



Cleansed and Fed: The Sacramental Life God Feeds Us Jesus

COMMUNION IS A GIFT BEYOND COMPARE

Hebrews 9:22

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Why does this teaching offend sinful pride?

It's easy for me to say, "I'm not perfect," but sinful pride hates considering how serious my sin is.

What role does blood play in the forgiveness of sins?

Essential role. No forgiveness without it. Note: forgiveness is more than an emotion or feeling here (as in, "I just don't feel like I can forgive you.") This forgiveness is like the forgiveness of a debt.

Transition: So Communion is one way God delivers to us this forgiveness...

Medicine of Immortality

See *Cleansed and Fed* Essay for some background on the phrase, "Medicine of Immortality."

Genesis 3:6

When Eve saw that the fruit was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

What was wrong with eating this fruit that looked and tasted good?

God said not to.

Genesis 3:19

Dust you are, and to dust you will return.

What physical consequence came as a result of this eating? Why?

Death for Adam and Eve and all their offspring.

Transition: In Communion, God gives us something else to put in our mouths.

Take and eat... Take and drink... For the forgiveness of your sins...

How is Communion like *medicine*?

Simple answer: both heal. You might encourage the class to think of more answers:

Oral reception.

Both offer help you can't naturally provide yourself.

What happens if you push the Communion/medicine comparison too far?

Just take this pill and you'll be all better, whether you believe it or not! Is that how

Communion works? [Let the class think about it]. You might end up thinking

communion works apart from faith, like just taking a pill. So don't push the

comparison too far. But that doesn't mean we can't use the comparison.

Psalm 32:

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away.... You forgave the guilt of my sin...Rejoice... Be glad... Sing!"

Job 19:25-27

I know that my Redeemer lives... Even after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God... How my heart yearns within me!

What physical blessings are connected to God's forgiveness?

You can talk about the *physical* aspect of gladness: endorphins are released, forehead relaxes, smile forms, heart rate slows down, breathing eases. Then also the *physical* aspect of the resurrection. At creation, the Lord breathed into Adam and Eve the breath of life. At Communion, the life God breathes into you will last into eternity. After your skin has been destroyed, in your flesh you will see God.

Agree / Disagree: If you are sick, you should go to Communion for healing.

Disagree if you are treating Communion like a pill that works whether you believe it or not.

Disagree if you assume that God will use the means of Communion to provide full physical healing of every disease. God may have a better plan for you under the cross of sickness he continues to send.

Agree. Communion is for both soul and body, for this life and the next.

It is often said that those who die continue to live in our memories. How does this sentiment compare to the immortality God offers and gives us through faith in the saving work of Jesus?

Not much comfort to that sentiment, compared to the earth-shattering good news that death has been conquered and that on the last day our bodies will be raised from the dead and reunited with our souls to live with God and the saints and angels forever!

How can it help us to think of Communion as a "medicine of immortality"?

We sometimes struggle to think about things in purely spiritual terms. God helps us by inviting us to receive Communion orally, and to remember that the rescue he gives us here is for both soul and body.

Sing or say the following hymn stanzas together.

Here, O my Lord, I see you face to face;
Here would I touch and handle things unseen,
Here grasp with firmer hand eternal grace,
And all my weariness upon you lean.

This is the hour of banquet and of song;
Here is the heavenly table spread anew.
Here let me feast and, feasting, still prolong
The brief bright hour of fellowship with you.

*Horatius Bonar
Christian Worship Hymn 315, s.1-2*

Fuel for Christian Love

Matthew 22:37-40

³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

How much love does Jesus want us to have? Where does he want us to aim our love?

The love of heart, soul, and mind, all aimed at God and our neighbor.

Apply these two commandments to various callings and stations in life. What would life in this world be like if everyone followed what Jesus said in Matthew 22? **Let the class pick a few of these and discuss. The picture you end up with is a picture of life in heaven! Good for us to remember whenever we begin to think of God's commandments as burdensome. God's command to love shows us that he wants heaven for us.**

- Spouse
- Parent
- Son or daughter
- Sibling
- Employer
- Worker
- Citizen
- Church member

Explain: The problem isn't with our ability to love, but with our ability to aim our love in the right direction.

