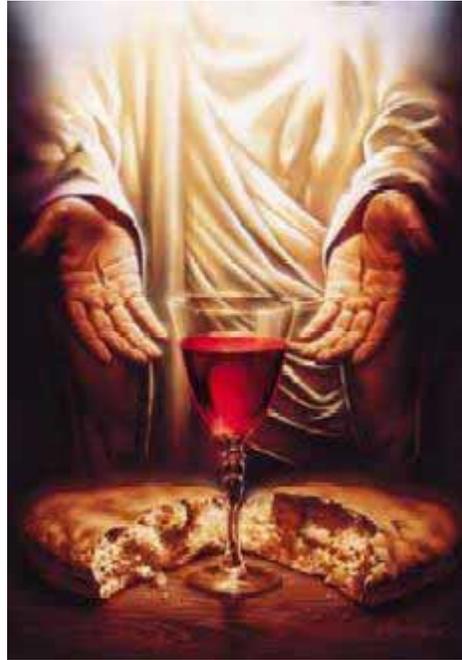


Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings from the parsonage! Having just preached on God's call for Ezekiel to be a watchman for the people of Israel, I feel that I should address a topic as it seems to be coming up pretty frequently in today's society: Close Communion.



We in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod practice what we call “Close Communion.” We do this because God has commanded it through His Word and in order to prevent anyone from getting hurt. In First Corinthians chapter eleven, God speaks through His servant Paul to the congregation at Corinth. There were apparently several poor practices being done there. As Paul wrote: “in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse (1 Cor. 11:17).”

Then God through Paul addresses the first major problem: divisions. “In the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you (1 Cor. 11:18).” In this way, God condemned the partaking of His Holy Communion divided on what it was being received. (These divisions are also condemned in Galatians 5:20.) So in an attempt to remind the Corinthians what they were receiving, Paul wrote to them the Words of Institution: “the Lord Jesus Christ on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 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.’ 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. (1 Cor. 11:23b-25).”

God wasn't saying *not* to have Communion, but that it should be done according to His institution. Again, He had Paul write: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you

proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26)." So how often should we partake? "As often." "Often." We should partake "often."

So why do we practice "Close Communion?" Don't other churches have the Lord's Supper? They have what they call the Lord's Supper, yes; but is it the Lord's Supper? Other churches proclaim the Lord's Supper as nothing more than a meal of remembrance. God through Paul does put "in remembrance of me," yet God also has Paul write: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup 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."

It is therefore by God's command that we in the LCMS practice "Close Communion." Other denominations do not "discern" the body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under the bread and wine. In that way, they "(eat) and (drink) judgment on (themselves)."

We in the LCMS do not desire for anyone to be hurt—especially not by a gift from God given for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith! As God through Paul warned "many of you (the Corinthians) are weak and ill, and some have died" because they did not "discern" the body and blood of Jesus.

So dear brothers and sisters in Christ, practice "Close Communion." Don't go partaking at other altars where they do not "discern" the body and blood. You do not have Communion fellowship with them because you understand the Word of God, and we are not to partake in divisions but in unity. We in the LCMS are united that it is the "body" and "blood" in, with, and under the bread and wine and so we may partake together with Communion fellowship. This Supper was given to be a help and health for your life as a believer, not a danger to you because you are partaking with those with whom you disagree and who do not believe it is Jesus' true "body" and true "blood." When we partake, it is for the forgiveness of our sins and strengthening of our faith, just as Jesus told us! In Jesus' Name. Amen!

Your brother and under-Shepherd in Christ,

Pastor Josh