

**Sermon Text:** 1 Corinthians 11:23 – 26

**Sermon Theme:** **We Preach Christ Crucified in His Holy Supper!**

Do you remember what you had for supper last night? How about two weeks ago? How about a month ago? Who made the suppers that you ate last night, two weeks ago or a month ago? It may be easy to remember what you had for supper last night and who made it. But it gets more and more difficult for us to remember when we go back farther and farther in time. Tonight we celebrate a supper that has been served for almost 2000 years. What is being served at this supper, and the one who serves it, has not changed in all that time. During our mid-week Lenten services the past 6 weeks we have used as our theme: "We Preach Christ Crucified!" Tonight, we remember that each time we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion "We Preach Christ Crucified in His Holy Supper." I invite you to turn to page #5 in our worship folders tonight, and follow along as I read from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 23 – 26. From God's Word we read:

***<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup>For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.***

This is the Word of the Lord.

While we may not be able to remember who cooked supper for us each night last week or last month, we know without any doubts who it is that gives us the supper we enjoy this evening. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is also known as "The Lord's Supper". As we read just a few moments ago from Luke's Gospel, it was on the night that Jesus was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, as he celebrated one last Passover with his disciples, that the Lord Jesus gave to them, gave to his disciples of all time, gave to you and me here this evening, his Holy Supper. Why? Two thoughts come to mind from the verses before us.

First, Jesus tells, "do this in remembrance of me." Paul, led by God the Holy Spirit, then comments on Jesus' words we he writes, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we preach Christ crucified; we remember that Jesus was willing to give up his body and shed his blood for the forgiveness of all of our sins.

This brings to mind the second answer to the question: "Why did Jesus give us this supper?" The Lord himself tells us that it is "a new covenant." A covenant is a promise or an agreement made between two people or two groups. In the Old Testament, the Lord God made a covenant with his chosen people, the nation of Israel. He promised them that if they remained faithful to him and his Word, then he would continue to be their faithful God. But his people didn't keep their end of the agreement. So, in love for sinful mankind, the Savior-God made a "new covenant" with his people. The promise is that through the body and blood of Jesus there is a right relationship between the one and only true God and his disciples; and this includes you and me here this evening.

You and I know that we are no different than the rest of sinful mankind when it comes to being conceived and born in sin. As we examine how we live, talk and think in light of the perfection that God demands of us, each one of us rightly falls on our knees in shame. In great sorrow over our sins, confessing that we are sinful inside and out, seeking the Lord's mercy and compassion, we hear again the Good News that we preach Christ crucified. In his Holy Supper, the Lord comes to you with his body and his blood in, with and under the bread and wine to assure you personally that all of your sins are forgiven. In his great love for you and me, through his Holy Supper, Jesus invites us to himself and says to each one of us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." What a comforting invitation from our Lord! Jesus freely gives us his body and his blood along with his promise of our forgiveness and peace with our Father in heaven.

I want you to think for a moment about a couple who are in love with each other but have to live one hundred miles apart from each other for awhile. What do these two people do during that time? Do they never once e-mail or text or call each other? Do they never go to visit their loved one? Of course they will communicate with each other on a regular basis. They call each other on the phone several times during the course of one week; maybe several times in just one day. But on the weekends and holidays they make an effort to spend time together. Because while talking on the phone, sending e-mails or text messages back and forth to each other, is a nice way to stay in contact with the other person, the greater enjoyment is when they are able to see each other face to face. So it is with you and me and our relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus speaks to us in his Word. But he visits each one of us personally when he comes to us in his Holy Supper. He is able to do that because his body and blood are really present in the Lord's Supper. Recall the words of our Savior. We are told that Jesus "took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood.'"

What I would like to do for all of us at this point is review for ourselves what Dr. Martin Luther wrote about the Lord's Supper in his Small Catechism. I invite you to listen as I read the four points that Luther makes based on the true Word of God. He makes his four points in the form of four questions:

*First: What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?*

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

*Where is this written?*

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the Apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

*Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking and drinking?*

That is shown us by these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

*Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?*

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

*Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?*

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.

As we come forward tonight and receive the Lord's Supper, it may not look like a very glorious scene. But as you come before him with a humble and penitent heart tonight, know that Jesus your Savior is here. His body and blood are really present together with the bread that you eat and the wine that you drink. Once again this evening, in his Holy Supper, your loving Savior-God reaches out to you with his forgiving grace and love. Once again this evening, with hearts filled with thanks for his great love for you and me, we preach Christ crucified in his Holy Supper. Amen.