

## The Lord's Supper

Rev. David Fleming

Isaiah was the first to record the *Sanctus*—the holy, holy, holy of angelic worship at the Lord's throne. He saw the Lord. Poor humbled Isaiah was ashamed of the rot that had come from his mouth and the mouths of his neighbors. It was then that an angel was sent with a coal from the altar to purify his soiled lips. The angel spoke directly to Isaiah, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged."

In the Divine Service, it's rather similar. The *Sanctus* of angels and archangels and all the company of heaven resounds in our ears. We see the Lord appear before us hidden under bread and wine. Then a poor, humbled pastor who has been ashamed of the rot that has come from his mouth and from the mouths of his people has not a coal but the Lord Himself touch his lips and mouth.

After Isaiah's lips were purged, he was sent. After my lips have received the true Body and Blood of Christ to release me from my sins, I'm sent too. The lips and tongues of many sinners hunger and thirst for righteousness, and Christ, the Lord our righteousness, is here to fill them.

When the fullness of time had come, God came down from heaven into the virgin's womb. Then when His saving sacrifice was about to be offered, He left as a last will and testament the only earthly possession that remained at His death—His body and blood. Now that gift, the most powerful medicine ever, bequeathed to His faithful throughout the ages, is taken by my hand and given to fellow sinners of practically every size and shape, sin and fear. One Savior fits all.

Distributing the Savior to sinners is humbling and encouraging, stunning and riveting. The beautiful rhythm—the body of Christ given for you; the body of Christ given for you; the blood of Christ shed for you; the blood of Christ shed for you—echoes the heavenly hymn of holy, holy, holy. Angels are weeping as sinners are being restored. A father and son are reconciled as Christ touches both. A troubled teen receives Christ's comforting touch. A blind woman gently receives the Savior who hasn't yet explained why she's blind, trusting that He is, as He promises, her Savior.

A man who knows death is near receives Christ with urgency and yet peace. A husband and wife who threw sharp dagger-like words at each other the night before now drink from the same cup of the cleansing, loving blood of God. A confirmand speaks her “amen” to the truth that this is the body of Christ for her. Her look and tone expresses that her “amen” is a confession of faith.

No matter how they look, no matter how they sound, no matter whether they are able to kneel or are forced by injury to stand, they come burdened with sin from a broken world to the fullness of the new creation. God in crucified and risen flesh has come to fulfill His kingdom in them. He pours His life-giving body and blood into their dying bodies. The great Physician has become the medicine of immortality. These dying sinners, like their dying pastor, will live in Christ with Christ in them.

I remember a man who was fighting cancer. He was weakened by the disease and another dreadful round of chemo. But he would not stay home. He directed his wife to bring him to church. He stumbled on the way to the Sacrament. Ushers rushed to his side. He allowed them to help him up, but when they saw the torn skin on his arm and tried to turn him around and get him help, he pushed them away. As reverently as he could, he continued to the rail, bowed, and knelt before the Lamb of God who takes away not just the sin of the world but his sin. Bleeding, he ate the body of Christ and drank His blood. He could not imagine choosing to be anywhere else.

I remember a dying pastor, a dear friend, receiving his Savior with me on a screened porch on a beautiful day in June. We celebrated the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession with Jesus’ healing touch for our burdened souls. We enjoyed Christ’s peace that passes all understanding.

I remember a dear family gathered at the rail the day after their ten-year-old son and brother had died on a country road. The six of them had been there the Sunday before the accident. The five were there the Sunday after. We all had tears in our eyes. We all rejoiced that Brandon was safe and was with the same Christ who was filling and blessing us.

In cramped hospital rooms or spacious homes, in a stale, humid care center or in a beautiful chancel, by His Word, Christ deigns to come and eat with sinners in His body and blood under bread and wine. He heals, frees, encourages, and strengthens our bodies and souls. He brings His heavenly reign to a now uncommon place on earth. It’s a privilege to be a witness to it all but even better to be a recipient of my Savior.

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