

## *Session #4 – Means of Grace, Part 2*

Read: Chapter 2, pp. 61-79

### **Introduction**

The doctrine of the Sacraments is the most strikingly unique feature of Lutheran theology. While other differences exist, it is in the teaching about the Sacraments that Lutherans find a dividing line between themselves and every other denomination or church body. In other words: if the Lutherans are right about the Sacraments, then every other theological system is wrong. Conversely, if a different theological system is right about the Sacraments, then the Lutherans are wrong. So, after looking briefly at the relationship between the Word and the Sacraments last session, we will look at both Baptism and Communion at some length in this session.

### **Opening Prayer – Collect 101 (LSB 305)**

Merciful God, we humbly implore you to cast the bright beams of Your light upon Your Church that we, being instructed by the doctrine of the blessed apostles, may walk in the light of your truth and finally attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



*Last Supper, Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1547  
oil on hardwood, altarpiece at Evangelische  
Stadtkirche St. Marien, Wittenberg*

### **Opening Hymn – LSB 596:**

#### **All Christians Who Have Been Baptized**

### **Scriptures –**

**Titus 3:4-8** <sup>4</sup>But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup>He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup>so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. <sup>8</sup>The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

**1 Corinthians 11:23-29** <sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also He took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. <sup>27</sup>Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup>For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

### Quotes and Questions from Veith:

“Lutheran spirituality is a sacramental spirituality, centered in the conviction that the Holy Spirit actually descends in the waters of Baptism and that Christ is really present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. It is certainly very odd that water, bread, and wine should have such significance – though perhaps it is no more odd than that ink on paper and sound waves should convey the Word of the Infinite God...” (61-62)

- What does it tell you that God conveys Himself through means so easily overlooked or devalued?
- How is this consistent with God’s work in history?
- What makes it difficult to accept?

“Baptism – like every other saving act – is not our work but the work of God... Infant Baptism, in fact, is perhaps the best illustration of justification by faith... In justification, we are purely passive, purely receptive... A baby receiving Baptism models that passive reception, which adults constantly struggle against in their zeal to save themselves by their own efforts... In Baptism, an infant passively receives God’s grace, is united to Christ, and is changed. The Holy Spirit dwells in the child, who subsequently has a living faith, which must be continually nourished by hearing God’s Word just as babies, once born, must still be fed or they will die.” (64-66)

- In what way is baptism a good symbol of faith?
- In what way is baptism more than a symbol?

“In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, all of Lutheran spirituality is crystallized: God acts, objectively, through matter, embodying the Gospel and promising the forgiveness of sin. And, more than that – or rather, making all of these efficacious – is the *real presence* of Jesus Christ. This is another astonishing claim, one which many Christians draw back from, but one that is at the pulsing heart of Lutheran evangelicalism.” (73, emphasis added)

- In what way is communion a good symbol of faith?
- In what way is communion more than a symbol?
- What is the difference between communion and baptism? Communion and absolution?

“The Gospel of Christ converts us, but it also nourishes us. We need to keep receiving Christ over and over again. In the sacramental spirituality of Lutheranism, the Word and Sacraments are Means of Grace. They are tangible, material means used by God to convey the Gospel of Christ, who converts us, feeds us, and is actually present in His Church.” (79)

- Is it easy or difficult to maintain this perspective? What makes it easy? What makes it difficult?
- How does this perspective shape our approach to worship? To daily life?

**Connections with Small Catechism:**

Read and discuss the portions on the **Sacrament of Holy Baptism** and the **Sacrament of the Altar**.

IV. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

*As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.*

**First.**

*What is Baptism?--Answer.*

Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word.

*Which is that word of God?*

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: *Go ye into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

**Secondly.**

*What does Baptism give or profit?*

It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

*Which are such words and promises of God? Answer.*

Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

**Thirdly.**

*How can water do such great things?*

It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: *By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.*

**Fourthly.**

*What does such baptizing with water signify?*

It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

*Where is this written?*

St. Paul says *Romans, chapter 6: We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

## VI. The Sacrament of the Altar

*As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.*

*What is the Sacrament of the Altar?*

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

*Where is this written?*

The holy Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul, write thus:

*Our Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.*

*After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Take, drink ye all of it. This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins. This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me.*

*What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?*

That is shown us in these words: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

*How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?*

It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*. Which words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

*Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?*

Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: *Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins*.

But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unfit; for the words *For you* require altogether believing hearts.

## Closing Hymn (if time allows) – LSB 630 – Now, My Tongue, the Mystery Telling

### Conclusion

Scripture teaches that Christ's death is a sacrifice which is sufficient for all sins and that God desires for all men to be saved. Yet, Scripture also teaches that not all are saved. Finally, Scripture teaches that no one is saved by their own deeds. These seemingly contradictory statements are resolved in the mysterious, wondrous, and yet entirely mundane and physical Means of Grace. In her teachings on the Sacraments, the Lutheran church is bound to walk what Hermann Sasse called "The Lonely Way." To Catholics, who view the acts themselves as salvific, the Lutheran view is dismissed along

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with the Calvinists, Baptists, and everyone else who does not hold this teaching. To Calvinists, Baptists, and everyone who holds that the sacraments are a human act of remembrance and symbolism, the Lutheran view is dismissed along with the Catholics. Lutheran doctrine celebrates the means of grace as God's gift which connects His objective justification on the cross with our subjective salvation here and now. The sacraments are simultaneously a mystery which can never be fully grasped which is embodied in simple and beautiful acts that even a child can see and understand.

**Closing Prayer**