

## What is the Lord's Supper?

Matthew 26:26-29 (ESV)

The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, Eucharist, Sacrament of the Altar, Mass, Divine Service, Table of the Lord, New Testament, Breaking of the Bread. So many names for this one special mystery, offered regularly for all Christians to eat and to drink from that very altar. All these names testify to the special gift here offered for you. It also testifies that you should not take this gift lightly. You should know what you are receiving. You should know why you are receiving it. You should know how to receive the gift. This is our aim and goal: that you can clearly and emphatically confess the most precious gift of your Lord's body and blood regularly offered at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Today, we shall begin with the "what" question. What is this special gift? What is the Lord's Supper?

IT IS THE TRUE BODY AND BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNDER THE BREAD AND WINE  
INSTITUTED BY CHRIST HIMSELF FOR US CHRISTIANS TO EAT AND TO DRINK.

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, when Pastor Wright or the communion assistants present the bread and the wine, there is more offered and presented than mere bread and wine. You can point to that bread and say, "There is the body of Jesus which hung on the cross." You can point to the chalice and say, "There is the blood of Christ which was poured out for me." That is why every time you are offered the bread you heard, "The body of Christ." Or when offered the wine, "The blood of Christ." It is your constant reminder of the words which our Lord spoke, "**Take, eat; this is my body. Drink of it all of you, this is my blood of the covenant.**" These words of Jesus are special because even though he spoke them once, on the night of the Passover meal, 2000 years ago, they are still powerful today. Those same words spoken by our Lord are the power and the means which establish all our celebrations of Holy Communion. It is not the pastor's power or your special faith which make that bread and wine become the body and blood of Jesus. No, it is only through Jesus' word and testament. Jesus says, "This bread which I have broken in front of you, this bread is my body. This very thing which you are about to eat is my flesh, given for you." And he again says, "This cup of wine you are about to drink, this wine is my blood which will be poured out not just in this cup, but it will be poured out in my death for the life of the world." These are the words which guaranteed that the disciples of Jesus on the Passover night ate the Lord's body when they ate the bread, and drank the Lord's blood when they drank the wine. These are the words which guarantee the same for you every Divine Service.

Dear Christian, this gift of the Lord's body and blood is significant because you receive in a most intimate way the very means by which all the world is saved. You receive with your mouth and with your heart the very sacrifice which made peace between God and man, which brought about the reconciliation between enemies. This is

the body and blood offered up as a spotless sacrifice. This is the body and blood which has the power to heal and cleanse because it is the blood of God. This is what is shared with you. You can see in this meal a fulfillment of that special meal all of God's people enjoyed before Christ's once for all sacrifice. When faithful Israelites brought animals according to God's commands for peace offerings, God blessed the people by allowing the priests and the worshiper to feast on the flesh of the animal which was being sacrificed. The animal was the sign for all the people that God guaranteed his peace to the individual and between the whole community. That offering of the animal God made into a special meal to be enjoyed by everyone involved with God's special covenant and promises. How much more is this special meal where the offering is not just a spotless lamb, but the spotless Son of God!

There is significance too in the very fact that you are invited to this meal. You are invited to this meal to receive the past and to receive the future. You receive the past since you receive the one who was hung and nailed to a cross. Yet, you also receive the future. You receive the future eternal feast of heaven. Jesus says to his disciples, "**I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom**". This meal which our Lord Jesus offers finds its culmination and end point in his Father's kingdom. It finds its goal and purpose in the age that is to come. Our Lord doesn't want to offer himself only for the now. He wants you to enjoy his blessed eternal feast. So, when you receive the Lord's body and blood on your tongue, consider the eternal weight of this gift. It is eternity that you are tasting. It is the most glorious of banquets, with everflowing wine and the most delightful food to the mouth.

You should also be able to taste the nourishment and sustenance it offers you for today. Just as our heavenly Father sustained the Israelites through the 40 years in the wilderness with bread from heaven, so he offers you his Son to sustain you on your journey. Just as they relied day-by-day on the amazing power and working of God to keep them alive, so return as often as possible to receive this food for your soul. This Lententide should be a good reminder of the difficulty of this journey until you reach the eternal banquet; the difficulties of the weight of sin which still clings to your body, the difficulties of the strife and turmoil which surrounds you, the difficulties of the pain and misery common to this world. All these may weary you. All these may lead you to despair. Find your power, find your strength in this meal. Trust in the Lord who is the physician of body and soul. Receive from his gracious hand the medicine of immortality.

All that we can learn or confess about this special meal comes not from our own understanding. It is not our own construction or fabrication. It comes only from the mouth of the Lord who commands and instructs us. We should keep in the forefront of our mind that it is the *Lord's* Supper. He decides what is best for us. And what he decided for you is to receive the special token of his very body and blood under the bread and wine. Amen.