

Lesson 11: Preparing for the Lord's Supper

“Christ himself says, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick,’ that is, those who labor and are heavy-laden with sin, fear of death and the assaults of the flesh and of the devil. If you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, go joyfully to the sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort, and strength.”

—Dr. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism: The Sacrament of the Altar*

Thesis:

We are prepared to receive the Lord's Supper when we believe the words of Christ.

Key question:

What must we do to be prepared to receive the Lord's Supper?

Catechism:

Sverdrup's Questions
Q 382-388
(*Ambassador Hymnal*
p.14-15)

Accompanying Bible Story:

Matthew 15:1-20 –
Clean on the Inside

My questions:

The Jews in the days of Jesus had many rituals about being clean. Today we know that we should wash our hands before handling food and eating. We wash because we don't want germs from our hands contaminating our food. We know that germs on contaminated food can make us sick. It's possible the washing rules God gave His people were to keep them from getting sick. But by the time of Jesus, the rules had become rituals that were used to judge if someone was religiously faithful.

The religious leaders had watched Jesus' disciples eating bread. They asked Jesus why the disciples had not washed their hands first. The religious leaders were not concerned that the disciples would get sick. Instead, the accusation against them was that they were not true believers. The religious leaders were probably trying to find fault with Jesus by accusing His disciples of not being faithful to the traditions.

Jesus noticed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. He questioned them about traditions they had broken. He noticed they made new rules that allowed them a convenient way around rules they didn't like. The religious leaders questioned the outward actions of the disciples. Jesus questioned the inner motives of the religious leaders. He wanted His disciples to know that what was in the heart was much more important than what was on the outside. He illustrated this truth by telling them, “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

The disciples didn't understand what Jesus said, so Peter asked Jesus to explain. He gave them a spiritual lesson that included some biology. It is obvious to us today, but it might not have been to the disciples then. He told them that what they put into their mouths went into their stomachs where it was processed. The leftovers went through their digestive system and were eliminated. Those things that went through the digestive system, He told them, were not the things that make a person spiritually unclean. He also told them it is the things of the heart that show one's spiritual nature. It is not the things (food) that go in through the mouth that show corruption. It is the things (words) that come out of the mouth that show corruption, because these come from the heart.

Being prepared for Holy Communion is much the same. It is not the physical things we do that prepare us. It is the spiritual things, particularly believing, that makes us ready.

* Copy the answer to the question “Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?” from your Lutheran *Small Catechism*.

* Read Matthew 5:3-10. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made eight statements telling us how to be blessed or happy. The statements are all connected and describe the process God uses to bring us into His kingdom. List the eight blessed qualities. Discuss with your class how these are the process of our salvation.

* Read Matthew 5:23-24. What do these verses suggest about a proper attitude when going to the altar for Holy Communion?

* Read 1 Peter 5:5-9. List the spiritual disciplines found in these verses.

How might these disciplines help us be ready to receive the Lord's Supper?

* Read Luke 26:26-28. What must we believe about the bread?

What must we believe about the cup?

What must we believe about why Jesus gives us His body and blood?

What did I learn in this lesson (three or four sentences)?