

Series on Worship, Week 4

Holy Supper



And He said to them,
With longing I have longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer... And taking bread, He gave thanks and broke it, and gave to them saying,
This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.
And likewise the cup after supper, saying,
This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.

(Luke 22:15, 19, 20)

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What is the purpose of holy supper? Why is it holy?

And I saw no temple in her, for the Lord God Almighty is her temple, and the Lamb.
(Revelation 21:22).

In this church there will not be any external separated from the internal, because the Lord Himself in His Divine Human, from whom is the all of the church, is alone approached, worshiped, and adored (AR 918).

[The Lord] enjoined only a few external observances, namely, baptism and the Holy Supper—baptism, that by it regeneration might be remembered; and the Holy Supper, that by it might be remembered the Lord, and His love toward the whole human race, and the reciprocal love of man to Him (AC 4904:3).

The Holy Supper was instituted by the Lord in order that by means of it there may be a conjunction of the church with heaven, thus with the Lord. It is therefore the most holy thing of the church (AC 10519).

[The Holy Supper] ... is the primary thing of external worship, because the Lord’s Divine Human is given there (AC 2811).

But be it known that conjunction with the Lord through the sacrament of the Supper is effected solely with those who are in the good of love and of faith to the Lord from the Lord. The Holy Supper is the seal of this conjunction (AC 10522).

For the sake of ... affiliation with angels, and at the same time conjunction with the Lord, the Holy Supper was instituted, the bread of which in heaven becomes Divine good, and the wine Divine truth, each from the Lord. Such correspondence exists by creation, to the end that the angelic heaven may make one with the church on earth, and in general the spiritual world may make one with the natural world, and the Lord may conjoin Himself with both at once (TCR 238).

If man thought in like manner when he is in a holy state, as when he attends the Holy Supper, and instead of bread perceived love to the Lord, and instead of wine love toward the neighbor, he would be in thought and perception like that of the angels, who would then approach nearer to him, till at last they could consociate their thoughts, but only so far as the man was at the same time in good (AC 3316:3).

It is with the Holy Supper as with a covenant: after the articles of agreement are settled, it is drawn up and finally executed with a seal.... The Holy Supper... is like the seal.... And the Word is the covenant itself which the Lord made with man and man with the Lord; for the Lord descended as the Word, that is, as Divine truth (TCR 728, 730).

The man who is in a holy state when receiving the bread of the Holy Supper... then thinks not of bread, but of the Lord and His mercy, and of what is of love to Him and of charity toward the neighbor, because he thinks of repentance and amendment of life; but this with variety according to the holiness in which he is, not only as to his thought, but also as to his affection. From this it is manifest that "bread" as mentioned in the Word suggests to the angels no idea of bread, but the idea of love, together with innumerable things that are of love. It is the same with "wine," which when read of in the Word, and also when received in the Holy Supper, suggests to the angels no thought of wine, but of charity toward the neighbor. This being the case, and as in this way there is a connection of man with heaven, and through heaven with the Lord, the bread and wine have become symbols, and unite the man who is in holiness of life with heaven, and through heaven with the Lord (AC 4217:2).

What are called the holy things of the church are not holy unless they are received in a holy way; for unless they are received in a holy way, the Divine does not flow into them, and all the holy things with man are holy merely from the Divine influx. For instance, holy edifices, the altars there, the bread and wine for the Holy Supper, become holy solely through the presence of the Lord; and therefore if the Lord cannot be present there because of the sins of the people, what is holy is absent, because the Divine is absent (AC 10208:3).

Questions

1. "Conjunction with the Lord is effected by the Holy Supper" (TCR 725). How does taking the Holy Supper accomplish this?
2. Why is the Holy Supper called a "covenant"?
3. How is the Holy Supper reciprocal? Why is this important?
4. "We can assure you that every man whose soul desires it, is able to see the truths of the Word in clear light. There is no animal that does not know its life's food when it sees it; and man is a rational and spiritual animal; he sees the food of his life, not his body's but his soul's food, which is the truth of faith, provided he hungers for it and seeks it from the Lord (AC 4904:3). Do we hunger for and seek the Holy Supper?"

5. Do most people understand why the Holy Supper is holy and special?
6. Is there anything we can or should do to increase the sense of its holiness?

How can we approach the holy supper worthily?

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6).

Is not the holy supper a sacrament of repentance, and thus introduction into heaven? Are not communicants told by all means to repent before coming to it? (TCR 567:8)

In order that everyone in the work of repentance might look to the Lord alone, He instituted the Holy Supper, which confirms the remission of sins with those who repent. It does so because in that Supper or Communion, the attention of everyone is directed to the Lord alone (DP 122:e).

