

LD 28; Mt. 26:26-29; I Cor. 11: 23-34; Communion with our Host I. Our Visible Reminder II. Our Nourishment Received III. Our Benefit Secured

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, sharing a meal is an important part of daily life. When you sit across the table from your family members, sharing your joys and your struggles, there is a closeness that results. This rather ordinary part of our lives is elevated to great heights when we consider the use meal shared around the Lord's Table. One of the lessons we are to learn from the Lord's Supper is this, by nature we are all weary and starving. Our souls are wasting away- we are malnourished and we need to be feed! Jesus Christ is the food that feeds the hungry soul. Like a good shepherd, Jesus feeds His sheep. Parents, you will likely remember a time when your children were completely dependant on you to feed them. With milk or baby food, you had to physically put the food into your child's mouth. But as they get older, they start to learn to take the food for themselves. Although you remain the one who places the food on the plate in front of them, they start to bring the food from the plate to their own mouth- also learning to hold a cup and drink with their own hands. Well today, we are going to see that Jesus Christ is our blessed host- the LS is the meal that he provides for us. We sit at His table and he puts the bread and wine before us. It is here that we will take, eat, remember, and believe. So, this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ is the blessed host who feeds His people with His body and blood.

### **I. Our Visible Reminder**

In our first point, we find that this sacrament is meant to be seen. As QA 75 puts it, as surely as I see with my eyes. So the LS is a sacrament to be seen with the eyes. Now this might seem trivial, but remember that the sacraments are in fact the God-ordained visual aids. Knowing our weakness, our struggle with fear and doubt; Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper to be constant reminder, memorial and visual picture of what is true. So this visual moment- when I see the bread broken and the wine poured out- I am convinced of this truth. Jesus' body and blood were also broken and poured out. So surely was His body offered as the sacrifice for our sins. The fact remains, that you and I were not present when Jesus died. We were not there on Good Friday to witness His death on the cross. And since we were not present, we might be tempted to doubt the

truth of this event. Are you really sure that Jesus died on a cross on the hill called Calvary? The LS is the answer to that doubt. Do you see the bread and the wine- well, just as surly as you can see it with your own eyes, so sure- so certain did His actual body hang from the tree and His actual blood flow from his wounds in his hands and his side. So Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper to be our proof- a testimony to us. I really did die- Jesus says. I really was on the cross- it is certain- just as certain as you see the bread and wine with your own two eyes. So when we see the sacrament celebrated- when the elements are put on display- we are to remember and believe that this event really happened. As I Cor. 11:24 put it, we celebrate the LS in remembrance of Him. This sacrament is built on an actual fact- remembering a historical reality. As the 4<sup>th</sup> of July remembers our nations liberty from Britain- so the Lords Supper celebrates our liberty from sin! So remember what He did! See it- believe it! That is why the bread is lifted up and broken apart. So you can see it for yourself! I'm sure you have heard someone tell you that they will not believe it unless they see it. Tall tales of the huge fish that got away- or the great shot that was made on the course. If only you had been there- right? Well, the LS is our way of being there! Calvary is no myth or legend! See it- believe it! It is true. The LS is visible reminder of what Christ did for us- as I Cor. 11:26 says, this supper proclaims the Lord's death. This meal is a visible sermon and constant memorial- He really did die. As a visible sign and seal- a sacrament for us to see. By this we show or we proclaim the Lord's death. But more than that- we do not only see the bread and the wine we also take and eat.

## **II. Our Nourishment Received**

So we celebrate not only with our eyes, but also our hands and our mouth. As QA 75 continues, as surely as I receive with my hand and taste with my mouth, so surely does He nourish my soul. So we do not only see it- looking at the elements from afar, but rather we take, eat, remember and believe! This is what we found in Mt. 26:26- Take and eat! Take and drink. There is an active reception that we are called to! So we find that Jesus is the host who sets the table before us- preparing a table before us- but He also calls us to take and eat what He has prepared! Notice what Jesus does not say and does not do. Jesus does not say- fend for yourself! He does not say- try and find your own food or eat whatever you can gather. Rather, Jesus as our host sets

