

How to Receive The Sacrament Worthily

Wednesday, March 21 at 11 AM & 7 PM

Sixth Wednesday of Lent – 2018

During Lent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: In recent weeks we have learned about the Sacrament of the Altar: Its substance; benefit; and power. Today we focus on How to Receive the Sacrament Worthily! In the 2017 edition of Luther's Small Catechism, we begin on page 338.

Dr. Luther asked: Who receives this sacrament worthily? Then he gave this answer: Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "for you" require all hearts to believe.

The Central Thought

"The essential way to prepare for the Lord's Supper is to believe Jesus' promise that His body and blood are 'given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.'" So Dr. Luther wrote, "Therefore consider, **and read yourself into this word *you***, so that He may not speak to you in vain" (LC V 65).

"...we sinners are 'worthy' to commune because Jesus welcomes sinners who repent of their sins and believe His promise that He gave His life... for their forgiveness."

Today's section includes 8 questions: **338-345**

A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism

367. **Who receives the Sacrament worthily?** “Those who “have faith in Christ and His words, ‘Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.’” *See last week’s sermon for a breakdown of that important phrase!*
368. **Why should we be concerned about receiving the Sacrament worthily?** Any person who receives UNWORTHILY:
- “...will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord” (1Co. 11:27 ESV).
 - “...eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1Co. 11:29 ESV). *That judgment can be physical weakness, illness, and/or death (1Co. 11:30)!*
369. **When are we unworthy or unprepared?** “...when we do not believe Christ’s words, or doubt them...” Also, when we ✦do not examine ourselves before we receive and ✦do not recognize our union with other believers in the one body of Christ (1Co. 11:17-22).
370. **What is “fasting and bodily preparation”?**
- “Fasting is denying oneself food or other pleasures for a particular period of time.”
 - “Bodily preparation may include proper rest, personal cleanliness, and modest and reverent clothing.”

“However, in themselves they do not make us worthy and well prepared to receive the Sacrament.”

Fasting and bodily preparation are not required, but believing, examining, and recognizing are required!

Connections and Applications

371. **How are we to examine ourselves before receiving the Sacrament?** We use God’s Word to see:
- a. **If “we are aware of our sins and are sorry for them”:** David prayed: ^{ESV} **Psalm 38:18** I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. More literally, “I am *anxious or worried* because of my sin.” Such a person is *concerned* about his sin. Those who **deny** their sin or **have** no concern about their sin *should not receive the Sacrament*.
 - b. **If “we believe in our Savior, Jesus Christ, and in His words in the Sacrament”:** Thus our confidence for heaven is in Jesus, not us; also, we believe we are receiving *bread—body and wine—blood for our forgiveness!*
 - c. **If “we intend, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to live as forgiven sinners [by] resisting the devil, saying no to sinful desires, and walking in the newness of life”:**
 - i. ^{NAS} **Romans 6:11** “...consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” “Because Christ has united Himself to us, we do not use forgiveness as an excuse to sin...” (TLSB).
 - ii. ^{NAS} **Romans 6:12** “...do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts...” “Christians are called to struggle against sin” (TLSB).
372. **May those who are weak or struggling in faith come to the Sacrament?** Yes! Come for *strength* and *peace!* Dr. Luther wrote in the LC: “...we go [to the Sacrament]

exactly because we are poor, miserable people.

...because we are unworthy. This is true unless we are talking about someone who desires no grace and Absolution nor intends to change” (LC V 76).

373. **What should I do if I feel no need for the Sacrament?**
✦ Check to see if you are still physically alive; ✦ use God’s Word to see your sins; and ✦ realize your desperate need for God’s gift of forgiveness!
374. **Who should not be given the Sacrament?**
- a. “Those who are not Christian or... not baptized.” The Sacrament is for Jesus’ disciples; those who have been baptized and taught (Mt. 28:19-20).
 - b. “Those Christians who are unable to examine themselves...” – including the young, the uninstructed, and the unconscious.
 - c. “Those Christians of a different confession of faith, since the Lord’s Supper is a testimony to our unity in faith and doctrine.” The Bible warns us: “...watch out for those who cause divisions... contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom. 16:17 ESV). See pages 343-344 for a good note on closed Communion.
 - d. “Those who are openly ungodly and unrepentant, living contrary to God’s Word.”
 - e. “Those who are unforgiving, refusing to be reconciled with their neighbors.”

Conclusion: Let us pray: “Lord Jesus...” (Luther’s Small Catechism Explanation, 345).

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Podcast: Benefit from the Bible | Facebook: Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230