Actual repentance is to examine oneself, to know and acknowledge his sins, to hold himself guilty, to confess them before the Lord, to implore help and the power to resist them, and thus to desist from them, and lead a new life, doing all these things as of yourselves. Do this once or twice a year, when you approach the Holy Communion; and afterwards when the sins of which you have found yourselves guilty recur, then say to yourselves, "We will not consent to them because they are sins against God." This is actual repentance (AR 531:5).

The Lord is present and opens heaven to those who approach the Holy Supper worthily, and is also present with those who approach unworthily, but to them He does not open heaven. Consequently, as baptism is introduction into the church, so the Holy Supper is introduction into heaven... With both the worthy and the unworthy the Lord is present, because He is omnipresent both in heaven and in hell, and also in the world, consequently with the evil as well as with the good. But with the good, that is, with the regenerate, He is present both universally and individually; for the Lord is in them and they are in Him, and where He is, there is heaven. Moreover, heaven constitutes the Lord's body; consequently, to be in His body is also to be in heaven... (TCR 719:1).

With those who only understand what is true and good, the Lord's presence is universal or external, while with those who also will and do what is true and good, the Lord's presence is both universal and individual, or both internal and external. Those who merely understand and talk about what is true and good are like the foolish virgins who had lamps but no oil; while those who not only understand and talk about what is true and good, but also will and do it, are the wise virgins who were admitted to the wedding, while the former stood at the door and knocked, but were not admitted (Matt. 25:1-12). From all this it can be seen that the Lord is present and opens heaven to those who come to the Holy Supper worthily; and that He is also present with those who come to it unworthily, but to them He does not open heaven (TCR 719:3).

Nevertheless, it is not to be supposed that the Lord closes heaven to those who come unworthily. This He does to no man, even to the end of his life in the world; but man closes heaven to himself, and he does this by the rejection of faith and by evil of life (TCR 720).

Those come to the Holy Supper worthily who have faith in the Lord and charity toward the neighbor, that is who are regenerate.... That God must be acknowledged in order that one may have religion, or that anything of the church may be in him, is declared by reason itself when there is anything spiritual in it; consequently, if one comes to the holy supper without acknowledging God, he profanes it.... After the acknowledgment of God, charity is the second means which enables one to come to the holy supper worthily.... Faith in the Lord is the third means of worthily enjoying the Holy Supper, because charity and faith make one, like heat and light in spring, from which two conjoined every tree is born anew; so from spiritual heat, which is charity, and from spiritual light, which is the truth of faith, every man has life (TCR 722).

If at recurring seasons there is actual repentance, as often, for instance, as a man prepares for the communion of the holy supper, and if he afterward abstains from one or another sin which he then discovers in himself, this is sufficient to initiate him into the actuality [of repentance], and when he is in that he is on the way to heaven, for he then from being natural begins to be spiritual, and to be born anew from the Lord (TCR 530).

Questions

1. Should we feel that we must be confirmed before taking the Holy Supper?
2. If you find yourself in the service and unprepared, should you participate? Should you turn down "the Lord's invitation"?
3. "It is known that they who eat the bread in the Holy Supper unworthily, do not appropriate good to themselves, but evil" (AC 4745). "The Lord does not require any more of the man of the church than to live according to what he knows" (AC 6706). In what sense are we able to approach worthily? Can we really tell?
4. Unworthiness is especially hypocrisy and insincerity, as if an avowed atheist or a confirmed adulterer or thief should come to holy supper. What is the path to becoming more "worthy"?

Why did the Lord command that we use unleavened bread but fermented wine?

It is the spirit that makes alive; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life (John 6:63).

The greatest power is in correspondences, because in them heaven and the world, or the spiritual and the natural, are together.... The Lord also by this means is in firsts and at the same time in

ultimates. On this account the sacraments have been instituted through correspondences, and therefore there is the Divine power in them (Invitation to the New Church 59).

“Bread” signifies what is celestial, because “bread” means all food in general, and thus in the internal sense all celestial food... The “bread” signifies all the things represented by the sacrifices, thus in the internal sense the Lord Himself. And because the “bread” signifies the Lord Himself, it signifies love itself toward the universal human race, and what belongs to love, as well as man’s reciprocal love to the Lord and toward the neighbor (AC 2165:1, 4).

