

JJ¹

If you are at a dinner party and you are wondering what you are eating, maybe all you have to do is look at and taste the food. If what you are holding looks like an orange and tastes like an orange, you're probably eating an orange. It's a little different, though, with meatloaf. You may be able to see and taste that there's meat in there, but unless you have amazing taste buds, you may have some difficulty knowing for sure what else is in there. If you wanted to be certain, you'd probably have to ask the host.

It's easy to look at and taste the Lord's Supper and realize that wine is present and bread is too. Any people who would deny this would not only deny their taste buds but would also be denying God's Word—which tells us Jesus took **bread** (Luke 22:19) and quotes Jesus as referring to **"the fruit of the vine"** (Luke 22:18), which is wine.

Don't let your taste buds or your eyes fool you. There's something else here. Something else is joined with the bread and wine. Jesus says, **"This is my body,"** and, **"this is my blood"** (Matthew 26:26,28).

Someone might ask, "Wasn't Jesus speaking figuratively when he said this? Wasn't he merely saying that the redness and that wine is a liquid were similar to

his blood and the bread was like his flesh?"

That would be a reasonable argument if I had said what Jesus said. If you were sitting at my house and I gave you some bread and said, "This is my body," you would know that I was speaking figuratively, for very clearly my body was still right where it had always been and, just as clearly, I obviously don't have the ability to be in two places at once. Jesus does. He has the ability to be in any and all places because he is God! Therefore, if Jesus says, **"This is my body,"** we accept that it is his body.

We also note that Jesus referred to this as a **"new covenant"** (1 Corinthians 11:25). A covenant was a solemn agreement, a binding contract. And like such documents today, covenants called for very precise language—language that said exactly what it meant. As the Son of God, Jesus knew that his words would be written down and then remembered until the end of time. If Jesus had intended for us to understand something different, there was a number of other words and phrases he could have chosen to convey the meaning of "this looks like my body" or "this symbolizes my blood" or "this will remind people of my body and blood." Jesus chose none of those words. If, on the other hand, Jesus intended for us to believe that it is truly his body and

¹ JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

blood in union with the bread and the wine, he would have said exactly what he did: **“This is my body. . . . This is my blood.”**

We also note that the early New Testament church clearly believed Jesus’ body and blood to be truly present. Paul wrote, **Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.**

Everyone ought to examine themselves

before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves (1

Corinthians 11:27-29). Paul says that when we eat and drink, we ought to recognize the body of the Lord. You can’t recognize something that isn’t even there, so therefore the body of the Lord must truly be present in communion. Paul also says

that those who receive the sacrament without faith sin against, not bread and wine, but the body and blood of the Lord which are together with the bread and the wine.²

This is **HIS FOOD** which Jesus gives to us, and he gives it so that it would be **OUR FILL**. He gives it because the bread and wine they were dining on that night in the Passover meal *were only symbolic*. As

beautiful a meal as it was, that meal of unleavened bread and year-old unblemished male lamb washed down with common wine certainly nourished their bodies, but could not nourish their souls. Not directly. The Passover meal included much teaching and remembrance of God’s mercy and love shown to their ancestors, and in that way fed them spiritually. But the meal itself could do no such thing because it was part of the Old Covenant.

Now, the Old Covenant and its terms were eagerly received by the people of Israel when Moses came down from the mountain (Ex. 24:1-11). But, it quickly became apparent that this covenant was inadequate. Rather than providing God’s people the opportunity to live up to his demands, it only further exposed their flaws. Under the Old Covenant, which was a covenant of the law, there were always more sacrifices that needed to be

offered because there was always more sin. There were always blessings God intended to give but were never fully enjoyed by the people because of their rebellion. The Old Covenant was two sided. God would keep his promises *if* the people of Israel would keep theirs. And since they continued to sin, there were always consequences that made life in the Promised Land far from what God designed.³



W E E K

² This and the previous paragraphs are adapted from the 2022 Lent series *The Crucial Hours* by Pastor Paul Rutschow © 2021 NPH.

³ This and the following paragraphs are adapted from *Commentary on the Propers: Year C*, © 2021 NPH, p. 151-153.

And this truth was reflected in Jesus' own disciples. Men who time and again showed how little they understood of what Jesus was trying to teach them. Men who, just earlier in the evening, were again arguing about who was greatest among them and most important in the kingdom they were expecting Jesus to establish. Men he knew who, in just a couple hours, would all abandon him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And we reflect this truth in our lives as well. We do this with how little time we actually spend in God's Word, which shows itself both in our ignorance of it and our slowness of heart to believe it! We do this as we shallowly, like the disciples, look for glory here and do not want to pick up our own crosses and follow Jesus. We do this every time we are afraid and pass up opportunities to either share God's grace with someone or speak God's truth in the face of opposition.

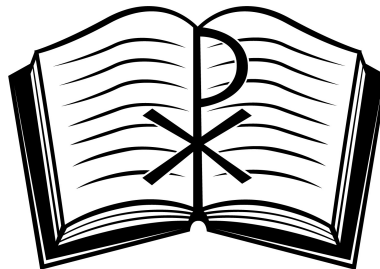
But notice Jesus' amazing words as he introduces this holy meal: **"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer"** (Lk. 22:15). These words are amazing and surprising when you consider the men to whom he first spoke these words! But you see, friends, in the kingdom of God, it doesn't matter so much who are the guests, but who is the host. The host is our Savior Jesus, the friend of sinners. And this beautiful truth

is proven in simple words, which interestingly, only Luke records. The words, **"for you."**

In contrast to the Old Covenant, the New Covenant is one-sided. Jesus means it when he says the body he is giving in, with, and under the bread, is being given **"for you."** He means it when he says the blood he is giving in, with, and under the wine, is being given **"for you."** It is **HIS MEAL** and **OUR FILL!**

What's more, is that when Jesus says **"for you,"** he doesn't just mean that it is for your benefit. It also means in your place! Under the terms of the Old Covenant, all kinds of blessings were promised by God *for* the children of Israel. However, each of those blessings was contingent on the children of Israel doing something *for* God in return. The Old Covenant was a *quid pro quo* ("this for that") agreement.

In contrast, the New Covenant is a "this in place of that" agreement. Its terms are executed when Jesus' body is given in the place of ours and when his blood is poured out in place of ours. As a result, nothing is required by God in return. Substitution eliminates expectation. Since Jesus did this all for us by sheer grace, there is nothing we owe God. There is nothing we give to God by receiving **HIS MEAL**. It's all entirely for **OUR FILL!** This and this alone gives us the confidence



that the blessings given in the New Covenant belong to us. Jesus' body and blood given and poured out in place of ours won for us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation! And in this blessed meal, Jesus has made this same body and blood the food and drink by which he satisfies our every spiritual need.

So, no matter who you are or what you have done, the blessings of the New Covenant are **"for you."** Unlike the obligations of the Old Covenant, "the words **'for you'** require nothing but hearts that believe" (Martin Luther's Small Catechism). Amen.

SDG⁴

⁴ SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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