

## **The Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood In the Lord's Supper**

I Corinthians 11:23-30  
Reminiscere Sunday, March 1, 2015

Beloved of the Lord.....In the Holy Christian Church, whereas Baptism is a Sacrament of Initiation, Holy Communion is a Sacrament of Preservation. It is intended only for disciples of Christ to strengthen and preserve their faith. The purpose then, is threefold, **FIRST**, it is chiefly to receive forgiveness of our sins and thus to be strengthened in our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and **SECOND**, to obtain strength for a holier life, and **THIRD**, to bear testimony that we are of one faith with those who commune with us. Therefore every time we observe Holy Communion at the beginning of the month, let us remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." If you are sorry for your sins, if you believe Jesus is your Savior, and you are of one mind and faith with the confessions of our congregation, by all means commune if you have announced. Today then let us once again be reminded why we believe in the Real Presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. Following our catechism we have the answer, "I believe in the Real Presence....."

A. Because Jesus says, "This is My body, which is given for you" [and] "This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you". When we as Lutherans speak of the Real Presence, we simply mean that when we commune, not only do we receive with our mouth the bread and wine, but also the true body and blood of Christ which is in, with, and under that bread and wine. Question 299 of our catechism rightly explains: In, with, and under the bread Christ gives us His true body; in, with, and under the wine He gives us His true blood....Real Presence." By the words "in, with, and under" we simply mean His body is truly present in or with the bread and wine, and we will not pinpoint nor argue about exactly where, for it is enough to believe the words of Christ who giving the bread said "This is my body", and giving the wine said "This is my blood." Because we love and honor Christ our Savior, who really did offer up His body and blood upon the cross for our sins, we will not put our own private interpretation on those words of Christ as other churches do. We take the words of Christ in their plain and literal sense, for "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." God forbids us from interpreting the Bible according to human reason. Let the Word of God speak for itself. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Jesus did not say "This bread represents my body", rather Jesus said **THIS IS MY BODY**.

We emphasis this point today because the Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostal, Non-denominational, etc., teach that the bread and wine only *REPRESENT* the body and blood. They *DENY* the Real Presence. They also say the body of Christ is in heaven so it

cannot possibly be at many places on earth wherever Holy Communion is observed. But Edward Koehler answers this question nicely, and so I will quote. Regarding the words, “This is my body” Koehler writes, “None of these words can possibly have a figurative meaning. “This” refers to the bread, which Christ gave to His disciples. “Is” always means, “is” and in no human language does it ever mean “signify” or “represent”. Christ indeed says [in John 15:5] that He “is” the “vine”. This is figurative language, but the figure of speech lies not in the word “is” but in the word “vine”. Christ does not represent or signify a vine, but He really is to His Christians what the vine is to the branches, from Him they receive strength and spiritual nourishment. [Likewise] “body” is clearly defined as Christ’s real body by the words “given for you.” (Annotated Catechism, 294)

Let it also be said that we do not adore or worship this body and blood of Christ in the Sacrament. We do not make idols of them. When the Catholics adore, genuflect, or bow before the body and blood of Christ in their Mass, they are committing idolatry, for God does not command us to adore the host, but Jesus said “Take and eat”, and “Drink ye all of it”. Likewise understand that when we commune at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church we kneel for communion simply as a sign of our repentance. We are unworthy sinners who did not merit nor earn this forgiveness from Christ and our sins grieve us. But here in the Sacrament God is giving us heavenly food for strength. This body and blood which you receive were “Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.” This brings us now to the second reason we believe the Real Presence.

B. Because the Bible states that the cup is the communion of the blood of Christ and that the bread is the communion of the body of Christ. This is exactly what I Corinthians 10:16 says. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” Thus there is a union. A communion takes place between the bread and the body, and a communion takes place between the wine and the blood. They are there together united, in communion with each other, because of the power of God’s Word to unite them. The bread and wine retain their properties of course, for we taste and eat them, but also due to the union created by God’s Word, we also receive with our mouth His true body and blood. So our catechism explains, (Q. 307), “Like bread and wine, Christ’s body and blood are received by the communicant with his mouth, but in a supernatural manner.” We don’t need to go any further than this nor ponder any deeper, but we should simply believe and be assured by the body and blood given us, all sins are now forgiven, not because we commune, but because Jesus offered up upon the cross His body and blood, as a ransom and payment for the sins of us all. “For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” How sad then and troubling when some people rarely commune or miss communion often rather than commune often. Yet for those Christians who are weak, feeble or fearful, how wonderful Holy Communion is, for by this heavenly feast Jesus will surely strengthen and make firm your faith by the giving of His own body and blood so your heart will no longer be fearful or troubled. This Sacrament is far better and more precious than any Christmas gift under a tree, for this is God’s gift to you, the gift of His only-begotten Son. Here you obtain strength for a holier life, and whenever you commune “ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”

