

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

THEME: THE PROMISES OF A POWER DIET

1. This Promise Offers Pardon
2. This Promise Powers Faith

The Lord Jesus...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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

"It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words 'Given' and 'poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.' These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins." (The Power of Holy Communion, Luther's Small Catechism)

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb:

"Do you mean it?" we've unfortunately learned to ask. In our day, when promises are made, we can't always be sure they'll be kept. People are no longer satisfied with a handshake when deals are put together. Now it takes a printed contract, sometimes in so much legalese that only lawyers can explain it. Even then we can't be 100% sure.

In his Supper our Savior set down his last will and testament for us. He stated it plainly, and because he did, we can be sure about what he offers us in that blessed meal and how it happens.

THIS PROMISE OFFERS PARDON

Christ offers one clear and simple blessing in his Supper. That blessing is so great that no one can exhaust it. Like some artesian well, it flows perpetually from the Rock of Ages all the way to eternity. What might that treasure be? "Forgiveness of sins," Luther reminds us. He also reminds us that this blessing does not come through mere eating and drinking in the sacrament. If it did, if eating and drinking, as some mechanical or semi-magical act, could bring forgiveness, then we might as well eat bread and drink wine more frequently and conveniently in our homes.

It's God's Word that connects forgiveness of sins with his sacrament. That's how our gracious God dispenses to sinners the forgiveness he prepared in Christ—through his gospel. With his Supper he connects the specific words "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." In these few words lies the whole gospel story. "Given and poured out...for the forgiveness of sins" reveals the love that compelled Jesus to die on the cross, consigned him to hell's fury, and carried him into the grave. "For you" reveals his love that reaches for me with all things needful for life and salvation. These are not human words that are not always to be taken at face value. They are divine words, words spoken by one who means what he says. Moreover, he can do what he says. With his Word he created the world and will one day bring it to judgment. With his Word he healed the sick

and will one day raise all the dead. “For the forgiveness of sins” is the sum he writes on the heavenly check with his divine signature on the bottom line. And his check is good!

THIS PROMISE POWERS FAITH

Regardless who approaches his Supper, whether hypocrite or believer, God’s promise stands and forgiveness is offered. He is faithful, though others be faithless. All who come receive his body and blood—some for their forgiveness, others for their judgment. The repentant sinner walks away with the tonnage of sin removed from his shoulders. The impenitent leaves with more poundage added, for he **“is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:27)**. When forgiveness, though offered, is not received, the problem is not with God’s loving hand reaching down, but with the hand of the unbelieving recipient.

When Luther wrote “Whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins,” he was not indicating that only the strong in faith dare approach. Few, indeed, would be so bold as to come. He was reminding us that the same Spirit who uses the Word to create faith in Baptism uses it also to strengthen faith in the Lord’s Supper. His powerful Word does not return empty; it works where and when he determines. Those who come to his Table with his golden words “for your forgiveness” on their hearts, leave with them imprinted even more firmly. Those who approach with the prayer **“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)**, will receive God’s answer. At the altar, his hand of promise reaching down and our hand of faith created by him are clasped together—his giving and ours receiving.

“Can I be sure?” the crusty farmer asked. He had spent his four score and ten years chasing money, collecting farms, and coming to church just barely enough to keep the elders off his back. Now he was dying. Hearing his confession on his bed, I announced God’s forgiveness to him and then offered him the Lord’s Supper. But he wanted to be sure. **“For you,”** I reminded him, “Christ gave his body and blood on Calvary for your sins, and now he gives them to you in his Supper. How more sure can we be?” Those who by God’s grace believe those blessed words, **“for you,”** will find them changed into “with him” in eternity.

As we prepare to receive the Lord’s Supper this evening, let us pray:

I come, O Savior, to your table, For weak and weary is my soul;
O Jesus, you alone are able To satisfy and make me whole.
Lord, may your body and your blood Be for my soul the highest good! Amen.