

REFORMED CHURCH CLANWILLIAM : SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER 2013 EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 148:5

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: 119:3

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation of the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Psalm 143:8

Scripture reading: Exodus 12

Scripture text: Catechism Sunday 28; Exodus 12:26, 27

26 "And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'

27 "that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' " So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

(Exodus 12:26-27)

We are here concerned with covenant instruction! What is the meaning of that service? That is what the children of the Israelites had to ask their parents concerning the Passover. Then they had to explain to their children that the Passover sacrifice was rendered to the honour of God, because with the Tenth Plague in Egypt the Lord passed over the homes of the Israelites and smote the Egyptians with death.

Between then and now, Christ transformed the Passover into the Last Supper (the Eucharist, Holy Communion). When our children ask of us: What is the meaning of the Last Supper? We must also be able to answer their question. Just like the children of the Israelites, our children also have the right to know what the Last Supper and Baptism means to them.

We are going to consider again three aspects of the celebration of the Last Supper:

1. **Who is the Host at the celebration of the Last Supper?**
2. **What is the spiritual food and drink during the celebration of the Last Supper?**
3. **Who are the invited guests?**

1. **Who is the Host at the celebration of the Last Supper?**

Sound instruction in the covenant guarantees that our children will remember why they were baptized, and also enable them to understand what the Last Supper means to them.

- It will also help to deepen their faith.
- Obviously they will then prepare themselves thoroughly for their confession of faith before the congregation.
- Bear in mind that the confession of faith provides them with admission to the celebration of the Last Supper.

To be able to educate our children, it is necessary that we adults from time to time consider anew and deepen our understanding of the meaning of the celebration of the Last Supper. What is the Last Supper?

- For us the Last Supper is a public confession that we have a share in the cross, and therefore in the death and resurrection of Christ.
- Through the Last Supper we know the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord who redeemed us.
- He instructed us to celebrate the Last Supper. We therefore celebrate the Last Supper whenever the Lord Jesus Christ instructs us to sit at His Table to celebrate His death.

At the celebration the proceedings are conducted as at any other meal:

- The Host determines the arrangements.
- He determines where it is to take place, just as He determined where the last Passover was to take place where He instituted the celebration of the Last Supper.

That the Lord determines the arrangements for the sacraments is not something we learn only from the New Testament.

- Already in Deuteronomy 16:2 we read that Israel had to slaughter the Paschal lamb on the place where the Lord "chooses to establish His name."
- Similarly in the case of the Last Supper.
 - Christ called upon His church to celebrate the Last Supper and to provide the food and drink, and to prepare the Table in His name for His guests.
 - We must always remember that, even though this celebration of the Last Supper takes place in the church, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who presents the sacrament, and who calls upon you sit at His Supper Table.

Precisely because it is the Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ, the elders must undertake pastoral visits at your homes.

- They must visit you in the name of Jesus Christ, because the Lord sends the elders to inform you that the Lord is again preparing His Table.
- They must see to it in the name of the Lord that you take your place at the Table to celebrate your redemption from your sins.
- For that reason too they must exercise supervision over your life and see to it that your life is in accordance with the holiness of the Last Supper.

The same applies to the minister:

- It is on behalf of the Lord that the minister calls upon you to take your place at the Table.
- Neither the church council nor the minister can invite you to share in the celebration of the Last Supper.
- That is why you are not invited on behalf of the church council.
- The Host is the Lord and He alone calls upon you to participate in the celebration of the Last Supper, or prevents people from doing so.
- The church council is only the instrument of the Lord, which must see to it that all the necessary items are available for the celebration of the Last Supper.

At the Last Supper the Lord Jesus Christ Himself addresses us. See what He teaches:

- In a manner we can see and experience, He teaches us about His grace towards us and how greatly He deserves our love.
- He enables us, as it were, to see the cross, even though we live so many years after His crucifixion.
- He teaches us that His goodness towards us has not ended nor passed by like that day on Golgotha.
- Just as He at the present time still teaches us through the Last Supper of His suffering and death, so His grace is still with us today.
- The proof of this is that we share in the Last Supper as we share in His love.

Furthermore He teaches us that He is God's High Priest who sacrificed His own body for us and shed His blood on our behalf. The Bible teaches us by means of several parables what happened when Christ died for us.

- It is written that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for us.
- It is also written that He prepared Himself as (spiritual) nourishment, so that we who come to partake of food and drink at His Table can satisfy our souls, and never again, in all eternity, know (spiritual) hunger or thirst.
 - Think here of what He taught the woman of Samaria.
 - The Host at the celebration of the Last Supper is thus He who takes care that His children do not suffer spiritual hunger.

2. The spiritual food and drink

We could perhaps say that there were two kinds of food and drink on the Table.

- In the first place, we eat real bread and drink real wine - that is, physically and bodily.

