

A Lenten Midweek Service

by The Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

WEDNESDAY IN LENT 5 - Theme: Holy Communion

ORDER OF SERVICE

Lent has traditionally been a time of repentance and renewal. In the early church, this was a time of preparation and instruction for those to be baptized at the Great Vigil of Easter on Holy Saturday. Later this idea of preparation and instruction was applied to baptized Christians as well. In our Lenten observance on these Wednesday evenings, we will concentrate on the five great themes of Luther's Small Catechism for our lessons and sermons. Our service order will be centered around the Ten Commandments as our guide and light to a life in loving response to the Gospel of our Lord.

P = Presiding Minister C = Congregation

PRELUDE

INVITATORY:

P: Come and let us walk in the light of the Lord. And he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

PRAYER FOR LENT:

P: Show your servants your works, O Lord;

C: And their children your glory.

P: Let your merciful kindness be upon us,

C: As we put our trust in you.

P: Not to us, O Lord, not to us,

C: But to your name be the praise.

P Lord, hear our prayer,

C: And let our cry come to you.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

P: Let us pray

O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

EXHORTATION:

P: Brothers and sisters: We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love -- the discipline of Lent -- help us to wage our spiritual warfare. Let us therefore turn to the Word of God this night. For the Word of God contains the Law and the Gospel and is the light before our eyes. The Gospel is God's gracious promise to us as his beloved children. It shows us all that He has done for us, in Israel and in Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and for newness of life. Christ makes us his own and heirs of his kingdom. The Law, on the other hand, represents what God expects of us in the response of our lives as we live in loving service to his will.

C: The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart. The commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to our eyes.

THE DECALOGUE:

P: God spoke these words, and said: I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods,

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this

commandment.

P: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: Honor your father and mother.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not kill.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not commit adultery.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not steal.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not covet.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

THE LAW OF LOVE

P: Jesus summarized the Decalogue into two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

C: The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart. The commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to our eyes.

PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION

P: Let us pray. Gracious Lord, through water and the Spirit you have made us your own. You forgave us all our sins and brought us to newness of life. Continue to strengthen us with the Holy Spirit, and daily increase in us your gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,

C: Amen

THE LESSONS

1 Corinthians 10:16-17

16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

A: This is the Word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSORY:

P: Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

C: Into your hands I commend my spirit.

P: You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.

C: Into your hands I commend my spirit.

P: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

C: Into your hands I commend my spirit.

HYMN "Amazing Grace" ELW 779

THE GREAT LITANY ELW #238 responsively

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O Christ, hear us.
In mercy hear us.

God, the Father in heaven,
have mercy on us.

God, the Son, redeemer of the world,
have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Spirit,
have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God,
have mercy on us.

Be gracious to us.
Spare us, good Lord.

Be gracious to us.
Spare us, good Lord.

From all sin, from all error, from all evil; from the cunning assaults of the devil; from an unprepared and evil death:
Good Lord, deliver us.

From war, bloodshed, and violence; from corrupt and unjust government; from sedition and treason:
Good Lord, deliver us.

From epidemic, drought, and famine; from fire and flood, earthquake, lightning, and storm: and from everlasting death:
Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of your incarnation; by your holy birth:
Help us, good Lord.

By your baptism, fasting, and temptation; by your agony and bloody sweat; by your cross and suffering; by your death and burial:
Help us, good Lord.

By your resurrection and ascension; by the gift of the Holy Spirit:
Help us, good Lord.

In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death;
and in the day of judgment:
Save us, good Lord.

Though unworthy, we implore you
to hear us, Lord our God.

To rule and govern your holy catholic church; to guide all servants of your
church in the love of your word and in holiness of life; to put an end to all
schisms and causes of offense to those who would believe; and to bring into
the way of truth all who have gone astray:
We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To beat down Satan under our feet; to send faithful workers into your
harvest; to accompany your word with your Spirit and power; to raise up
those who fall and to strengthen those who stand; and to comfort and help
the fainthearted and the distressed:
We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To give to all nations justice and peace; to preserve our country from
discord and strife; to direct and guard those who have civil authority; and to
bless and guide all our people:
We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To behold and help all who are in danger, need, or tribulation; to protect and
guide all who travel; to preserve and provide for all women in childbirth; to
watch over children and to guide the young; to heal the sick and to
strengthen their families and friends; to bring reconciliation to families in
discord; to provide for the unemployed and for all in need; to be merciful to
all who are imprisoned; to support, comfort, and guide all orphans,
widowers, and widows; and to have mercy on all your people:
We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to reconcile us to
them; to help us use wisely the fruits and treasures of the earth, the sea,
and the air; and graciously to hear our prayers:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
we implore you to hear us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
give us peace. Amen.

O Christ, hear us.

In mercy hear us.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER

P: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, you gave your only Son to be a life to redeem us, an example to follow, the word for our rule, the grace for our guide, the lamb on the cross for the sins of our souls. Send your Spirit to enter into us and take possession of our hearts, and dwell with us forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your be, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and takes on new life, it remains just a single grain. With grateful hearts, let us bring the fruit of our lives to God.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING/DEDICATION

As the high priest Melchizedek blessed Abraham and offered his tithe of bread and wine at your holy altar, may our gifts be made perfect through Christ to glorify you and bless the world. **Amen.**

HYMN ELW 599 "Lord Jesus, Think on Me"

MESSAGE – COMMUNION

Today our message is a tutorial by the Christian writers at CSS publishing as to how we understand our celebration of communion.

