hunger and thirst after righteousness in my whole life of living out my faith. Increase this hunger and thirst and satisfy it. Help me to do what is right in your sight and walk in your ways. In Jesus' name. Amen.

THE NEW PASSOVER - April, 2018

²⁶Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:26-28

The children of Israel were required to take an unblemished lamb and slaughter it according to the Lord's command. They were also required to take its blood and smear it on the doorposts and lintels of their homes. The blood spared them from the angel of death. The flesh of the lamb was then roasted and eaten.

On the evening of Christ's death on the cross for our sins, He instituted a new Passover for our benefit and blessing. He is fully devoted to us sinners in feeding us. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is the perfect unblemished Lamb who laid down His life so we could live. The wrath of the Father for the sins of the world was taken out on His only begotten Son who was roasted on a new altar, the cross. Hidden under bread and wine, we now eat the roasted body and blood of Christ and are spared. We continue to be devoted to receiving this precious gift that is poured out for the forgiveness of all our sins as often as we gather. Jesus is fully devoted to delivering forgiveness to us.

How much do you value the fact that Jesus instituted this new Passover for you to receive for the forgiveness of your sins? How do we as Lutherans value this new Passover more than other church bodies that don't trust Jesus at His Word when He says, “This is my body...blood?”

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you instituted this meal to continually lavish your grace upon us as we eat and drink your true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Help us by your Spirit to continue to value this Sacrament and receive it faithfully. In Jesus' name. Amen.

BLOOD AND WATER FROM HIS SIDE=LIFE—May, 2018

³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. John 19:34

Where do we receive our life from? Eve was taken from Adam's side. She received her life from his side. **"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."** Gen. 2:23

How does, the Church, the body of Christ receive her life? From the side of Christ who is the Second Adam. In death, life flows forth. In the sleep of death Christ brings life to sinners as the life blood and life giving water flow out from his lifeless body. It is from the elements of water and blood that flow from Jesus' crucified body that we find life today in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and in the Sacrament of the Altar. You, as the body of Christ today, are looked upon as Christ's holy bride and He says to you, "This (You) at last is bone of My bones and flesh of My flesh". And, you are called Church, because you were given life from the life giving blood and water that flowed from your Savior's side. Continue to come and receive the life giving blood with the body in the Lord's Supper and remember the life giving water daily that with the Word has covered you in Christ's righteousness.

What is the significance of water and blood pouring out of the crucified Christ?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your only begotten Son to become our substitute by becoming the Second Adam who died that He might pour out from His side the life giving water and blood. Bless us as we daily remember our baptism and weekly receive His body and blood poured out for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DO YOU SEE JESUS? - June, 2018

³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. Luke 24:30-31

After Jesus died, life seemed hopeless for the disciples walking on their way to Emmaus. The one they thought was the Messiah was brutally crucified, died, and was laid in a tomb. And so, they were off to their next destination in life. But, Jesus came to them without them recognizing who He is. They share with Him all that had happened. How does Jesus respond? He teaches them. He opens up all of the Holy Scriptures to them. He catechizes them. He helps them to understand how everything is fulfilled from Moses and the prophets. But Jesus doesn't only teach them. He goes and feeds them. He gives them what they need to see Him. Breaking bread, blessing them, feeding them. Sustenance from Jesus. Then they see Jesus.

How do we see Jesus? Preaching and teaching. Our Pastors preach and teach us, and open up the Scriptures to us to see Jesus in all of Scripture. We catechize you in the basics of the Christian faith so you continue to see Jesus in your daily life and are fed. We encourage you to come and eat with Jesus, be fed by Him where He is the host of the meal and also is the meal. Our eyes are opened too. We see Jesus every time we are devoted to receiving these precious gifts of His.

How has Jesus opened the Word for you to see Him in all His gifts that He gives?

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, open your Word and open my eyes as you reveal yourself to me, that I see you more and more clearly through the gifts that you desire to feed me with. In Jesus' name. Amen.