

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Topical Bulletin, January 2024

In this month's Bulletin, we will continue from where we left off last month. Therefore, our topic for consideration is: **The Lord's Supper (part 3)**

The proper preparation is necessary before we partake of the Lord's Supper. Three things are surely needed when we intend to partake of Holy Communion; those being: contrition, faith, and honest intent. Therefore, we need to examine ourselves in view of the Ten Commandments given by God, to see—

- A. Whether we truly repent of our sins; that we are truly sorry for offending God.
- B. Whether we believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior; that we fully trust and confide in Jesus Christ, as He has kept God's Law perfectly for us and has paid for our lack of keeping God's Law.
- C. Whether we have the good and earnest purpose, with the aid of God the Holy Ghost, henceforth to amend our sinful lives; changing our behavior in thoughts, words, and deeds, to conform with God's directives as found in His Holy Word.

Consider the following Bible passages which confirm what is stated above:

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:19-20)

Comment: GOD'S HOLY WORD – PARTICULARLY GOD'S LAW – CONVINCES US THAT WE'VE ALL OFFENDED GOD AND CONSEQUENTLY NEED TO REPENT OF OUR SINS. Indeed, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Ecclesiastes 7:20) "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

Comment: WE ALL NEED TO BELIEVE THE GOSPEL— THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST, THE ONE TRUE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD. It's a fact, because, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) "He that

believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36)

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:6-10)

Comment: AGAIN, THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF SINCERE REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST IS PLAINLY PUT FORTH.

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:1-7)

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:15-21)

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:1-6)

Comment: NOTE WELL THAT THE AMENDING OF OUR LIVES – THAT IS, BEING FRUITFUL IN THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST – IS WHAT WE ALL NEED TO STRIVE TO DO! We are to show that, “We love him, because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19) WE ARE NOT TO BE LIARS, CONFESSING FAITH IN CHRIST WITH OUR MOUTH WHILE LIVING IN DELIBERATE AND WILFUL SIN; for the devil, “is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44) ACCORDINGLY, WE CHRISTIANS SHOULD CERTAINLY HAVE THE HONEST INTENT TO AMEND OUR SINFUL LIVES, WITH THE AID OF GOD THE HOLY GHOST, AS WE APPROACH THE LORD’S TABLE TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION.

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” (Isaiah 42:3)

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)

A man with a devil-possessed child once rightly prayed to Jesus; for, **“the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” (Mark 9:24)**

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.” (Luke 17:5)

Comment: Notice from the Scripture passages quoted above, it is evident that the Lord God is ready and willing to strengthen believers in their faith. THEREFORE, BELIEVERS WHOSE FAITH IS WEAK SHOULD INDEED COME TO THE LORD’S SUPPER THAT THEIR FAITH MAY GROW STRONGER.

We will now consider the fact – with proofs from the Holy Bible – that there are people to whom the Lord’s Supper must be denied.

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” (1 Corinthians 11:27 & 29)

Comment: The above quoted Bible verse makes it clear that THE LORD’S SUPPER MUST BE DENIED TO THOSE WHO ARE KNOWN TO BE UNGODLY AND IMPENITENT.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

Comment: Observe the importance of being reconciled to a brother. HENCE, THE LORD’S SUPPER MUST BE DENIED TO THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN OFFENSE AND HAVE NOT REMOVED IT.

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” (1 Corinthians 11:28)

Comment: The Scripture verse quoted above makes the point that proper self-examination is necessary before one can partake of Holy Communion. THUS, THE LORD’S SUPPER MUST BE DENIED TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT ABLE TO PROPERLY EXAMINE THEMSELVES— SUCH AS CHILDREN AND ADULTS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY INSTRUCTED IN BIBLE DOCTRINES; AND, PERSONS WHO ARE UNCONSCIOUS OR MENTALLY INSANE, OR THE LIKE.

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

**“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”
(1 Corinthians 10:17)**

**“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”
(Romans 16:17-18)**

Comment: The above quoted Bible verses emphasize the need for unity of faith— unity in the doctrines of the Holy Bible. HENCE, THE LORD’S SUPPER MUST BE DENIED TO THOSE OF A DIFFERENT FAITH, SINCE THE LORD’S SUPPER IS A TESTIMONY OF UNITY OF FAITH. Accordingly, CLOSE COMMUNION is to be practiced— that is, CLOSE, as in close friends with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; NOT CLOSED, as in totally closed to all people.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:38-42)

Comment: NOTE WELL FROM THE ABOVE QUOTED BIBLE PASSAGE THAT HOLY BAPTISM AND INSTRUCTION IN GOD’S WORD PRECEDES THE BREAKING OF BREAD, THAT IS, THE PARTAKING OF HOLY COMMUNION. SO, THE LORD’S SUPPER MUST BE DENIED TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN BAPTIZED. JESUS CHRIST MUST BE PUT-ON BEFORE ONE PARTAKES OF HIS TRUE BODY AND BLOOD, WHICH IS IN, WITH AND UNDER THE BREAD AND THE WINE IN HOLY COMMUNION. Yes, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)

It is a common practice in our Lutheran Churches for people to make known their intention to partake of the Lord’s Supper— such is known as registration for Communion. This gives the pastor the opportunity to speak to the communicants before the Lord’s Supper is celebrated.

We admit to the Lord’s Table only those who have received sufficient instruction in the primary doctrines of the Holy Bible (and are thus capable of examining themselves) and have given account of their faith; for our Lord Jesus Christ declares, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32-33) “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38)

Accordingly, in our Lutheran Churches, we observe the custom of CONFIRMATION. “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that

we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:21-22) “And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.” (Acts 15:32)

It’s a fact that CONFIRMATION IS NOT A SACRAMENT, but is rather a RITE by which a baptized person renews his (or her) baptismal vow, publically confesses his (or her) faith, and is received into communicant membership by the congregation. Our Lord Jesus Christ plainly states, “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:8-9)

Take it to heart that on the day of Confirmation the congregation should pray for the catechumens, that they may grow in grace, be steadfast in the profession of their faith in Christ, become fruitful in every good work, and in the end receive the crown of life. Indeed, for Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, says in Revelation 2:10, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Yes, our Lord Jesus urges every Christian, saying, “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” (Revelation 3:11)

Let us all strive to hold fast to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, continuing in His Holy Word and making proper use of His Sacraments. Let all of us confirmed Christians highly value **the Lord’s Supper**.

m.e.l.