

Sermon for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13C) August 3, 2025 jj
Rev'd Mark B. Stirdivant, Christ our Savior Ev. Lutheran Church, St. Augustine, Florida

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Today for our First Sunday Catechism highlight on the sixth chief part I would like for us to step through one of our Communion hymns, one that is written and arranged like an orderly catechesis. That is to say, the hymn teaches the basics of the Eucharist in an easy to grasp way and also proclaims the benefits of the Body and Blood of Christ, given to you in, with, and under the bread and wine. There are 27 hymns in our book listed under the subject “Lord’s Supper” which is our more common term for Holy Communion, as compared to what Luther names it in the Catechism, the Sacrament of the Altar. The hymn we just sang, number 622, Lord Jesus Christ, You have Prepared, first appeared in the German language about a century after Martin Luther. It sings like a prayer to the Lord Himself, Jesus Christ our Savior, for it is He who prepared this feast for you.

The first stanza of the hymn sets clear exactly what the feast is: Christ’s true body and precious blood. None other than Jesus invites you to attend the banquet, which brings to mind the Lord’s parable of the wedding banquet, Matthew 22. Several hymns, both inside and outside the Lord’s Supper section, link the image of a wedding banquet with the Sacrament of the Altar. Sin has oppressed us and left us in need of three of the many benefits offered at the Lord’s Table, Sabbath rest, comfort, and most importantly, the pardon of forgiveness that has set us free.

Stanza two explores the majesty of Jesus Christ, who is true God and true Man. We ponder in awe at the glory that He now possesses, as He is ascended and seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. When we seek after things that are above and scorn the earthly things below, our minds are set on the risen Christ,

raised high above all earthly power and authority. Angels, those mighty servants of God, bask in His unchecked Divine brilliance that is all-excelling. All human creatures, on the other hand, have no access to this glorious vision, until, of course, the Last Day, which will dawn with the resurrection of our bodies, like Easter morning did for Jesus, whom Paul describes as the firstfruits of them that sleep.

It’s in the next stanza that the thought is completed: even though Jesus is dwelling in utter glory in the presence of the holy angels, our access to Him is not revoked after all! King Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Jerusalem temple three thousand years ago asked: Will God really dwell on earth? Yes, Solomon, He will and He has—in the flesh of Jesus Christ, and He continues to do so, although hidden, sacramentally present under the bread and wine. Jesus assures you He is with you, His precious congregation, He’s made for Himself His holy temple of dwelling in your hearts. This truth shall stand, firm as a rock: Jesus in the flesh is here to save, to strengthen, and to heal you—this is your forgiveness unmoved by any hand that would even dare to oppose God’s holy will for you, His dear child.

Stanza four relishes the very moment we’ve been awaiting: we eat this bread and drink this cup! While doing as the Lord commands, we believe exactly what the Lord promises to deliver in these humble means of grace. Jesus said, take, eat this is My body, therefore, that is what we are eating with our mouths, not symbolically nor in a spiritual sense of any kind. We drink the cup, that is, the fermented wine that was in the cup, same as it was at that Passover supper long ago. What a magnificent miracle that has taken place! We are astounded, but not surprised, because of course, Lord, all

things are possible with You, for You are the Lord Almighty!

In stanza five, our prayer at the Lord's holy table reflects upon how He makes good on this promise week after week. Reason cannot grasp it, but faith understands and embraces the fact that the same Lord's Body and Blood is at once undivided and yet present in many places. Everywhere the Sacrament is observed in accord with His institution, there is Christ, in the human flesh and blood that is eaten and drunk by human mouths. The more we reflect on this mystery, the more solid our conclusion becomes: I leave to You, Lord, how this can be. Your Word is enough for me to believe it, and the truth of that Word will not fail me.

With the final three stanzas of this Communion hymn, we include our specific petitions to our gracious Lord, who is for our feast the host, chef, cook, butler, and also He is the food itself! I am assailed by doubts. My own sinful flesh sometimes opposes me when I say simply, Lord, I believe what You have said. I am nothing more than dust of the earth, as Abraham recognized in our readings last Sunday while he was pleading with the Lord for the safety of his nephew Lot in the wicked woke city of Sodom. God the Holy Spirit inspired my faith in me, so I trust He will not let it fail. Why do we need this Lord's Supper often, as Jesus said do this often? It's because we live in a vale, a valley of tears, and while we walk through the deep dark valley of the shadow of death, like the 23rd Psalm sings, we have this feast to refresh and to make our fears be still, much like our Savior Himself calmed the storms that raged on the sea. Though we may be robbed or swindled of all our earthly valuables, this Body and Blood remains our most priceless treasure that we shall never lose.

In stanza seven, the hymn writer reminds us of our proper repentant attitude that prepares us to

receive the Sacrament worthily. As the Catechism says, whether or how we fast or prepare our body may be a useful aid to us, but the core of it all is centered in grasping the forgiveness of sins. We are correct to grieve for our sins, genuinely abhorring not only the sins we do, but also the sinners that we are. We follow Paul's advice in today's Epistle reading and put all things in us that fall under God's wrath away from us permanently, putting them to death by nailing them to the cross, drowning them in our remembrance of Baptism. Let the change in our attitude, our behavior toward others be valid evidence of our actual change in status from lost to found, from miserable earthling to heavenly citizen. Our partaking together as a unified congregation also proclaims our unity in holding a common teaching, not a mere fleeting or vague "agree to disagree" sentiment. Your pastor oversees this teaching personally, and he is responsible for the spiritual care necessary to ensure that the same faith is professed publicly by every communicant, which is the only valid reason for a congregation to have closed communion. Lord, make us thankful for the presence of Your grace in our lives, the grace without which we would have no hope of daily running our race with perseverance looking to Jesus the author and finisher who has at the same time won the race for us and cheers us on as we run, ever increasing in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.

Finally, we praise Christ our Savior for the consoling that His Body and Blood offers us and gives each and every Lord's Day, the Dies Dominica, or in Spanish, Domingo. Unchanged throughout all ages, its comfort for our distressed consciences will not diminish, even though in every place the world against it rages. The fallen, sinful world rejected Jesus during the years He taught and was seen on earth; why should it do any differently now while He is hidden in the Sacrament of the Altar? He

identifies personally, bodily even, with every assault that is raised against the Church and against every Christian, yet through all this abuse we suffer together with one another and with our Lord in this life, He will preserve His consoling supper for your sake until He welcomes you fully in His arms of eternal life. Until that day when He shall use your death to bring you into His nearer presence, praise the Lord for His blessed comfort, and partake often of His Body and Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.