Heart, soul, and mind are indeed filled with love.... for self.

Matthew 26:26

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and give it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, at whom does Jesus aim his forgiving love?

Me.

What practical help does Communion give for the stations of life listed above?

Frees me from the need to spend all my love on me. Already loved by Jesus with a love far above anything I could do for myself.

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together.

I have no help but yours nor do I need
Another arm but yours to lean upon.
It is enough, O Lord, enough indeed;
My strength is in your might, your might alone.

*Horatius Bonar
Christian Worship Hymn 315, s.3*

How can eating and drinking do such things?

In his Small Catechism, Luther says:

How can eating and drinking do such things? It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words “Given” and “poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking.

Which words are “the main thing” in the sacrament?

Why are these words the “main thing”?

Given, poured out for the forgiveness of sin.

The whole point of the real presence of Jesus’ body and blood is forgiveness and life, now and forever.

In his Large Catechism, Luther says:

Since this treasure (Communion) is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be received and made ours in any other way than with the heart.

What “other way” could he be talking about?

Putting primary emphasis on the ritual, or the minister, or the worthiness of the communicant. All are important, but none of them is the *main* point. Saving faith is hungry for and needs God’s word and promise.

In what sense are the words we hear in Communion just like the words we hear whenever the gospel is preached? How are the words of Communion different?

Same promise, same effectiveness. The words of Communion are tied to earthly elements and delivered to communicants one by one. Always personal. “For you.”

Sing or say the following hymn stanza together.

Mine is the sin but yours the righteousness;
Mine is the guilt but yours the cleansing blood.
Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace:
Your blood, your righteousness, O Lord, my God.

*Horatius Bonar
Christian Worship Hymn 315, s.4*

“Do This in Remembrance of Me”

Luke 22:19

**And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”**

What does Jesus want his disciples to remember about him?

Everything. His work, his words, and especially his death and resurrection.

1 Corinthians 11:26

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

The benefits of this remembrance extend beyond those receiving Communion. How so?

Note: “remember” in this context isn’t the opposite of “forgetting.” This is a remembrance, like taking a moment of silence on 9/11. It’s a remembrance that makes a statement to all those around us. The remembrance is a proclamation.

Who does this proclaiming at Communion? Who hears the proclamation? What is the content of the proclamation?

Communicants. Everyone assembled in church. The world around us (our communion practice is a public matter). The content of the proclamation is everything Jesus our Savior has said and done. (See the answer to Luke 22:19 above)

1 Corinthians 10:17

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

What additional message do we proclaim when we take Communion with other Christians?

That we are one in faith with them. (We are one body).

The Large Catechism

But now the entire Gospel and the article of the Creed – I believe in... the holy Christian Church, ... the forgiveness of sins, and so on – are embodied by the Word in this Sacrament and presented to us.

Explain: When you proclaim the Lord's death at Communion you're saying more than "Jesus died." (See 1 Corinthians 2:2)

1 Cor. 2:2 - As if all Paul ever did was say the two words, "Christ crucified." No. There and here, proclaiming Jesus means proclaiming everything he has said and done. In other words, we proclaim the entire Bible without changing any of it, while remembering that the whole Bible is pointing to Christ crucified.

Why must those who receive Communion together confess the same faith as one other?

If we don't, then our joint communion reception will be a false or fuzzy proclamation of Christ.

Ephesians 4:15

Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Apply this verse to our proclamation of Christ's death at Communion. What is our goal when we proclaim Christ in this way?

Love. Love for Christ, love for each other, and love for those outside our fellowship.

How can this passage help us talk to those who want to receive Communion with us but don't yet share our confession of faith?

Love will lead us to deal gently with those who aren't yet ready to receive Communion with us. Talk about some practical ways to do this.

Sing or say the following hymn stanzas together.

Too soon we rise; the vessels disappear.
The feast, though not the love, is past and gone.
The bread and wine remove, but you are here,
Nearer than ever, still my shield and sun.

Feast after feast thus comes and passes by,
Yet, passing, points to that glad feast above,
Giving sweet foretaste of the festal joy,
The Lamb's great marriage feast of bliss and love.

*Horatius Bonar
Christian Worship Hymn 315, s.5-6*