

Written Copy: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 “God Still With Us in His Supper”

Midweek Advent Service #3

Wednesday, December 16th, 2020

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Exegetical Statement

Our God is the God who desires to have special intimate fellowship with His creation. We see this in our Genesis reading. As part of His ratifying the Covenant with them He calls them to enjoy a special meal in His presence. But He has to mask His glorious presence so that His sinful people could be in His holy presence. Jesus is that God who took on human flesh and cloaked His divinity withing humanity. While He had intimate fellowship and many meals with them, He will be going to the cross and leaving them after His resurrection to resume His place ruling over all at the right hand of the Father. So He takes the special celebratory meal designed to remember and give thanks and praise to God for saving His people from the angel of death and turns it into something else. Like the OT feast on the mountain it is to celebrate a Covenant with the LORD. But this is a new Covenant, sealed not with the blood of oxen but in the blood that all our sacrifices drew their power from to communicate God's grace and forgiveness to His people. In this new meal we call the Lord's Supper we are intimately united with our Savior who is present always with us through His true body and blood, present but cloaked in the bread and wine. Present to not only make us a part of this New Covenant, but to give us all that Christ would die and rise again to earn for us: salvation, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. We are to know that He is truly present as He shows us what we can see: bread and wine, and then reveals what we can see and know only by faith, His body and blood present with the bread and wine. While He will be physically departing, He promises this physical present with His Church whenever they celebrate this Sacramental Meal as He has given it to us. Paul tells us why it is important to celebrate the meal as Christ instituted it, when we take and eat, and take and drink, Christ promises to be really and miraculously present to bless us and preserve our faith. His presence is a communion or intimate fellowship with Him, each one of us personally and our Lord and Savior. But His real presence also unites us with each other as the one loaf, one body, on church. And not just the one church here in this place, but the one church throughout space and time. And Paul confirms this real and supernatural presence with the warning that if we partake of this meal, yet refuse to believe in His presence by faith, we drink judgment upon ourselves. But when we do confess and believe in His presence, we receive all the gifts that Christ has to offer us, right into our physical bodies as He joins with us physically and spiritually. In His Word we have the assured presence of His Spirit, but in a less tangible way, with words that we can speak, and read, and hear, but not feel or taste or touch. In baptism we have His promised presence in the water which we can feel and see, but this happens only one time in our lives. We can remember it, or at least remember the date it happened, while holding that it did and that we received what it promises by faith. But in the LORD's Supper we have the real presence of our Creator and Savior God in something that we can see, touch, taste, and feel. His special gift to us that we can and should do often in remembrance of His death and resurrection, and all the gifts it brings. All this from the God who desires to be with His people and will one day live intimately with us in all His unmasked glory in Eternal Life.

Focus Statement:

The God who desires to have intimate fellowship with His children gives us this Sacrament as a means to have that fellowship with Him and with one another through His real sacramental presence. There He brings to us all the gifts He won for us in His death and resurrection and delivers them to our whole being: body and soul

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We can sometimes view the Sacrament in an ordinary and everyday way that doesn't take into account how He promises to be really present what He promises to give us, and what a blessing it is in our lives

What the hearer should do as a result:

Regard this gift as the wonderful supernatural event that it is. See Christ's presence as being different from how He is present through other means. Treasure this gift and do as His says, participate in it often, in remembrance of Him.

Subject Sentence: Christ's continuing presence in the Supper

Introduction: Our God Created Us To Need Fellowship

Having to shut down the Church as we did this past week is a hard thing for me, and I'm sure it is for many of you watching at home. We are created to have fellowship with one another. And one of the things I know many of you miss this past year, even during those times we are having public worship services, is the Fellowship Hour afterwards. That and the occasional get togethers we would have for Advent meals and other occasions. It just seems "un-Lutheran" to forgo such things. And there is a good reason to feel this way. There's something about us that Christians outside of our denomination recognize, something that we may ignore or deny. Consider this Facebook meme: "You know you're a Lutheran when you keep a casserole in the freezer in case of potluck. We actually have some casseroles stored in the Church freezer. You see, we Lutherans live up to our reputation.

But maybe in another sense we are just being honest with how God really designed His people to be. He designed us to desire fellowship with one another. You've probably noticed that during those times you've had to quarantine yourself. We want to and need to be connected with our friends and family. And if you think about it, those times we enjoy the presence of friends and family usually have something to do with food. Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Dinner, Easter Dinner, Birthdays and Anniversaries, and the all-important social event The Superbowl; all have food as an important element. God has designed us to enjoy food and fellowship as a package deal. Should it be so surprising that the way He desires to have fellowship with us involves a meal?

