

The Lord's Supper

The Blessings of Weekly Communion

Introduction:

*In this Sacrament, we cling to and trust God's Word alone. Jesus does not lie to us or deceive us. Therefore, when He tells us the bread and wine are His body and blood, they are what He says. The key to understanding the benefit of the Sacrament is Christ's words "for you." What we receive in this Sacrament is a great "treasure": the forgiveness of sins. The whole Gospel is comprehended in this Sacrament and is offered to us through the Word, which promises that in and under the bread and wine we receive the body and blood that was sacrificed on the cross for our salvation. Those who believe the Words of promise receive the forgiveness this Sacrament promises. Luther urges Christians to receive the Sacrament frequently. Those who realize the enormity of their sin, how many dangers abound, and how great Christ's gifts are that are given in the Sacrament will receive the Lord's Supper as often as possible. This is precisely why the early Lutheran congregations began to offer the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day and on other festival days to those wishing to receive it (**Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions. McCain, p. 431**).*

Luther's Small Catechism (p.28):

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household

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.

Where is this written?

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

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?

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.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." 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."

Who receives this sacrament worthily?

Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."

But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require all hearts to believe.

- *Matt 26:26-29*
- *Mark 14:22-25*
- *Luke 22:18-20*
- *1 Cor 11:23-25*

As Christians, we confess that we receive the very body and blood of Christ—in, with, and under the bread and wine—in our hands and in our mouths. This is a profound wonder and unexplainable mystery.

Jesus wants to be with me and within me (**John 17:26; Matt 28:18-20**). In the Sacrament of the Altar, He gives Himself to me and pledges never to leave me or forsake me.

The Book of Concord

Note on Article X of the Lord’s Supper:

*By the time the Augsburg Confession was written, deep divisions had arisen among the various reformers concerning the Lord’s Supper. The Lutherans were very careful to distance themselves from those who reject that the body and blood of Christ are in fact truly present in His Supper and distributed to all those who eat and drink. **Transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or any other human speculation asks the wrong question: how is Christ present? Lutheranism has no theory or philosophical explanation of how Christ is present. Rather, Lutherans insist on answering the what of the Lord’s Supper. We believe, teach, and confess that of the bread, Christ said, “This is My body,” and of the wine, “This is My blood.” These are given and shed “for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:26–28). We reject any teaching that is contrary to our Lord’s Word (Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions. McCain, p. 35).***

ARTICLE X

The Lord’s Supper

¹ Our churches teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and distributed to those who eat the Lord’s Supper [1 Corinthians 10:16]. ² They reject those who teach otherwise (*Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions. McCain, p. 35*).

Chemnitz Questions and Answers:

The Lord’s Supper

248 What is the Lord’s Supper or the Sacrament of the Altar?

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

249 What are the Essential Parts of This Sacrament?

*One usually and rightly answers: Word and element. But these must be rightly explained. For, first, to the essence of this Sacrament belong the outward elements of bread and wine (for in the cup that Christ took there was the fruit of the vine, **Mt 26:29**). These elements are taken according to the institution and are separated from common use for the purpose of this Sacrament. Second, the word of institution of this Sacrament is added to those elements. And by virtue of that Word that which is present, offered, and received in the use of this Supper is not only bread, not only wine, but the body of Christ, which was given for us, and the blood of Christ, which was shed for us for the remission of sins. And what is more, the Word is added to the elements not only in the way in which Christ spoke it once at the first Supper, but as Paul says, **1 Co 10:16**: The cup of blessing which we bless, namely through the*

words of Christ which we repeat in the administration of the Lord's Supper and thus connect the bread and wine with the word of institution, so that in that Sacrament we have neither the element alone, nor the simple Word, but, as Luther says, the word is clothed in the element, and the element connected with the Word (Ministry, Word and Sacraments: An Enchiridion. Chemnitz, Martin, p. 120).

The Blessings of Weekly Communion:

The Question:

"Pastor if the Lord's Supper is everything that Scripture and the Catechism say it is, why don't we have the opportunity to receive it when we come for worship each week?"

Luther's Small Catechism:

Christ has not specified a particular timetable but invites us to come often to this Sacrament on account of the gifts He bestows here and our own great need. In the New Testament, the Sacrament was a regular and major feature of congregational worship, not an occasional extra.

- *Acts 2:42; 20:7;*
- *1 Corinthians 11:20, 33*

The Book of Concord:

¹ *At the outset, we must again make this preliminary statement: we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously keep and defend it. Masses are celebrated among us every Lord's Day and on the other festivals. The Sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved (Apology of the Augsburg Confession XXIV 1).*

1995 - LCMS in convention adopted Resolution 2-08A "To Encourage Every Sunday Communion."

