

Maundy Thursday- We Preach Christ Crucified
April 13, 2017
1 Corinthians 11:23-28
As We Share in Partaking of the Lord's Supper
Rev. George Ferch

Dear disciples of Christ Jesus,

You communicants become preachers when you come to the Lord's Supper. You are proclaiming the Lord's death. You are proclaiming gospel truth. This is most certainly true until Jesus comes.

That is an important and urgent word to proclaim, for sure. This is why Jesus told the disciples in the upper room and later the apostle Paul, and why Jesus tells us, do it often. The giving and receiving of such a gift as this need to be repeated time and time again.

In keeping with our theme, We Preach Christ Crucified, we see that **We Preach Christ Crucified as We Share in Partaking the Lord's Supper**. The parts of your sermon in action reveal what Holy Communion is, what it does, and with whom you are sharing it.

Prof. Emeritus, Dan Deutschlander, wrote in his excellent book on Christian doctrine, "More ink has been spilled in attacking the Bible's teaching about the Sacrament of the Altar than perhaps any other doctrine of God's Word." That is a testament to Satan's great despising of this powerful expression, as the prof adds, "from God's heart to our hearts."

Rather than spreading Satan's slander about the Lord's Supper that the pens of false teachers have spread, when you preach Christ crucified by partaking the Lord's Supper, you declare the truth. That is, what Jesus declares the sacrament to be, and the pastor repeats. The Lord's Supper is bread and wine and the true body and blood of Christ together in what we call the sacramental union. Jesus' words of institution are plain and clear. "This is my body which is for you... This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

How this can be, we leave to God. When you come up and take Holy Communion you are expressing your belief that what Jesus said is true. To turn a phrase, "It is what it is." The Lord's Supper is not a symbol. It is not a sacrifice. It is the real presence in a miracle of the very body and blood Jesus offered up on his cross as the atoning payment for the sins of the entire world given and received with the bread and the wine.

I trust the Word of God I share with you because God passed it along to the writers of the Bible. You trust the Word of God about the Lord's Supper for the same reason. Jesus gave the words of institution in that upper room which the disciples passed along to the church. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you."

God's Word makes Holy Communion what it is, a sacrament. God's Word also makes Holy Communion do what it does. The Lord's Supper as a means of grace offers and gives the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus instituted Holy Communion as a means of remembrance of what he was about to do on the cross. It is more than a remembrance as the words of institution declare in the gospels, St. Luke, for example. "This is my body given for you... This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." Christ's sacrifice on the cross seals the new covenant of grace that saves us from condemnation under the old covenant, the law.

Christ's sacrifice is the gospel, the means by which God gives us the forgiveness of all our sins. With that forgiveness come new life and eternal salvation. Jesus' sacrifice is the perfect example

of the mandate he gave the disciples from which this holy night gets its name, Maundy, "A new command I give you: Love one another as I have loved you." [John 13:34]

Holy Communion is not simply a recollection of historical facts that are to our eternal advantage. It is not a re-sacrificing of Christ that forgives us by virtue of our eating and drinking. Holy Communion is the giving and receiving of the gospel. When you come to Holy Communion with a contrite heart and trust Jesus' words that gospel forgives your sins. The gospel puts the blessing of forgiveness into the sacrament. Your faith is the hand that receives the blessing of forgiveness.

After you have examined yourselves and acknowledged your sin and what it deserves, you come to receive as a free gift the full payment for those sins Christ made on the cross. You proclaim what Holy Communion does. It gives you the Lord's death.

You do not proclaim alone even when you take private communion, Even then, you do it with other Christians. Jesus' words Paul quotes, "for you" are plural. There is a communion among believers when we preach Christ crucified as we share in partaking the Lord's Supper.

When I preach Sunday morning, there are over 1000 WELS pastors preaching at roughly the same time. How do we know all those sermons are essentially the same in source, content, and application? All of us brothers in the ministry agree with the Bible and with each other about everything the Bible says. We confess that by our unity in our church.

There is a unity for you as you preach Christ crucified in partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is a shared visible confession of examination and confession. You have looked into your heart and seen your sin and acknowledge it. You see in your heart a belief in the real presence. You rely on Jesus' blood for the forgiveness of your sins. You have every intention by the Spirit's power to amend your sinful life.

You may then take the Lord's Supper with the assurance that you are not sinning against the body and blood of Christ by impenitence, or a lack of knowledge concerning the doctrine of the real presence.

At the foot of the chancel, you join others preaching the same truths about all things the Bible teaches. You know that by the unity in our church. Taking the Lord's Supper with others is a visible confession of agreement, an act of fellowship, among the recipients. Just as all pastors declare our common faith in our sermons, so you confess your common faith in closed communion.

This is most certainly true. Now I may say with Paul, "For I received from the Lord, what I also passed on to you." Amen. <SDG>