How God Desires Intimate Fellowship in a meal (Exodus 24)

We can see this through our Old Testament Lesson in Exodus 24. The LORD through Moses has just ratified His Covenant agreement with the people. Moses read the conditions before the people and they agreed to everything the LORD said. He seals the Covenant with a sacrifice and the blood that is applied to the people by sprinkling. He has promised to be their God, to provide and protect them as such, to save them from all danger. They in return are supposed to worship and serve Him alone as God. They are to demonstrate their faithful service by being obedient to His commands. Then in celebration of this Covenant, the LORD invites Moses, Aaron, and 70 of the Elders of the people to join Him on Mt. Sinai

Keep in mind our LORD doesn't need to have fellowship with us. Before He created anything, the Triune God existed at peace with Himself for eternity past. But He desired to create us so that He might have fellowship with us. He did this even though He knew that we would fall into sin, and thus exclude ourselves from any possibility of fellowship with Him. As you read through the actions of Israel in the desert, we can see their inability to be faithful to God, and their proclivity to doubt His presence, even when He gave them visible gifts like the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

But here on the mountain the LORD graciously welcomed these sinful people into His presence. They are not allowed to see Him in all His glory, for if sinful man saw that it would mean destruction. Sin cannot stand in the presence of our Holy God. But He cloaked Himself in a special manifestation of His power and glory. And with His real presence manifested in this way, these sinful men enjoyed a special fellowship meal in the presence of the LORD God. This is the LORD who desires to be present with us, and who comes to us in ways that are safe for us to be present with Him.

How Christ Institutes a Fellowship Meal that Lasts

Jesus coming to earth to be born as a baby is another example of our God's desire to have fellowship with us. Here our Holy Creator God came down and cloaked Himself in human flesh. Doing more than just putting on an outer shell of humanity, the infinite God became a human being, complete with a human will and soul. And He lived among His sinful creation, walking with them, talking and laughing with them, and also having meals with them. Meals were important enough that at least twice He fed large crowds of people in a miraculous manner.

Then came the last week of His life on earth. He desired to share one last meal with His disciples. It was a celebratory meal that the LORD instituted for His chosen people for them to remember Him as the powerful redeeming and saving God. It was to remind them of how He not only saved them from slavery in Egypt, but graciously protected them from a fate they deserved just as much as they Egyptians. He saved their firstborn children from death though the means of the sacrificial blood of the lamb painted on the doorposts of their homes.

Jesus, God's Sacrificial Lamb, the One whose sacrifice was the reason the lamb's blood on the doorposts was able to save the Israelites of old, is the one celebrating this meal with His disciples. Although it should be a reverent, yet joyful meal, this one recorded in Matthew 26 is a very somber event. Jesus has just prophetically announced that one of the twelve will betray Him into the hands of the Chief Priests, who will have Him put to death. This is the last time they will gather with Him like this. The setting is equivalent to a soon to be departed loved one reading His own last will and testament.

It is in this setting the Jesus provides the means for them, and you, and me, to join with Him in a fellowship meal that has the power and gifts of the New Testament in His body and blood, that He will soon be going to the cross to provide. In doing so He takes hold of a piece of bread, probably a larger flat unleavened piece of bread that would be a staple at any Passover meal. He says words of blessing, then breaks it into smaller pieces that He shares with His disciples. At this point He says something that is definitely not part of the normal script to be read as a part of the Passover celebration. This change, along with the solemn and somber nature of the meal would've stood out greatly to these twelve Jewish men. Holding the bread in His hand, Jesus says "this is my body".

Now it has been argued by those who refuse to believe in the supernatural power of the Sacrament that Jesus wasn't referring to the bread, but to His physical body holding the bread. But that would make no sense, especially at such a somber and solemn affair. It would be like me calling you all to attention, then holding out my phone to you. But then in a totally unrelated manner pointing to my chest and saying, "This is my body". You would respond, "OK. Duh! We know that. We can see it's your body. What's the big deal." But Jesus isn't telling them what they can already see. He's telling them the reality that they can't see that is being joined to what they can see. Luther gave this example: a monk comes to town with a cart loaded with kegs of beer. He calls the townsfolk together and says, "These are kegs of beer". Well they can see that. What he needs to tell them is what kind of beer is in the kegs. He would instead announce "In these kegs is the finest of ale!" That's the reality they can't see but must be told. Jesus, in telling His disciples that the bread He holds and the cup of wine that He shares is actually His body and His blood, is telling them the reality that they and we can't see but must be told exists. And seeing how His words have the performative power to do what they see; they give to us the power of faith to believe in the reality before us that we cannot see: His body and blood joined with the bread and wine.