- But, in the second place, our spiritual hunger and thirst are satisfied by our assimilating the blood and flesh of Christ spiritually.

In the Old Testament the Israelites were not permitted to eat the flesh of the victim sacrificed as a sin-offering, nor were they permitted to drink or otherwise use the blood of the slaughtered animal. But now, in the New Testament, Christ came and changed this instruction. He says: "eat and drink". Is this not a great privilege?

- We may eat of the bread of life and drink of the blood of atonement.
- This proves that we share in it.
- We need not pay for this. We receive it all, as a gift, by the grace of God.
- This proves to us that we share fully in all that Christ did and accomplished, and not just in one or two of His accomplishments.

Do you, brothers and sisters, realize how most liberally God shares with you what Jesus Christ accomplished?

- This spiritual food and drink confirms that you have received forgiveness of your sins.
- It confirms to you that you share in eternal life, just as you share in the food you eat.
- All we have to do is that we must believe this - and, in addition, Christ also helps with the visible presentation of the Last Supper.

As if this were not yet sufficient grace which God bestows upon us weak men and women, He also grants us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.

- The Spirit of God convinces us in this case that we are of one body with Christ.
- By taking away from us our sins, Christ also removes the distance between Him and us, because it was our sins that separated us from Him.
- We then have such unity with Him that we share a meal with Him.
- By doing so we can see and experience that we share in all His redemptive benefits.

3. The invited guests

Who are the guests? Let us put the question more seriously: Who are entitled to come to the Table when Christ calls?

- The answer is: Christ calls me and all who believe in Him.
- It is important that it is specifically written that all believers must celebrate His death.
- The emphasis falls on their being believers.

This has nothing to do with their being perfect. All who believe, must celebrate the Last Supper!

- If you were perfect, you would not need any strengthening of your faith.
- If this celebration of the Last Supper were intended for perfect people, it would have been presented differently; but Christ arranged our celebration of the Last Supper in this way precisely because it had to strengthen our faith since we are imperfect.
- We all need to celebrate the Last Supper:
 - Christ invites to the Table people who are weak in their faith;

- people who are aware of their weaknesses,
- but who pray for grace.
- That is, after all, who a believer is:
 - It is a person blinded by sin, but who does not persevere in sin.
 - He strives, in the name of the Lord, to overcome his sins.

Sinners are transformed into purified people by Jesus Christ

- They receive forgiveness of their sins.
- As result of this the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in them.
- They are people to whom Jesus Christ seals their salvation through their celebration of the Last Supper.

Beloved, when you once again prepare yourselves to celebrate Jesus' death, what will the Last Supper accomplish in you?

- Will it confirm and strengthen your faith, so that you can experience the nearness of God?
- The forgiveness of your sins is already an accomplished fact, therefore the Last Supper assures you that you have eternal life.
 - We must, nevertheless, still pray repentantly for the forgiveness of the sins we commit.
 - We must also every moment thirst for the grace of God.

If, then, you believe all God's promises, you know that you are of the elect, and that you share in all the promises of the Last Supper.

Be strong then in your Spirit, because God will, every time you celebrate the Last Supper, strengthen your faith through the Last Supper so that you may always be of good cheer and assured of eternal life.

Come, let us now read together Catechism Sunday 28, in which this entire sermon is summarized in our confession:

LORD'S DAY XXVIII

75. QUESTION. How is it signified and sealed unto you in the holy supper that you partake of the one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?

ANSWER. Thus, that Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, and has added these promises¹: first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me, and the cup communicated to me; and further, that with His crucified body and shed blood He Himself feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life as assuredly as I receive from the hand of the minister, and taste with my mouth, the bread and cup of the Lord as sure signs of the body and blood of Christ.

1. Matt.26:28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Cor.10:16,17; 11:23-25; 12:13

76. QUESTION. What is it to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ?

ANSWER. It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and the death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the forgiveness of sins and life eternal¹, but, further, also to become more and more united to His sacred body, by the Holy Spirit, who dwells both in Christ and in us², so that, though Christ is in heaven³ and we are on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones⁴, and live and are governed by one Spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul⁵.

1. John 6:35,40,47,48,50,51,53,54 2. John 6:55,56 3. Col.3:1; Acts 3:21; 1 Cor.11:26
 4. Eph.5:29,30; 3:16; 1 Cor.6:15; 1 John 3:24; 4:13 5. John 6:57; 15:1-6; Eph.4:15,16

77. QUESTION. Where has Christ promised that He will as certainly feed and nourish believers with His body and blood as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

ANSWER. In the institution of the supper¹, which reads thus: The Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you; this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also 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. For as often as ye eat of this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come, 1 Cor.11:23-26. This promise is repeated by St Paul, where he says: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? This bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body; for we all partake of the one bread, 1 Cor.10:16,17.

1. Matt.26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20

AMEN.

Amen.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song Scripture Versification 5-4:1, 2

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

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