

Cleansed and Fed: The Sacramental Life God Feeds Us Jesus

COMMUNION DESERVES OUR CAREFUL ATTENTION

Last week we focused on the blessings of Holy Communion. What blessings did we specify?

A. Don't miss the blessing

In his Large Catechism, Luther says: *Since we now have the true understanding and doctrine of the Sacrament... 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”?

B. May the blessing not become a curse

No one wants a blessing to become a curse.

Manasseh, Hezekiah, 15 years

Other?



Don't Miss the Blessing: Frequently Receive the Sacrament!

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.”

Can we make rules where God hasn't given us rules?

If not, why? (Mt 23:4) Is so, how? (Mt 23:23)

1 Corinthians 11:25 – [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?

The 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. Some Lutheran congregations even offer Communion every week.

What do you think about that idea in light of the above Bible passages?

What do you think about that idea in light of how you personally feel about the sacrament?

What can be done if you have not received Communion in a while, or if you specially desire the Sacrament?

Say the following hymn stanza 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! *Friedrich C. Heyder, Christian Worship Hymn 670, s.1*

May the Blessing not Become a Curse: Receiving in a Worthy Manner

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 – 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. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

This passage speaks of two things that must be in place in order to *not* receive the sacrament in an unworthy way. What are they?

1)

2)

Our hymnal provides a section that guides us to receive the Sacrament in a worthy manner. It focuses on these two principles for worthy reception. Open to page 295. (Life Hack: It's the last thing before the hymns in our hymnal.)

What does it mean to “examine oneself” (#1 above)?

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 “recognize the body of the Lord?” (#2 above)

Why is it important to prepare before coming to Communion?

Consider Confirmation’s role in connection with receiving Communion in a worthy manner.

Some practices regarding preparing for the Sacrament:

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 or short phrase, 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?

How would you suggest preparing for the Sacrament?

Say the following hymn stanza together.

O grant that I in manner worthy
may eat and drink and be restored,
and, dwelling on you boundless mercy,
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 670, s.2*

Symbols and Ceremonies

Colossians 2:16-17 - 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. 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. And we don't have another worship rulebook in its place either. 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?

How does art and symbolism help people pay careful attention to God's gift of Communion? Could we do better?

- Altar Design and Placement
- Music
- Ceremony
- Art

Say the following hymn stanzas together.

By faith I call your holy table
the testament of your deep love,
for by your gift I now am able
to know the heart of God above.

Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

My heart has now become your dwelling,
O blessed, holy Trinity.
With angels I, your praises telling,
shall live in joy eternally.

Lord, may your body and your blood
Be for my soul the highest good!

Friedrich C. Heyder, Christian Worship Hymn 670, s.8,10