These are His body and blood of the New Covenant. These are not only the means for Him to be present with His Church, even after His resurrection and ascension. This bread and wine become the means, the conduit, through which flows the wonderful gifts He died and rose again to give us: forgiveness of all our sins, salvation from the eternal death that we earn for ourselves, and eternal life. All these things He paid for with His life and death. All these He promises and gives in the resurrection. All these are yours and mine when we partake of this sacrament. These we receive from our Lord and Savior, who is also our Creator and Redeemer, who is truly present with us whenever "we do this in remembrance of Him."

His Real Presence affirmed with a warning and blessing

Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 affirms the truth of Christ's real presence in the Sacrament. He does so by repeating the words by which Christ instituted this Sacramental meal, telling us He received this information not from one of the twelve who were present for the first supper, but from Christ Himself who gave him this knowledge, along with directions as to how this meal should be celebrated. Paul's point in Chapter 11 is that since it's Jesus' meal, we need to celebrate it according to Jesus' instructions, and not our own adaptation of them.

He affirms Christ's true presence with the warning He gives for those who try to this meal something that it's not. Those who partake of it refusing to recognize His true supernatural presence in the bread and the wine fail to receive the blessing it has to give. Whether you believe He is there or not, He really and truly is. But by partaking without believing, instead of receiving His blessing, you receive judgment. Instead of receiving empowerment and assurance in your faith, you receive this meal to your detriment.

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul describes the blessings we do receive. We are made participants with our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ in His life, death and resurrection. We are brought into a unique and special fellowship, a fellowship that is even more intimate than the disciples had setting around that table with Him. That cup of wine, and that bread that the Words of Institution are spoken over, before this meal were just bread and wine. But when we do what Christ tells us to do, when we eat and drink, they become through Christ's powerful Word cloaks and carriers of His true body and blood. They become our means to have a communal participation with Him. Through these means we are eating with Him, present at His table. We are transported spiritually heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father.

But Paul has more to surprise us with. We are not only united with Christ in intimate fellowship. We are also united with each other as we partake of the same bread and wine that has His body and blood united with it. And not just us here who are worshipping in this Sanctuary. We are united in spirit with all those who are celebrating this sacrament across the globe. And not only that, with all those who have celebrated this sacrament throughout time, throughout the history of the Church, we are intimately united with them. Our Church may be using a different brand of wine and wafer than the Faith-Grand Blanc, or the Lutheran Church over in Africa. But we are all consuming and uniting in fellowship with the same body and blood, the same Lord and Savior. We are all gathered together at His table for what we call the foretaste of the Feast to come. For this meal looks forward to the even greater intimate fellowship we will have with Jesus and each other on the Last Day. And this meal provides us with the strengthening of faith to carry us through in intimate fellowship with our Savior until we reach that day.

Conclusion: Regard the wonder and blessing of this gift

Our God loves us very much. So much so that He has provide various means to be Emmanuel: God Still with Us. He cannot be present among us in all His glory, at least not yet. That would destroy us. But He has provided the means that are His Word through which the Holy Spirit is always present and active around us and in us and through us. His Words that have the power to make the reality they describe the reality for us. He is present with us and in us through our Baptism. He comes upon us and enters into us, never to leave us. He keeps up the washing that began in our baptism through Confession and Absolution. Our baptism becomes a point we can look back to and remember as the day the Spirit began the good work in us which He promises to continue.

But He has also given us His own body and blood in the Lord's Supper. It is the means by which we have intimate fellowship with Him and with each other. And it is something we are to continue to enjoy often, in remembrance of Him. Each time we celebrate it according to His instructions, He is there and unites Himself with us physically and spiritually. He brings to us in abundance all the gifts He won for us on the cross: forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. And He is there at work in you, preparing you for that special

eternal fellowship that you and I will have forever with Him in eternal life. It is the place where we will stand with Him and see Him in all His glory, where we will live with Him, glorified by Him, forever and ever. Emmanuel: God Still with Us in so many ways. Emmanuel: God Still with You now and unto eternal life. Amen.