¹<https://sermons.com/sermon/communion-is-reformed/1340136>

Then he took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me." (TEV)

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Martin Luther was raised by very strict Catholic parents. They rightly believed that the devil was real and constantly present. They believed that God was to be feared and respected. So anytime young Martin or any of their other children did something "devilish," they were severely punished.

But Luther said his mother meant well. She was determined that he know right from wrong and that he learn to fear the righteousness of God. And fear God he did! His fear of the Lord plagued him throughout his early years of development and even continued when he became a priest. All of his fear of God came to a head when he celebrated his first Mass, his first service of Holy Communion.

Luther believed, as the Church taught, that a priest was closer to God than any other human, except the Pope of course. Only a priest had the privilege of talking directly to God, everyone else had to pray through the priests. Only a priest had the privilege of performing the miracle of the Mass: transforming the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Despite these privileges, as his first celebration of Holy Communion approached, Luther became more and more frightened. He knew that he was not worthy to hold in his hands the flesh and blood of Christ. He wasn't

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sure that he was ready to talk directly to God. What if he did or said something wrong in Mass? What if he mishandled the Bread and Wine? God would surely be angry and punish him severely and swiftly as his parents had done years before.

At that point in his life he accepted the Roman Catholic teaching of transubstantiation. The doctrine that the bread and wine actually changed into the body and blood of Christ when the priest spoke the proper words at the altar.

Communion was mysterious and awesome. The Church was so afraid that lay people might spill the wine and in that way desecrate the sacred blood of Christ. The cup, the chalice, was withheld from the worshipers. The people received only the bread of Holy Communion

In his early years as a priest Luther believed in the doctrine of transubstantiation and in the practice of withholding the wine from the laity. But in the midst of the Reformation, he rejected both the doctrine and the practice. He wrote that transubstantiation "is a monstrous word for a monstrous idea. The bread remains bread and the wine remains wine." (Theodore Tappert, *The Lord's Supper*, p. 12) Since the bread and wine do not actually change into the body and blood of Jesus, Luther argued that there was no reason to withhold the chalice of wine from the congregation. Therefore one of the radical changes which the Reformation brought was the serving of both bread and wine in Holy Communion.

Luther not only rejected the Doctrine of Transubstantiation - that the Communion Elements changed into Christ's Body and Blood, he also rejected the memorial view. This theological position held that the bread and wine were merely symbols to remind us of our Lord's Body which was broken and his Blood which was spilled on the Cross of Calvary. To be sure, they do remind us of what Christ did for us through his atoning death he said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." But for Luther and Lutherans, Communion is more than a memorial service in which we remember what the Lord did for us in the past. Holy Communion is a celebration of what he is doing for us in the present and what he promises to do for us in the future.

Lutherans do not believe in transubstantiation or the memorial view but in the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion. They believe that Christ himself comes to the recipient - not simply the metaphysical substances of his flesh and blood. When we gather for Holy Communion, we believe that

Christ is our host. He is really present in, with and under the forms of Bread and Wine to invite us to meet him at his Table of Grace. As we eat the bread and drink the wine in repentant faith, Christ comes to give us "forgiveness of sins, life and salvation" as Luther wrote in his Small Catechism.

For Lutherans, Holy Communion is something that God does for us! He comes with forgiveness of sins. He brings assurance of salvation. He gives strength for battling temptation and living the abundant life. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast your burdens upon the Lord and he will sustain you." Many of us become burdened with worries, concerns and problems. In Holy Communion, Christ invites us to come to him with repentant hearts, confessing our sins and he will relieve us of our burden of guilt with the assurance of forgiveness.

Christ is present in this special meal of grace. Christ is here to relieve us of our burdens if we'll let him. The trouble is that we won't trust our Lord enough to cast our burdens on him. Too many of us choose to hold on to our burdens as we add today's pain onto yesterday's sorrow and top it all off with worry about tomorrow. So many of us have not learned the tremendous lesson which Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:34) saying "Do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will have worries enough of its own." God wants us to trust him to be present with us and then just live one day at a time!

Jesus is really present, in a special and mysterious way in our celebration of Holy Communion.. Jesus is here to forgive us, to strengthen us, to save us, to love us. He is here inviting us: "Come to me, my heavy laden children and I will give you rest. Cast your burdens upon me and I will sustain you!"

Each time we come to the Altar we believe, as Luther did, that Christ is really present in our celebration of his Holy Supper. Confess your sins to our Lord and hear him say that you are forgiven. Place all your cares, fears, worries and burdens into Christ's loving hands and know that he will strengthen and sustain you. Then leave the Altar refreshed, renewed and rejoicing.

CLOSING PRAYER:

P: Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you have taught us what you would have us believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus

Christ, to keep your Word in pure hearts, that we may be strengthened in faith, perfected in holiness, and comforted in life and in death.

C: Amen

BENEDICTION

A: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God

P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

C: Amen

CLOSING HYMN ELW 377 – “Alas! And Did My Saviour Bleed”

P: Go In Peace, Remember The Poor

Thanks Be To God

POSTLUDE