Its being “unleavened,” or not fermented, signifies that it should be sincere, and thus from a sincere heart, and free from uncleanness (AC 2177:5). The good of innocence, which is represented by the paschal lamb, cannot be appropriated to anyone except through temptations. By “unleavened bread” such good is signified (AC 7854). In the Word “bread” signifies in general all celestial and spiritual food, thus celestial and spiritual things in general... That these should be free from everything impure was represented by bread without leaven; for “leaven” signifies that which is evil and false, by which celestial and spiritual things are rendered impure and profane (AC 2342).

As further regards what is leavened and what is unleavened, be it known that the purification of truth from falsity with man cannot possibly exist without fermentation, so called, that is, without the combat of falsity with truth and of truth with falsity; but after combat has taken place, and truth has conquered, then falsity falls down like dregs, and the truth comes forth purified, like wine which grows clear after fermentation, the dregs falling to the bottom. This fermentation or combat exists chiefly when the state with man is being changed, that is, when he begins to act from the good that is of charity, and not as before from the truth that is of faith. For the state has not as yet been purified when the man acts from the truth of faith, but it has been purified when he acts from the good which is of charity, for then he acts from the will, but previously only from the understanding. Spiritual combats or temptations are fermentations in the spiritual sense, for then falsities desire to conjoin themselves with truths, but truths reject them, and finally cast them down as it were to the bottom; consequently, they purify (AC 7906:2-3).

Afterwards the assembly of Englishmen, enkindled with the desire of being wise, said to the angels, “So many various opinions are spoken of the Holy Supper, tell us what is the truth.” The angels replied, “The truth is that the man who looks to the Lord and performs repentance, is conjoined with the Lord by means of that most holy sacrament, and is introduced into heaven.” But some of the company said, “This is a mystery.” To which the angels replied, “It is a mystery, but still such that it can be understood. The bread and wine do not produce this effect, for there is nothing holy in them, but material bread and heavenly bread correspond mutually to each other, and so do material wine and heavenly wine; and heavenly bread is the holy of love, and heavenly wine is the holy of faith, both from the Lord, and both the Lord. Thence there is a conjunction of the Lord with man, and of man with the Lord, not with the bread and wine, but with the love and faith of the man who had done the work of repentance; and conjunction with the Lord is also introduction into heaven.” And after the angels had taught them something concerning correspondence and its effect, some of the company said, “Now for the first time we understand.” And when they said, “We understand,” behold, a flame with light descending from heaven consociated them with the angels, and they loved one another (AR 224:13).

Questions

1. Which comes first in life, good or truth?
2. Do we seek understanding or a change of heart in taking the Holy Supper?
3. Why must the bread be unleavened, while the wine needs leaven to be purified? (Fermentation purifies wine of leaven.)
4. In AR 224, the angels say, "It is a mystery, but still such that it can be understood." Do you feel you understand a bit more than before? Is there a little more light descending from heaven? If not, can you formulate a question or two?

Why do we break the bread instead of cutting it up?

And taking the seven loaves and the fishes, giving thanks, He broke, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowd (Matt 15:36). He was known to them in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:35).

In the Ancient Church bread was broken when it was given to another, and by this was signified to communicate [or share] good from one's own, and to appropriate it from one's own, thus to make love mutual. For when bread is broken and given to another it is communicated from one's own; or when bread is broken among several, then the one piece of bread becomes a mutual possession, and consequently there is conjunction through charity. From this it is plain that the breaking of bread was significative of mutual love (AC 5405).

It is manifest what is meant by eating in the Holy Supper... namely, to have communication, to be conjoined, and to appropriate to oneself (AC 2187:4). "To eat" signifies to be appropriated and conjoined by love and charity. Hence it signifies to be consociated. "To eat" is predicated of the appropriation and conjunction of good, and "to drink," of the appropriation and conjunction of truth... Hence it is, that "to be famished" and "hungry," in the Word, signifies to desire good and truth from affection. The angels understand the things here spoken of according to their internal or spiritual sense alone, because the angels are in the spiritual world. Hence holiness from heaven flows in with the men of the church, when they receive the Sacrament of the Supper with sanctity. And thence is conjunction with the Lord (HD 220).

There was put before me in a vision a small plate full of bread, cut up into squares.... I was told that broken bread, not cut, signifies celestial things, for bread is broken with the lips and teeth, as at first with the hand, before it is eaten. Because this is according to nature, therefore celestial things are signified by bread broken with the hand, lips, so with the teeth, and so on into the minutest [particles] by the muscles, fibers, as it were by the minutest hands, lips and little mouths

of the recipient vessels. But bread cut up with a knife is what simulates what is celestial, and yet is not celestial, as is the case with everything that is done by art. Therefore the bread placed before me, because it was cut up into little squares [and] little cubes, as it were, with knives, signified loathsome pleasantnesses... which are supposed by such as are in loathsome pleasantnesses to be celestial, when yet they are infernal (SD 2626-2627).

