



Cleansed and Fed: The Sacramental Life God Feeds Us Jesus

COMMUNION DESERVES OUR CAREFUL ATTENTION

In his Large Catechism, Luther says:

Since we now have the true understanding and doctrine of the Sacrament, there is also need for some admonition and encouragement. Then people may not let such a great treasure – daily administered and distributed among Christians – pass by unnoticed. (LC, V, 39)

How could a treasure so great as Communion “pass by unnoticed”?

Preparation

1 Corinthians 11:27-28

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. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

Large Catechism

Those who are lewd and morally loose must be told to stay away. They are not prepared to receive forgiveness of sin, since they do not desire it and do not wish to be godly. (LC, V, 58)

What does it mean to receive Communion “in an unworthy manner”?

Why is it important to prepare before coming to Communion?

Small Catechism

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words: "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

What good purpose can fasting and other outward preparations serve?

In a word, what is the essence of true Communion preparation?

In days past, people prepared for Communion by announcing to the pastor ahead of time that they were planning to come.

What were some benefits of this practice?

Why do you suppose we don't follow this practice anymore?

What helps you prepare for Communion?

Sing or say the following hymn stanzas together.

I come, O Savior, to your table,
For weak and weary is my soul;
O Jesus, you alone are able
To satisfy and make me whole.
Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

Oh, grant that I in manner worthy
May now trust solely in your Word,
And, conscious of the sins before me,
Look only unto you, O Lord.
Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

*Friedrich C. Heyder
Christian Worship Hymn 310, s.1-2*

Christ's Command and Promise

1 Corinthians 11:25

²⁵ [Jesus said,] "Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Based on this passage, how often does Jesus want us to take Communion?

Evaluate: We take Communion because it is a commandment from God.

Someone might say, "Why come to Communion, when I can benefit in the same way from listening to God's Word and remembering my baptism?" How would you reply?

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together.

Unworthy though I am, O Savior,
Because I have a sinful heart,
Yet you your lamb will banish never,
Nor will your faithfulness depart.
Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

*Friedrich C. Heyder
Christian Worship Hymn 310, s.3*

Frequency of Communion Celebration

1 Corinthians 10:23,24

“Everything is permissible” - - but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible” - - but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

The Apostle Paul is talking about matters of Christian freedom, things that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. For example...

What loving principles does he help us apply to matters of Christian freedom?

Matthew 15:8-9

[Jesus said,] “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

What’s wrong with making rules in church about things for which God hasn’t given us rules?

Frequency of Communion celebration is a matter of Christian freedom. The trend within our circles over the past hundred years seems to be toward more frequent celebration. A number of Lutheran congregations have even begun to offer Communion every week.

What do you think about that idea?

How can the two passages above help a congregation that wants to approach this particular area of Christian freedom?

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together.

Your heart is filled with fervent yearning
That sinners may salvation see
Who, Lord, to you in faith are turning;
So let me, too, come trustingly,
Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

*Friedrich C. Heyder
Christian Worship Hymn 310, s.5*

Symbols and Ceremonies

Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁶ Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Old Testament rules for worship no longer apply. We're free to worship God anywhere, in whatever way we think is best. Why will New Testament believers still pay close attention to things like art and symbolism in their houses of worship and their patterns of worship?

What are some ways churches can use art and symbolism to help people pay careful attention to God's gift of Communion?

- Altar Design and Placement
- Ritual
- Music
- Art
- Ceremony

Sing or say the following hymn stanzas together.

Who can condemn me now? For surely
The Lord is near, who justifies.
No hell I fear, and thus securely
With Jesus I to heaven rise.
Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

Though death may threaten with disaster,
It cannot rob me of my cheer,
For he who is of death the master
With help and strength is always near.
Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

*Friedrich C. Heyder
Christian Worship Hymn 310, s.13-14*