

FIRST CLASS:

Module 8

The Means of Grace—Holy Communion

Review of Module 7: The Means of Grace—Baptism

Here are the summary points from Module 7. If you have any further questions and want to dialogue, please contact one of Trinity's pastors!

- *Baptism is a divine institution. Baptism is a miracle. Baptism is not our response to God's grace and promise—it IS God's gracious Gospel at work. He is the One who does Baptism for us! It is He who designed it as one of the most ordinary and available things in all His creation—water—joined to His Word to become a divine action.**
- *Baptism is simple and profound at the same time. It is simple because it is administered by applying water *in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, the name by which the true God has revealed Himself to us. It is profound because *baptism now saves you* (1 Peter 3:21)**
- *Baptism is intended for all people, without distinction. All segments of the human population are included; none are excluded in the Scriptures. Infants and babies not only can but should be baptized, since this is the way God has revealed in His Word that they can be saved. Those older who can hear and receive the Gospel cognitively, as the Holy Spirit enables them by the gift of faith, come to believe and then are instructed and baptized. The newborn, infant, and toddler have the promise of Baptism as the way of assurance for our little ones!**
- *Those who argue for a "believer's baptism" confuse faith with intellectual ability. According to Scripture all people are conceived and born into sin and need what Baptism gives—forgiveness. Faith is not a human response or decision; it is the gift of God that enables everyone to believe, including children as the Bible teaches in Matthew 18:6. Baptism is not our promise to God; it is God's promise in action to and for us.**
- *In Baptism, God gives the gifts of forgiveness of sins, rescue from the devil and death, and eternal life. In Baptism we are adopted into God's family as His own dear children, made members of the Church, and made heirs of the future new heavens and earth.**
- *Christians remember their Baptisms through daily confession of their sins, repentance and faith. In remembrance of Baptism we know God is**

with us always!

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In this lesson we will explore the truths and practices regarding the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The readings from your Catechism Explanation are pages 322-345. Read these through before tackling this worksheet!

The Lord's Supper is known by multiple names: The Sacrament, The Sacrament of Holy Communion, The Eucharist, The Holy Meal, The Last Supper, The Lord's Table, The New Covenant Meal, The New Testament Meal, The Breaking of the Bread, The Agape Feast, and The Great Mystery.

The Lord's Supper is not merely a church custom or ritual, but like preaching the Gospel and Holy Baptism, is a divine ordinance, instituted by Christ Himself. It is a means of grace!

As with all doctrine and truth, we read and hear what the Word of God has to say to us about these matters. About the matter of The Lord's Supper, here are all the passages in the Bible that speak on this topic:

1) Matthew 26:17-20; 26-30

***On what day (a Jewish Festival) would Jesus institute The Lord's Supper?**

***As they were eating (the Passover Meal), Jesus takes bread from the table, offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God, and distributes portions of it to His disciples. This was not part of the Jewish Passover liturgy; Jesus is, in fact, doing something new! What does Jesus say as He distributes the unleavened bread to His disciples?**

***What does Jesus do next, and what are His exact words which accompany this second action toward His disciples?**

***In verse 28, what does Jesus say is the purpose of the giving of His Body and Blood in and with the bread and wine?**

***After this eating and drinking of the bread and the wine, Jesus makes a remarkable announcement to them; what does He say?**

2) Mark 12:12-16; 22-25

***Mark corroborates Matthew's account of the Institution of the Lord's Supper. It is the character of Mark's writing to record less of the words spoken and more of the actions of Jesus. For example, Mark records Jesus' word over the bread as simply, "Take; this is My body," and His word over the cup of wine as, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."**

***Mark also records the announcement Jesus makes about His time of anticipated separation from them; what does Jesus say?**

3) Luke 22:7; 14-20

***Luke records Jesus' words in a different order! First, Jesus takes the cup of wine on the table (part of the Passover liturgy, most) likely what was the "second official" cup shared, and informs them that He will not eat of the Passover Meal with them again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God; this is what we will learn in a later study to be "eschatological" language, speaking of the Last Day and what will happen when Jesus returns. What else does Jesus say to them about the celebration of this particular Passover?**

***Then Jesus distributes the bread with the same words, including a command for them to "do this in r_____ of Me."**

***And the cup (probably the Third Cup of the Passover Liturgy) with the words of institution. . .(For your information, the Passover Liturgy, from our best scholarly guess, in the first century utilized four cups, the final being a cleansing cup with the Benediction (final blessing before dismissal). There is no record in any of the Gospels that Jesus and His disciples drank the fourth cup, as Jesus had implied. . .the Fourth Cup He will drink with them and all of us in heaven!**

3) 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

***Paul addresses the Church at Corinth because they are guilty of false teaching and dangerous practice when it comes to the doctrine and administration of the Lord's Supper. His is a commentary on the centrality of this sacrament in the life of the Church,**

as well as a corrective on what it is and how it is to be used.

