

Holy Communion: Biblical Doctrine; Local Practice

May 19, 2013



Synopsis: The doctrine and practice of the Lord's Supper is important for a number of reasons. First, because it is a matter that is commanded by Christ, tied to his sacrificial death (the Gospel), and universally acknowledged as a necessary element of Christ's Church on earth. The doctrine of Scripture requires certain necessary elements in the use of the Sacrament which also give rise to traditions within the church that 'make space' in the liturgy and the life of the church for these necessary elements and help the Christian enjoy the benefits of receiving the Lord's Supper. Good traditions surrounding the use of the Sacrament thus help believers partake of the Sacrament "worthily," while bad traditions invite people not only to receive the Sacrament unworthily, but mitigate against the doctrine of the Supper itself. Such customs and traditions are to be reviewed and taught so that all members know why the traditions are important so long as the concerns giving rise to the tradition are valid. A change tradition is thus made first respecting previous traditions and consciously knowing why a change is good for the congregation; never abandoning Biblical principles that have motivated our fathers in the faith. Our class will review the Christian doctrine of the Lord's Supper in contrast to the false doctrine and false traditions of the Roman Church and the Reformed. We will review customs observed in history and locally with respect to the Supper including rites of preparation, ways of receiving the Lord's Supper (in the hand vs. in the mouth, common vs. individual cups); blessing of children at the communion rail; 'early dismissal' for those not communing; frequency of communion (every Sunday, every other, once a month, four times a year).

Goals:

- To review the doctrine of the Lord's Supper *vis a vis* heterodox church bodies.
- To learn the role of Communion in the sanctification of the church and the individual Christian.
- To learn the Biblical requirements for "worthily" communing.
- To discuss why we have changed our communion policy statement in our bulletin.
- To discuss reasons for present customs and consider reasons why they should be changed or not.
- To discuss how order is revised in the Christian Congregation.
- To adapt improvements in our practice through the voters' assembly if deemed appropriate.

An optional resource: Joel R. Baseley, *Holy Communion: Vanishing Mark of the Church*, Mark V Publications, Dearborn, Michigan, 2010. I will have this resource printed for the class and you may purchase one at my cost.

Introduction

I. Paul on the Supper; use and abuse (1 Corinthians 11.17ff) . . .

Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. ¹⁹For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. ²⁰Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. ²¹For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

²⁷Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. ³³Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

This passage will be a touchstone throughout the class: don't lose this page!

1. Where did Paul get his doctrine of the Lord's Supper (v. 23)? Is it to be retained? Why? Is anyone communed without having being instructed?
2. How does vs. 29 say one does not commune 'worthily'? What does this say about opening the communion rail to someone instructed in the Reformed faith and confessing that faith? How does vs. 19 apply to us communing someone who is Reformed? Is a Lutheran Church's practice of "open communion" loving and God-pleasing?
3. The Roman Church confesses and teaches her members that Christ's body and blood are truly in the Sacrament. Good for her! But Paul says in v. 26 that participation in the sacrament is a confession of the Lord's death. Is the Roman Catholic confession of Christ's death the same as the Bible's Confession of the Lord's death? Is the Lutheran Confession of Christ's death the same as the Bible's? Can Lutherans and Catholics commune together in their common confession of Christ's body and blood presence in the sacrament (See Romans 16.17)?
4. Can a 'good Lutheran' receive communion to his judgement? How (v. 31)? How do we avoid that?