How has Providence protected the Holy Supper from profanation?

Lest [the papists] should profane the most Holy Supper, it is of the Lord's Divine Providence that they should divide it, giving the bread to the people and drinking the wine themselves; for the wine in the Holy Supper signifies holy truth and the bread holy good; but when they are divided, the wine signifies profaned truth and the bread adulterated good; and further, that they should make the Holy Supper corporeal and material, and adopt this as the primary principle of religion. Anyone who turns his attention to these particulars and considers them with a somewhat enlightened mind may observe the wonderful operations of the Divine Providence for guarding the holy things of the Church, and for saving all who can be saved, and who are willing to be saved (DP 257:6).

The Roman Catholics, if they approach God the Savior Himself, not mediately but directly, and likewise administer the Holy Eucharist in both kinds, may more easily than the Reformed receive a living faith in the place of a dead faith, and be conducted by angels from the Lord to the gates of the New Jerusalem or the New Church, and be introduced into it with joy and shouting (BE 108).

Questions

1. What is the difference between a representative act and a correspondential act?
2. Is it wrong for us to slice bread outside of the holy supper?
3. Does it strengthen a sense of communion with others in the congregation to think of the bread and wine as a "mutual possession," something we all share?
4. What should be done if for health or other reasons one cannot take one or both of the elements?
5. Is the Holy Supper ever administered privately or to meet special conditions? Should one be free to ask?
6. When the Lord first administered the Holy supper the disciples reclined at a table. Why do we come forward? Why do we kneel and not sit? Reach to take it? Share it with married partners? Etc.

Why does the Lord call the bread and wine His flesh and blood?

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all from it; for this is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins (Matt 26:26-28).

That the Lord so spoke, namely, that He called the Divine good that proceeds from Him His “flesh,” and the Divine truth that proceeds from His Divine good His “blood,” was because the Word, which is from Him, was the Divine that fills the universal heaven. Such a Word must exist by means of correspondences; consequently it must be representative and significative in each and all things, for thus and no otherwise it conjoins the men of the church with the angels in the heavens (AC 10033:9).

All that is holy in heaven proceeds from the Lord’s Divine Human, and therefore all that is holy in the church. Therefore that violence might not be done to it, the Holy Supper was instituted by the Lord, in which it is expressly said that the bread is His flesh, and the wine His blood, thus that it is His Divine Human from which the holy then comes.

With the ancients, flesh and blood signified the human proprium*, because the human consists of flesh and blood. Thus the Lord said to Simon, “Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in the heavens” (Matt. 16:17). The flesh and the blood, therefore, signified by the bread and the wine in the Holy Supper, denote the Lord’s Human Proprium.

The Lord’s Proprium Itself, which He acquired to Himself by His own power, is Divine. His Proprium from conception was what He

*Proprium means what is one’s own, that makes us who we are, that is, our character or identity, our self. Since all good is from the Lord, no one but the Lord truly has proprium, or what is His own. But the Lord works for us to have a good character or heavenly proprium *as* our own. had from Jehovah His Father, and was Jehovah Himself. Hence the Proprium that He acquired to Himself in the Human was Divine. This Divine Proprium in the Human is what is called His flesh and blood; “flesh” is His Divine good, and “blood” is the Divine truth of Divine good (AC 4735).

As regards “flesh,” in the supreme sense it signifies the Proprium of the Lord’s Divine Human, which is Divine good; and in the relative sense it signifies the proprium of man’s will made alive by the Proprium of the Divine Human, that is, by His Divine good. This proprium is what is called the heavenly proprium, which in itself is the Lord’s alone appropriated to those who are in good, and thence in truth. Such a proprium have the angels who are in the heavens, and men who as to their interiors or as to the spirit are in the Lord’s kingdom (AC 3813).

But if anyone is so simple as to be unable to think from his understanding of anything except what he sees with the eye, I advise him, when he takes the bread and wine and hears them called the Lord’s flesh and blood, to think within himself of the holy supper as the holiest thing of worship, and to call to mind Christ’s passion, and His love for man’s salvation; for He says,

This do in remembrance of Me (TCR 709).

