

Lesson 23: Preparing for the Lord's Supper

“Christ himself says, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick,’ that is, those who labor and are heavy-laden with sin, fear of death and the assaults of the flesh and of the devil. If you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, go joyfully to the sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort, and strength.”

- Dr. Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*: The Sacrament of the Altar

Keys to Lesson 23:

Topic: Preparing for the Lord's Supper

Thesis: We are prepared to receive the Lord's Supper when we believe the words of Christ.

Key question: What must we do to be prepared to receive the Lord's Supper?

Catechism: Sverdrup Questions Q 382-388 (*Ambassador Hymnal* p. 14-15)

Accompanying Bible Story: Matthew 15:1-20 – Clean on the Inside

Warm-up or review:

As students enter the classroom, have a task posted for them.

Options:

Finish paragraph from Lesson 22

Finish questions from Lesson 22

Finish Lesson 22 summary

Lesson 22 quick quiz

Read and summarize Matthew 15:1-20

Read the Sverdrup questions assigned for this lesson

Introduce new lesson:

Options: Discuss spiritual disciplines and their value: Bible reading, prayer, fasting, alms

Read and discuss the student worksheet text

The Jews in the days of Jesus had many rituals about being clean. Today we know that we should wash our hands before handling food and eating. We wash because we don't want germs from our hands contaminating our food. We know that germs on contaminated food can make us sick. It's possible the washing rules God gave His people were to keep them from getting sick. But by the time of Jesus, the rules had become rituals that were used to judge if someone was religiously faithful.

The religious leaders had watched Jesus' disciples eating bread. They asked Jesus why the disciples had not washed their hands first. The religious leaders were not concerned that the disciples would get sick. Instead, the accusation against them was that they were not true believers. The religious leaders were probably trying to find fault with Jesus by accusing his disciples of not being faithful to the traditions.

Jesus noticed the hypocrisy of the religious leaders. He questioned them about traditions they had broken. He noticed they made new rules that allowed them a convenient way around rules they didn't like. The religious leaders questioned the outward actions of the disciples. Jesus questioned the inner motives of the religious leaders. He wanted his disciples to know that what was in the heart was much more important than what was on the outside. He illustrated this truth

by telling them, “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”

The disciples didn't understand what Jesus said, so Peter asked Jesus to explain. He gave them a spiritual lesson that included some biology. It is obvious to us today, but it might not have been to the disciples then. He told them that what they put into their mouths went into their stomachs where it was processed. The leftovers went through their digestive system and were eliminated. Those things that went through the digestive system, he told them, were not the things that make a person spiritually unclean. He also told them it is the things of the heart that show one's spiritual nature. It is not the things, food, that go in through the mouth that show corruption. It is the things, words, that come out of the mouth that show corruption because these come from the heart.

Being prepared for Holy Communion is much the same. It is not the physical things we do that prepares us. It is the spiritual things, particularly believing, that makes us ready.

Lesson:

Help the students work through the text and Bible passages in the student material.

*** Copy the answer to the question “Who, then, receives this sacrament worthily?” from your Lutheran *Small Catechism*.**

Fasting and bodily preparation are indeed a good outward discipline, but that person is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” But anyone who does not believe these words or who doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require truly believing hearts.

*** Read Matthew 5:3-10. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made eight statements telling us how to be blessed or happy. The statements are all connected and describe the process God uses to bring us into His kingdom.**

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

List the eight blessed qualities. Discuss with your class how these are the process of our salvation.

*The poor in spirit – we must realize that our sin is spiritual poverty and separates us from God
Those who mourn – when we hear the Law, we realize our sin; our sin should cause us great sorrow*

The gentle – a more common translation is “meek,” a better translation is “humble”; our only hope is to be humbled before a gracious God; when we are humbled we confess our sins and God forgives and cleanses us from all unrighteousness

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – when we are humbled before a gracious God, He causes us to want more and more of Him

*The merciful – once we have received mercy, we extend God’s mercy to those around us
The pure in heart – our hearts are not in themselves pure; but when we confess our sin, God cleanses us from all unrighteousness*

The peacemakers – once we are at peace with God through the forgiveness of our sin, we are agents of peace to the world proclaiming also the forgiveness of sins

Those who have been persecuted – the world will not necessarily want to hear the Gospel; we are likely to experience persecution as a result of our relationship with Jesus

*** Read Matthew 5:23-24.**

Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

What do these verses suggest about a proper attitude when going to the altar for Holy Communion?

Being ready or worthy has to do with what is in our hearts. Being reconciled with God ought to move us to be also reconciled with each other.

*** Read 1 Peter 5:5-9.**

You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

List the spiritual disciplines found in these verses.

*be subject to your elders
clothe yourselves with humility
humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God
cast all your anxieties on Him
be of sober spirit
be on the alert
resist the devil
be firm in the faith*

How might these disciplines help us be ready to receive the Lord’s Supper?

These spiritual disciplines are a result of being in a relationship with Jesus. They are fruit and good works that come after forgiveness. They are examples of what the new life looks like. They are the good works that come from faith. We do not receive the Lord's Supper because we are good or do good works. We receive the Lord's Supper because by faith we believe God's promises.

*** Read Matthew 26:26-28.**

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” And when He had taken a cup and given

thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”

What must we believe about the bread?

We must believe that the bread is the body of Christ.

What must we believe about the cup?

We must believe that the cup is Jesus’ blood of the covenant.

What must we believe about why Jesus give us His body and blood?

We must believe that Jesus give us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Summary:

Options:

Students write questions in their question column

Students write a three to four sentence summary: What did I learn in this lesson?

Students write a SEE paragraph

Possible paragraph prompt:

What must we do to be prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper?

Sample paragraph:

To prepare our hearts to receive the Lord’s Supper we ought only believe that Jesus’ words are true. “While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins’” (Matthew 26:26-28 NASB). First we believe the bread is Christ’s body given for us. Then we believe the cup is His blood of the new covenant poured out for us. Finally, we believe Jesus gives us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 15:1-20

1 Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” 3 And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God said, ‘honor your father and mother,’ and, ‘he who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death.’ 5 But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,” 6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.’ And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 8 ‘this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. 9 ‘but in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’” 10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, “Hear and understand. 11 It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.” 12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?” 13 But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted. 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” 15 Peter said to Him, “Explain the parable to us.” 16 Jesus said, “Are you still lacking in understanding also? 17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? 18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man.”