

Table, Body, and Blood

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Holy Thursday

Introduction

Last year, Easter was on April 12th. By this time (the 1st of the month), I still had hope that it wouldn't be cancelled. I was wrong. I know, I shouldn't say it was cancelled. You can't cancel Easter. It still came and we still celebrated it as best we could in our own homes. Some churches were able to live-stream their services. I recorded the sermons for Holy week and Easter, along with all the other sermons, and posted them on the Internet. But the services of Holy Week and Easter are so experiential, when you watch them on TV or a computer, you don't even get the half of it. That's why I'm so glad we can be back together this year.

Communion and Maundy Thursday

One of the things that makes it experiential, and important to be together, is Communion. Communion is central to the Maundy Thursday service. Some people think that Foot Washing is a big part of it. But think about it. Jesus' intention when He washed the disciples' feet wasn't the institution or ordination of a religious rite. He was performing a task that was customarily performed by a servant when guests entered a home. Jesus was using that as a teaching opportunity—to show us that being a Christian is about being a servant to my brothers and sisters in Christ. But when He broke the bread and passed the cup, He was instituting a rite, one that's been carried on in the church for 2,000 years, with very little change. It's a constant of Christian Worship. Since Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper, the night Jesus was betrayed and arrested, Communion is a powerful part of that service.

The Importance of Communion

Communion is a powerful part of any service. As a pastor, my main duties are Word and Sacrament. I am to preach and teach the Word in its purity and fullness and administer the Sacraments properly. There are other duties, but those are the primary ones. Communion is important because Christ commanded it. It's also important because, as Paul says, we are receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ when we receive the bread and wine. It's important because it is one of the means of grace. The means of grace, or the earthly things that God has chosen to be vessels of His grace to us, are the Word, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion. These are the means by which God works faith in our lives.

“I Need as Much Grace as I Can Get”

Shortly after joining the Lutheran Church, I was singing in the choir and was going to have to be in both services the next Sunday at Faith. I asked Pr. Raebel if I was to take Communion at both services. He said that I could take it whenever it was offered. With a sigh of relief, I said, “That's great, because I need all the grace I can get.” If Communion were only a symbol, and not a mean of grace, it wouldn't be a big deal. This is why, if I'm out of town and can't get Communion on a Sunday, I come to church Monday night, to receive Communion.

Live-streaming Communion?

This brings us to the question of live-streaming services. If we can live-stream a worship service and if Communion is that important, why don't we just live-stream the Communion service? There's been a lot of discussion about that in the LC-MS this year. I've heard of at least one church in our District that did just that. Individual households had their own bread and wine. The pastor consecrated the elements, and it was understood by all that the elements in their house had received the same consecration, and so contained the body and blood. While that may sound ridiculous, let me ask you, is anything impossible for God? If God chose to work that way, He could. But there's more to this issue than the question of it being possible. Even if it is possible, is it right?

What Communion Communicates

What's communicated in Communion? We communicate two things. We communicate our faith in Christ, *proclaiming His death until He comes* (**1 Corinthians 11:26**). And we communicate our unity. Paul says, "*we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*" (**2 Corinthians 10:17**). Do we have to be physically together to be one? No, we do not. But what good is it to be one if we can't be together? Praise God, we can come together. We do come together this night, around this one table, to eat this bread and drink this wine, to eat and drink the body and blood of our Lord. And we say with a loud shout, "We are one in Christ!"

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