This also may be illustrated by comparisons. Who does not remember and love the man who, from zealous love for his country, fights against her enemies even unto death, that he may thereby free her from the yoke of slavery? Who does not remember and love the man who, seeing his fellow citizens in extreme want and dying before his eyes in the relentless grip of famine, brings forth from his house all his silver and gold and freely distributes it? Who, again, does not remember and love the man who, out of pure love and friendship, takes the only lamb he possesses, kills it, and sets it before his guests? And so on (TCR 710).

Questions

1. Is it important to use the words, “flesh and blood” in the service?
2. Does it make sense to think of eating up the Lord’s love and drinking in His wisdom to make them a part of our spiritual body, thus who we are?
3. Can you picture eating up a new, heavenly proprium from the Lord?
4. How much should we try to duplicate the original administration of the Holy Supper by the Lord, or its administration in the early Christian Church?
5. In what sense are we to remember Christ’s passion (that is, His suffering the cross) in receiving the holy supper? In what ways are we *not* to think of it?

Why is the holy supper called “communion”?

But I plead not only for these alone, but also for those who believe in Me through their word, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me (John 17:20-21).

The church scattered throughout the whole globe ... is called a communion, because it is as one body under one head (DLW 25).

In the heavens there is a communion [or sharing] of all goods. There the peace, intelligence, wisdom, and happiness of all are communicated to everyone, and that of everyone is communicated to all, yet to each according to the reception of love and of faith from the Lord (AC 10723).

Those who are outside the Church, and yet acknowledge one God, and live according to their religion in a kind of charity toward the neighbor, are in communion with those who are of the Church, because no one is condemned who believes in God, and lives well. From this it is evident that the Lord's Church is everywhere in the whole world, although specifically it is where the Lord is acknowledged, and where the Word is (AC 10765).

It is well known that in the world conjunctions and affiliations are brought about by invitations to the table and by feasts, for the host thereby intends something that contributes to some end that looks to harmony or friendship; much more so the invitations that have spiritual objects in view. Feasts in the ancient churches and also in the primitive Christian church were feasts of charity, at which they strengthened each other to abide in the worship of the Lord with sincere hearts (TCR 727).

It is because dinners and suppers or feasts signified such association of minds that they are so frequently mentioned in the Word, and nothing else is there meant by them in the spiritual sense; and the same is meant in the highest sense by the Passover supper among the children of Israel, also by their banquet at other festivities, and by their eating together of the sacrifices near the tabernacle. Conjunction itself was then represented by the breaking and distribution of bread, and by drinking from the same cup and handing it to another (TCR 433:e).

Why do we kneel for holy supper, if we are able?

Holy fear with its consequent humiliation, and therefore adoration, has acts or gestures corresponding to itself, namely, bending the knees, falling down upon the knees, and also prostrating the body down to the earth. In this state, if the adoration is from genuine humiliation, or if the humiliation is from genuine holy fear, there is a failing of the spirits, and hence a giving way of the joints in the border or intermediate region where the spiritual is conjoined with the natural, thus where the knees are; for the parts below have correspondence with natural things, and those above with spiritual things. Hence it is that the bending of the knees is a sign representative of adoration. With celestial men this act is spontaneous; but with spiritual men it is a result of will (AC 5323).

People in whom there is humility of heart plead for the Lord's mercy, but those in whom there is humility of thought seek His grace. Or if the latter do plead for mercy they do so in a state of temptation, or with the lips only and not with the heart (AC 598:2).

Celestial people acknowledge that the human race is wholly unclean, and in itself excrementitious and hellish, on account of which they plead for the Lord's mercy (AC 980). The more anyone loves himself and imagines that he is able to do good of himself and so merit salvation, the less he is able to plead for the Lord's mercy (AC 981).

That the whole of the Lord's redemption is in the Holy Supper follows from what has already been said, since where the Lord is wholly present there also is His whole redemption; for it is in respect to His Human that He is the Redeemer, and thus also redemption itself. Where He is wholly present no part of redemption can be absent. Consequently, all who approach the Holy Communion worthily become His redeemed (TCR 717).

Questions

1. Does taking holy supper together with fellow members of the congregation strengthen you “to abide in the worship of the Lord with a sincere heart”?
2. Is it right to think of helping others when partaking?
3. Should husband and wife partake together? If so, how?
4. Can you remember a time when kneeling before the Lord came spontaneously?
5. Does your sense of humility increase during your preparation for and receiving of the holy supper, at least for that time?
6. The whole of the Lord’s redemption is present in the holy supper! Is there any sin the Lord cannot give us strength to overcome?