But here now let us briefly tackle another question, namely when is the exact moment when God unites His body with that bread, or His blood with the wine? The proper answer here is: We cannot give that exact moment, nor do we know, nor is it important. We do know that when the pastor speaks the Words of Institution, we are consecrating or setting aside that bread and wine for this divine purpose. Likewise without the spoken Word there is no Sacrament observed. We don't have a baptism for example, without saying those sacred words, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." So it is with Holy Communion, and so we have the Words of Institution. Yet when they are recited by the pastor, he is not bringing down the body of Christ from heaven to the bread, nor the blood to the wine. Again let us quote Edward Koehler here, for his words strike the target. He writes, "The Bible does not record the words with which Christ blessed the bread and the cup. We recite the words of Institution for the purposes stated above. These words do not work like magic, as though by their mere recitation the communion of the bread and the wine on the altar were effected with the body and the blood of Christ, for this was done by the words Christ spoke at the first Supper, and this communion exists only with the bread we actually eat and with the wine we actually drink, and not with what falls to the floor, is spilled, or left on the altar" (pg. 298). Thus when it is actually time for you to eat and drink in Holy Communion, you can be certain you are receiving His true body and blood because of the words Christ spoke that first sacred night. The power then of the Sacrament is in those words Christ spoke long ago. That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread, saying, "This is my body." [and] After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." Indeed the next day, Good Friday, Jesus offered up the same, His own body, His own blood, so He was and still is "the Lamb of God which taken away the sins of the world". Thus when we commune today, this is not a new sacrifice, nor are we forgiven because we commune, rather Holy Communion is the fruit of the onetime sacrifice whereby God forgave all sins, by the body and blood of the Son given once upon the cross long ago, for all.

Thus we need not concern ourselves with the leftover wine or bread after everyone has communed, for the body and blood are only present in the bread and wine which are consumed by the communicant. There is no leftover body. There is no leftover blood, for only that which is eaten and drunk is the body and blood of Christ. Nothing else. And let it also be said that when Jesus said "Drink ye all of it" in Matthew 26:27, this was fulfilled when ALL the disciples drank of it, as it says in Mark 14:23. "And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it." Therefore when pastors in the Orthodox Lutheran Confessional Conference today teach that the leftover wafers and wine must be consumed, they are "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." They are changing the meaning of a divine institution, much like substituting grape juice for wine. By focusing on the doing and fulfilling of men (the consuming after it is over), they lose sight of the doing and fulfilling of Christ. By focusing on the time and moment of the union, their vision is blurred regarding the purpose. This Sacrament is about all that Christ has fulfilled and given, "Given and shed

for you for the remission of sins.” It is not about man’s fulfillment of the Sacrament. The Sacrament is Gospel, not Law. It can only be received by faith, not fulfilled by fear.

As for our third reason we believe in the Real Presence: C. Because the Bible states that unworthy communicants are guilty, not of the bread and wine, but of the body and blood of Christ. For example, if the body and blood of Christ were not really present in the Lord’s Supper, than why does verse 27 of our text say, “Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”? Clearly then if a person communes in unbelief, not being sorry for their sins nor believing Jesus is their Savior, when they commune they are guilty of the body and blood of Christ! This means they have received the body and blood of Christ, but in vain! Such will receive to themselves “damnation.... not discerning the Lord's body.” If then at one time or another this was true of us, and we communed unworthily, we should repent of this sin also and look to Christ for forgiveness. Through Christ there is still forgiveness for all sins, but now we should commune with repentant hearts and faith in Christ, for God does not turn the penitent away, but “Jesus sinners doth receive”. So it says in Psalm 51, namely “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Finally now, our last reason why we believe in the Real Presence is, D. Because no man has the right to change the meaning of a divine institution and testament. Just as nobody has the right to change the Sacrament by substituting grape juice for wine, or teaching that all leftovers must be consumed, so nobody has the right to change the words of Christ who said “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” We must then take these words in their plain and literal sense because no man has the right to privately interpret God’s Word according to reason. *“IS” MEANS “IS”, AND “IS” DOES NOT MEAN “REPRESENT” OR “CHANGED INTO”*. So also it is wrong when the Catholic Church teaches the bread is changed into the body and the wine is changed into the blood. That does not agree with Jesus who simply said “This is my body” and “This is my blood.” Brethren, let us not change this blessed Sacrament, nor interpret it according to the vanity of reason, but rather let us rejoice in this wonderful gift God has given us in Holy Communion. For when you are a worthy communicant, namely you are genuinely sorry for your sins, yet believing Jesus is your Savior, you receive all the benefits God gives you through His body and blood, namely “that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.” Amen.