

February 19

Examine before Eating

“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29, ESV)

In the last couple of years, we’ve begun preparing our children for the Lord’s supper in the fifth grade in my congregation. Part of the reason for this comes from the fact that there really is no age requirement for receiving the Lord’s Supper, and we wanted to get the kids in the habit of receiving the Lord’s Supper regularly at a younger age (and thus building a habit they’ll hopefully continue in). But the other reason is that, at that age, kids are better able to learn and understand exactly *what* is going on in the Lord’s Supper. They are now at an age where they are better able to discern that the Lord’s Supper is indeed Jesus’ body and blood, given and shed for them. And if they can discern the body and blood of Christ, they ought to receive it as soon as they are able.

But it occurred to me that, while talking to our kids about beginning the class to learn about the Lord’s Supper, of the Sacraments we receive in church, the Lord’s Supper does have something of an age requirement to it. Being old enough to understand what the Sacrament is and why it is necessary is important because not understanding what the Sacrament is or why it’s necessary has consequences. Like medicines that can become dangerous when taken improperly, when we receive the Lord’s Supper without understanding that it is Jesus’ body and blood given and shed for repentant sinners, we can find ourselves under God’s judgment. Therefore, understanding what the sacrament “is” is of utmost importance for us when we receive it.

This is why pastors examine us before we come to the Lord’s table. As called stewards of the mysteries of God (*1 Corinthians 4:1*), they want us to understand the mystery of the Lord’s Supper before we partake of it so that we do not eat or drink judgment on ourselves (*1 Corinthians 11:29*). So we are taught to study Jesus’ words, “This is My body, which is given for you....This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (*Luke 22:19-20, ESV*) and to examine ourselves and know our sinfulness (*Psalm 38:18*) and desire to live a redeemed life (*Ephesians 4:22-24*). When we consider these things and believe them, even if we are weak in faith, we will receive Jesus in a worthy manner for our good, and our faith will be strengthened and our sins forgiven.

So, when you go up to receive the Lord's Supper, examine yourself and remember these things. Ponder the mystery of Christ's body and blood. Know that they are given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Christ feeds you with the very medicine of immortality!

Prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ, help us to discern Your precious body and blood in Your holy Supper. Help us to know our sins and our deep need for Your forgiveness and the life You give us. Help us to always desire Your body and blood for our good; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*