

God's "Salutary Gift" For You

“Salutary.” It means, “producing a beneficial effect; promoting health.” After we have received our Lord’s body and blood under the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, we often pray, “We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift.”

This *Salutary Gift*, the Lord’s Supper, will be the focus of our Lenten meditations this year. Guided by the writings of Rev Paul Beisel, we will explore a series of images and metaphors used in the Scriptures that highlight the nature and blessings of the Lord’s Supper.

What is it that makes the Lord’s Supper so different, so special? Martin Luther once wrote: “When I preach the death of Christ, I am delivering a public sermon in the congregation. In it I am not giving to any person in particular; he who grasps the saving truth grasps it. But when I administer the Sacrament, I am applying it to him in particular who is taking it; I am giving him Christ’s body and blood that he (personally) may have the forgiveness of sins, purchased through Christ’s death and preached in the congregation. This is something more than the ordinary sermon.” (Plass, *What Luther Says* III 1242).

“Given *for you* . . . shed *for you* for the forgiveness of sins.” That’s what Jesus said. As in Holy Baptism and private Absolution, each time you receive the bread and wine of the Supper you directly and personally receive Jesus’ Body and Blood for the forgiveness of *your* sins. Not some ‘generic person’s sins,’ *your* sins. Jesus takes His life-renewing, life-restoring gifts and gives them to the one who, with faith in Jesus’ words of promise, eats this bread and drinks from this cup.

The Lord’s Supper isn’t something we have the right to change—it is the *Lord’s* Supper, after all, not ours—but it is something that changes us. Luther described it this way:

“Corruptible food transforms itself into the body which eats it; but this food changes him who eats it into itself, makes him like itself, spiritual, alive, and eternal. . . . Since this poor maggot sack, our body, also has the hope of the resurrection from the dead and of eternal life, it, too, must become spiritual and must consume and digest everything that is carnal about it. That is what this spiritual food does when it eats it bodily. This food consumes its flesh and changes it so that it also becomes spiritual, that is, eternally alive and blessed, as Paul says (1 Corinthians 15:44): The body will rise spiritual. To give a crude illustration of what takes place in this eating, it is as if a wolf were to devour a sheep and the sheep were a food so strong that it changed the wolf and turned him into a sheep. Thus when we eat Christ’s flesh bodily and spiritually, the food is so strong that it changes us into itself and out of carnal, sinful, mortal men makes spiritual, holy, immortal men. Indeed, we are this already—but, of course, in a hidden manner, in faith and hope; and the fact is not yet evident. On Judgment Day we shall see it.” (Plass, *What Luther Says* II 818).

As God has richly blessed us with this Salutary Gift, so let us continue in His blessing. We look forward to and dine upon this weekly Feast throughout this season of Lent and, through the joy and glory of Easter, we look further ahead to the great and eternal Feast that is yet to come!