

The Sacrament of the Altar 3: Its Power

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: "forgiveness of sins."

This section speaks to the question, "What makes Communion a means of grace?" We have a beautiful service of Holy Communion in our LSB, in fact, five of them. We generally only use one through four. Divine Service, setting five is sort of a template for a "create-your-own" worship service. I have a service I use when I take Communion to the homebound and those in nursing homes. But sometimes, a person may not be feeling well enough to do the whole service. What can I do?

That's when we ask the question, "What makes Communion a means of grace?" or "What gives Communion its power?" as the Catechism asks. The answer, "The Word of God." All we need to receive the blessings of Communion, *forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation*, are the elements, the Words of Institution, which is the Word of God, distribution, and reception by faith, believing we are receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The power is in the Word.

That addresses a question the church has faced from time to time. "Is Communion valid if it is administered by a pastor who is teaching errors or who is fallen in sin?" The answer is, "Yes." The power is not in the pastor, but in the Word of God. The bread and wine are not just symbols. When the Word of God is added to them, they are the "bread and wine that is Christ's body and blood and has the words attached to it" as said by Luther in his Large Catechism. The power is in the Word of God.