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The issue in Corinth is that there are other “holy meals” in town, the dinners and festivals at various pagan Temples in the city. Many of the Christians perceived that since they had been taught these idols were not really gods, had no power, and were the inventions of unbelieving minds, that it didn’t matter if they ate and bought the meat sacrificed in these pagan services. In verse 20, Paul assures them these idols are nothing, but that the worship and ritual that happens in their temples is connected to the worship of a real entity; who would that entity be?

For this reason should the members of the Corinth Church attend these festival or not? Upon what is Paul’s answer based?

In verse 16, Paul makes the strongest case for not giving any indication or sense that The Lord’s Supper is anything like the Temple rituals. What does Paul say about the unleavened bread and cup of wine?

4) 1 Corinthians 11:17-29

*Paul returns in this chapter to the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Let it never be that in our churches it would ever be said about us what Paul says about the Corinthians—when they assemble together, because of their false teaching and dangerous practice, they may be doing more harm than good! In verse 20, he accuses them of what?

It appears that the Corinthians conducted their worship service and then immediately following celebrated an Agape Feast (something akin to our potluck dinners at church, but more formal and considered ritual). Perhaps this was the model of the pagan festival, where rituals, ceremonies, and dramas were conducted throughout the eating and drinking, which was mostly revelry. At the dinner is where the Lord’s Supper was being conducted. Today we would say simply, “What a mess!”

Paul will correct this serious problem by taking them back to Scripture, to the very institution of the Lord’s Supper by the

Lord Himself. Read again verses 17-25.

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Both bread and wine (as Body and Blood) are to be eaten and drunk in remembrance of Christ and done o _____, or frequently. It is under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Paul has written these words, “for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you. . .” do what?

Having lifted The Lord’s Supper out of the noise and mess of the Corinthian’s Agape Feast, Paul goes on to give them and all of us further instructions on receiving this holy gift. In verse 27 a shocking reality is revealed; it is possible to receive this holy meal in an u_____ manner! That means that it is not some automatic ritual benefit that happens to just anybody who might be present and join in this eating and drinking!

To remedy this reality and possibility, Paul tells us what in verse 28?

Verse 28 leads to the question, “on what basis do we make this evaluation?” Verse 29 answers the question. What must be present; what must we be able to do and perceive in order to receive this meal in a worthy manner?

Verse 29 also cranks up the consequences and seriousness of the issue; misusing and abusing this gift from God can result in what?

APPLICATIONS AND PRACTICES OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

Three radically different beliefs concerning the Lord’s Supper dominate the various denominations (groups) of Christian churches:

- A) The bread and wine are transformed and converted into Christ’s flesh and blood in such a manner that only the body and blood of Christ are received in the Sacrament (Roman Catholic definition of transubstantiation and real presence)

B) The bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ are all present in the Sacrament, so that with the bread the Body of Christ is received, and with the wine, the Blood of Christ is received, all four elements being truly present and received (Lutheran real presence)

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C) Only bread and wine are received in the Lord's Supper in any real and true way; they stand as symbols or representations, signifying the flesh and blood of Christ. The Catholic and Lutheran interpretations are viewed as preposterous (Reformed, Arminian, Pentecostal, etc.)

To analyze these differences in doctrine and practice, we depend solely upon the Scriptural testimony we surveyed above, applying them to the issues of difference.

What constitutes The Lord's Supper? Is it the ordained priest with his indelible character acquired in ordination, his words and ministrations, that literally effect transubstantiation? (This is the Roman Catholic teaching with which Luther took issue; it says the priest is a means by which the earthly elements of bread and wine are transformed physically into flesh and blood; in Luther's time, surgeries were conducted shortly after death and last rites where one had taken communion to physically locate and prove bread was gone and human flesh was discovered. . .)

Is the definition and interpretation of The Lord's Supper the reasonable domain of human reason at all, so that various theologians may give their various interpretations?

Or is it the Lord's own words that deliver the reality and the blessings of The Lord's Supper? Could it be that His Words actually have power to bring into existence and reality what is spoken and commanded?

So what does He say? *Take, eat, this is My body. Take, drink, this is My blood. This is for you. This is the New Covenant. [Jesus' reference to the promise in Jeremiah 31:31-34] Do this. . .often. . .in remembrance of me. . . for the forgiveness of your sins.*

Which position do we honor as our official doctrine? How does this affect our practice?

In defining the purpose of The Lord's Supper?