the food before us and then call us to take and eat. It is similar to what you find in Ex. 16 with the manna. The God of the Covenant provided this heavenly bread, but the Israelites still had to go out in faith and take and eat what God had provided. So when the plate is passed, Jesus says take with your hand and eat with your mouth. When the wine is given, you take the cup with your hand and bring it to your lips. In other words, there is an active component to the Lord's Supper. Yes, Jesus gives it to us. But we must take and taste. Now as we will find in the next point, it is by the strength of the Spirit that we can take and eat with a heart of faith. But that does not diminish the command. This is a commandment that Jesus gives to His people- take and eat! Receive what I give you! Do not harden your hearts or turn away- open wide your mouth and I will fill it with blessings! So Jesus sets the table, but we must hear and respond appropriately! Here again, we see that Jesus is compassionately helping us in our weakness. As every teacher knows, kids learn better when they can see and feel what they are learning. Let's say you are teaching a lesson on the principles of liquid. What happens to water at different temperatures. You can talk about it- and then you can show the class water and then let them feel ice. In this way, the lesson is impressed upon the mind. In a similar way, the LS is the hands-on experience of the gospel promise. The gospel preaching tells us what is true- but when I hold the bread and eat it- when I take the wine and drink it- this truth is impressed upon me! I will remember it- I have participated in it! So the LS is not just some vain pretending- something real is going on- real food and drink enters my body as a proof- to assure me- to teach and to comfort me! Jesus body and blood really does nourish me! Jesus had a similar response for doubting Thomas- after appearing to the disciples in John 20 He said to Thomas, "put your hand here- feel my flesh. Do not doubt, only believe!" So Jesus says to us in the LS- take my body in your hands- touch my flesh! Take my blood to your lips- taste and see that the LORD is good! Do not doubt that I have died for you- only believe! The bread and wine are real elements- just as His body and blood are real! And just as this food and drink nourishes my body, so surely does His body and blood nourish my soul! As I Cor. 11:24 puts it, my body is broken for you! My sacrifice is for you! My blood shed for you – for the complete forgiveness of all your sins! There is a real, personal, and concrete promise found here!

### III. Our Benefit Secured

Now that we have considered both the sight and the touch of the Lord's Supper, we press on to consider the benefit of this supper. The external sight of the bread and wine- and even the actual eating of the bread and drinking of the wine are not enough! The true and full benefit will only be received if and when you partake rightly! As QA 76 puts it, to eat and drink means to accept the suffering and death of Jesus with a believing heart. In other words, we are nourished only as we partake with a heart of faith! Only when we take and eat in believing remembrance of Him! As we saw with baptism, it is possible to receive the sacrament without actually benefitting from it. Our reading from I Cor. 11:29 says that anyone who eats without discerning the body, eats unto his own judgment. In other words, if you eat wrongly, this meal does not benefit you but rather is to your detriment. If you eat in a rebellious way you are calling down judgement upon yourself. So we must eat with discernment- or we are to celebrate with understanding. To discern the truth concerning the body of Jesus is to see and acknowledge His sacrifice as one made for you. To be united to the members of Christ's body the church as well. We could say that to eat with a discerning heart is to eat as a member of Christ's church who has been united to Him by faith. So how are we to benefit from the Lord's Supper? What marks must be met? Well, we must not only see the elements with our physical eye, but we must also perceive the truth about the elements with the eyes of faith. Not only taking holding of the elements with the hand, but also grasping onto Christ with the hand of faith! Not only eating the bread and the wine, but partaking of Jesus body and blood by faith! As Jesus said in John 6:55, my body is true food and my blood true drink! His body is that heavenly bread that the Father so graciously provides to those walking in the desert. His blood is the living water that flows from His side to quench our thirst. So it is by faith that properly receiving- as we remember and believe the truth when what we take, eat and drink. A clear application is this, when you come to the table you must come rightly- with discernment and by faith! That is why we read in the preparation forms every time that if you are lacking this confident knowledge, please reach out to the pastor or an elder of this church so that you might come rightly! This is also the reason why our elders fence the Table- meaning that visitors need to sign a card stating that they are in fact a member of Christ and His church

as well! We want to both protect this church and protect our visitors as much as possible to avoid this sin of coming to the Table without discerning faith.

So, now that we understand how we benefit- when we partake by faith; we also need to consider what we benefit. Or what is it that we receive when we partake of the LS rightly? Well, QA 76 lists for us the major benefits that we receive when we partake rightly. These benefits are secured for us by the one sacrifice of Jesus, and they are applied to us by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The first benefit is that of the forgiveness of sins. Our sins are atoned for and God's justice satisfied. Without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness as Heb. 9 says. But with the shedding of Jesus perfect blood, we find complete forgiveness of all our sins. His blood was shed once for all- the complete forgiveness of all our sins! The next benefit is that of eternal life. The death of Jesus secures the life of His people. Those who believe in Him, even though they die, yet they shall live. Whoever believes in Him will never die as John 11 says. The third benefit that we find in QA 67 is that of union. It is for good reason that we also call the Lord's Supper, Communion. We have union and fellowship with Christ- united more with Him by faith- and with His people- united to His body the church here below. So this two-fold union is a clear blessing of the Lord's Supper. We come to love Jesus and appreciate His work more and we come to love and appreciate our fellow saints here below as well. The Holy Spirit is continuing His work of making us one, just as Jesus prayed for in John 17. Uniting us more with Christ by faith and with one another as we come together to celebrate the Communion of the Lord's Supper. As we share in this same body and blood of Christ- as we are filled with the same Spirit- we are made one.

As we close, the Lord's Supper is a wonderful reminder of Jesus precious sacrifice. It is also a means by which the Spirit strengthens our faith. Jesus Christ is the blessed host who feeds His people with His body and blood. So when we take, eat, remember, and believe; let us come with a heart of faith that looks to receive what was promised. The Bread of life and the wine of the New Covenant. Now we eat in remembrance and by faith- one day we will feast in His presence by sight!