WHEREAS, Our Synod's 1983 CTCR document on the Lord's Supper (p.28) and our Synod's 1986 translation of Luther's Catechism both remind us that the Scriptures place the Lord's Supper at the center of worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 11:20, 33), and not as an appendage or an occasional extra; therefore be it Resolved, That the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in convention encourage its pastors and congregations to study the scriptural, confessional, and historical witness to every Sunday communion with a view to recovering the opportunity for receiving the Lord's Supper each Lord's Day.

177 Year History of the LCMS:

For most of the LCMS 177 year history, the majority of congregations have not celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly. In the early 1900s, it was normal to celebrate Communion four times a year. In the 1950s and 1960s, monthly Communion was the prevalent practice. By the end of the twentieth century, most LCMS congregations were offering the Lord's Supper two weeks of the month.

Former LCMS President A.L. Barry:

We receive the Lord's Supper often because of how much we need what the Lord gives in His Supper. We dare never make a law about how often an individual "should" or "must" receive the Lord's Supper. But this is a separate question from how frequently Holy Communion is offered in our congregations. Our Lutheran Confessions make it clear that the Lord's Supper is offered every Lord's Day and on other days when there are communicants present (AC XXIV.34 and Ap. XXIV.I).

From the Beginning - Two Holy Treasures:

Since the beginning of the Christian Church (Acts 2:42), the "weekly gathering of God's people centered on a single serving of two holy treasures: Word and Sacrament."

Luther: *But if you say, “What, then, shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?” Answer, “For those who are of such a mind that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they put their hand into their shirt to check whether they have flesh and blood. And if you find that you do, then go, for your good.*

Martin Chemnitz

*Therefore, you ask, how often would be enough to have been a guest of this Supper? It is not for any man to give a specific answer to this, either with a number or with a certain measure, other than as often as a troubled conscience feels and recognizes that it needs those benefits that are offered in the Supper for comfort and strengthening. Consciences are therefore not to be forced but aroused to frequent use of this Supper by earnest admonition and by consideration of how necessary [and] likewise how salutary and profitable the use of this Supper is for us. But he that does not attend this most holy table thereby clearly shows that he is a Christian in name rather than in fact, namely that he is one who neglects and despises the command of his Savior, who says: Eat, drink, and do this as often etc (**Enchiridion. Chemnitz, Martin. p.129**).*

Luther and the Presence of Christ:

See, the bright rays of the sun are so near you that they pierce into your eyes or your skin so that you feel it, yet you are unable to grasp them and put them into a box, even if you should try forever. Prevent them from shining in through the window—this you can do, but catch and grasp them you cannot. So too with Christ: although he is everywhere, he does not permit himself to be so caught and grasped; he can easily shell himself, so that you get the shell but not the kernel. Why? Because it is one thing if God is present, and another if he is present for you. He is there for you when he adds his Word and binds himself, saying, “Here you are to find me.” Now when you have the Word, you can grasp and have him with certainty and say, “Here I have thee, according to thy Word.”¹

God’s Presence in the Old Testament:

God dwelt in the midst of His people in specific places in the Old Testament. Moses knew God was everywhere, but if you would have asked Moses if God was ever in a specific place and time, Moses would have said yes. Much the same way if someone asks where God is today, we can tell them specifically where we find God. His spoken Word, which is Jesus, in the waters of Holy Baptism and in the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper.

➤ **Exodus 3:2, 14; 13:21; 19:18; 25:22; 33:10**

Going to Church:

If Satan can keep the invisible yet true presence of the risen God-man out of mind in the Divine Service, he can easily marginalize and misshape weekly worship. As Richard Eyer explains: If worship were not God at work among us, the idea of “going to church” for any other reason would personally lead me to find other things to do on a Sunday morning. The cult of joggers and cyclists I pass on the way to church might tempt me to join them ... but there is only one place to find God at work in our lives the way He is in the liturgy of the Divine Service—offering healing at the core of life.

Conclusion:

As we put aside the work we do so God may work in us, why would we want to preclude the risen Christ from working in us also with the heavenly food of His body and blood? What more can the risen Lord do for us than give us this blessed rest, refreshment, and release as He comes under the very roof of our mouths to feed and forgive us? As will be shown, the presence of the Lord’s Supper in weekly worship is central in the scriptural, historical, and confessional witness.

¹ Luther, M. (1999). *Luther’s works, vol. 37: Word and Sacrament III* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.; Vol. 37, p. 68). Fortress Press.