+Is it merely Ritual?

+Is it merely about Tradition?

+Is the main benefit the forgiveness of sins?

In consecrating the bread and wine, i.e. in separating it out from ordinary bread and wine, for sacramental use:

+should we worship the visible elements?

+should we use grape juice?

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In administering The Lord's Supper, who is to receive it?

+Unbelievers?

+Those not able to examine themselves?

+Those not baptized?

+Those who do not believe the doctrine of the real presence and the purpose of the sacrament?

+What about a member who is living in un-repentant, public, known sin? (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21; Matthew 5:23-24)

[How does a congregation and its Pastor make this determination, then?]

Should you take The Lord's Supper in another church that teaches and/or practices contrary to the Scriptures?

+A church that believes the bread and wine are only symbols? A church that uses only grape juice?

+A church that teaches we are saved and converted by our good works, decision to follow Christ, and/or obedience to the Gospel?

+A church that teaches that the Bible is a human book full of many problems and errors, much of which is not relevant in our day, and that it is up to pious, human reason and scholarship to discover what in the Bible is the truth to be proclaimed in the contemporary age? A church willing to reinterpret the meaning of one or more of the 10 commandments to be more "relevant" with contemporary culture?

(A Lutheran church that has declared pulpit and

altar fellowship with a church that teaches and practices symbolic ritual as the Lord's Supper?)

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How do fellow Christians in other denominations justify their rejection of the doctrine of the Real Presence?

1) They quote Scripture!

**John 6:63: It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all*

**Romans 14:17: For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

**Colossians 2:16 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come*

How might such Scriptures be used as proof passages that the bread and wine must be symbolic?

2) They interpret Scripture with the use of human reason, and it does make more sense to our fallen, human reason to reject miracles we cannot understand; it's just interesting such theologians who lead whole denominations of people in this direction, often do not reject other miracles of Jesus, such as His changing water to wine!

"The breaking of bread by Christ with His disciples was a figure, namely of the spiritual and inner reception of Christ's body and blood, which they who received the symbolized thing at times used in the Church because of the weak, just as they practiced abstaining from meat strangled or bloody, washing one another's feet, or anointing the sick with oil. These things, along with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were no more binding on Christians than any other ritual or ceremony, especially for the mature who has attained the substance of things in the heart."

How do you answer by Scripture such a denial of the real presence?

The Practice of Closed Communion

Let Luther himself speak about faithful administration of the Sacrament as he instructs the preachers of the Reformation:

Now it must be said that closed communion is not taken all that seriously by those who now teach that the bread and wine only signify Christ; it is of no great concern to them who receives these things, nor what they believe or how they live, since it

is only the true believer who comprehends the heavenly thing anyway. But since God's Word says and we believe that it is Christ's body and blood that are given to us in the Sacrament, we neither will nor can give such Sacrament to anyone unless he is first examined. Does he believe God's Word about the Sacrament? Does he confess his sins and intend to forsake the sins which he has again committed? We will not make Christ's Church into a pig pen letting anybody come without faith, lest we do invite people as pigs to a trough, when it is the most excellent food we can ever receive. Such a church we will leave to the fanatics.

[Luther, 1532 Admonition to Frankfurt am Main]

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Contemporary Objections (and sample responses) to Closed Communion:

***It is judgmental, unloving, and arrogant for a church to exclude people who have come to their worship service to worship God, from their participation in The Lord's Supper. Their decision to partake of The Lord's Supper is their own choice, and is between God and each of them.**

Closed Communion sincerely shows a loving concern for those who would receive the Sacrament in an unworthy manner, perhaps to their judgment. In the objection itself are at least three errors in understanding what the Bible teaches about The Lord's Supper, the doctrine of the church and ministry, and faith.

Does not participation in Holy Communion reflect and create fellowship among Christians? To refuse to give The Lord's Supper to someone or an entire church body is to put a roadblock on unity.

It is true that when we participate together in The Lord's Supper we publicly acknowledge that we believe the same things and are one in the faith. But we do this as members of a particular confession of doctrine and faith. The Lord's Supper is a profound expression of the unity of faith and of the Church. That witness to unity is a false witness if major doctrinal disagreements exist between church bodies and those who commune together. When we allow open communion, we witness in fact that these doctrinal differences do not matter—which they don't or don't as much to those churches who practice open communion—that they are unimportant, and may be safely overlooked. This message of doctrinal indifference contradicts Scripture. (Matthew 7:15; John 8:31-32; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Galatians 5:0; 2 Timothy 2:17; Titus 3:10; 2 John 10-11 to name a few)

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If you want to ask questions or enter into dialogue on any of the above questions or related issues, we'd love to engage in conversation with you:

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