

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage, and happy new year! The Lord has seen fit for us to have completed another church year together as His Church, and now He has found it proper to allow us to begin a new season of Advent with Him. Last week and the weeks before, we focused on Christ's second-coming. In the weeks ahead, we will look at our Savior's first trip to our world—while keeping in mind that we eagerly await His return.



Along with beginning a new season, we start a new section of Luther's Large Catechism: The Sacrament of the Altar. This sacrament was "established from the words Christ used to institute it. So everyone who wishes to be a Christian and to go to the sacrament should know them. For we do not intend to admit to the sacrament and administer it to those who do not know what they seek or why they come (BoC, p.467)."

In Sunday School, I have already shown how Paul wrote that all believers should come to the Sacrament of the Altar unified in his first letter to the Corinthians (chapter 11). With the words just above, Luther demonstrates how even the very words of Christ spoken in His

institution of the sacrament require a unified understanding. We must know what we are receiving and why. This is not to say, though, that our misbeliefs make the sacrament less than what it is. “(J)ust as the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Creed retain their nature and value even if you never keep, pray, or believe them, so also does this blessed sacrament remain unimpaired and inviolate even if we use and handle it unworthily (BoC, p.467).” As with baptism, which we just finished in last month’s newsletter, “(i)t is the Word...that makes this a sacrament and distinguishes it from ordinary bread and wine, so that it is called and truly Christ’s body and blood (BoC, p.468).” Since the Sacrament is indeed Christ’s body and blood, we as believers must recognize what it is and why we take it whenever we partake, lest we become sick and die (1 Cor. 11). And since this Sacrament is Christ’s very body and very blood, we must not give it to unbelievers or those who are not unified in this confession, lest they become sick and die, even eternally. It is not their belief that makes the Sacrament of the Altar a sacrament, but the Word of God spoken over the bread and wine.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I urge you to keep these things in mind as you partake each weekend! In this way, you will receive the Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood worthily, and it will be of great benefit to you.

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh