

May Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us His peace.
Amen.

“Take Eat; Drink”

- I. An invitation to a miracle.
- II. An invitation to a feast.
- III. An invitation that calls for preparation.

Dear Christian friends,

Our special Lenten worship this year **has had** the GENERAL THEME of **“Three Words of Truth.”** Over the past six weeks we’ve **looked at various three-word CATCHY PHRASES** from the Passion History. Do you remember some of those **“Three Words of Truth”**? **“Love one another. Is it I? Watch and pray. What is truth?”** etc.

Today’s “Three Words of Truth” are actually a THREE WORD INVITATION – a very familiar invitation. **“Take eat; drink.”** THE TRUTH is that those three words are 1)an **invitation** to a miracle, 2)an **invitation** to a feast and 3)an **invitation** that calls for preparation.

I. An invitation to a miracle.

Listen again to the INVITATION. **“Take, eat, this is My body. Drink from it all of you, for this is My blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”**

There’s really nothing hard to UNDERSTAND here. About the only word that MIGHT NEED **some explanation** – and we’ll get to it later – is the word **“covenant”** or **“testament.”** But ALL IN ALL this invitation is pretty SIMPLE and STRAIGHTFORWARD. Just please don’t miss THE TRUTH – those three words – **“take eat; drink”** – are an invitation to a MIRACLE.

Jesus and the apostles were in an **“upper room”** in Jerusalem celebrating the Passover. The **Passover** was to be an annual reminder for the Israelites of **how** GOD HAD RESCUED them from slavery in Egypt. With bitter herbs – **“unleavened bread”** – and roasted lamb they were TO REMEMBER the bitter slavery in Egypt – the blood of the lambs **“on the doorframes”** that had protected them from the DEADLY **tenth plague** – the haste with which they had left Egypt.

“While they were eating” – Luke says, **“after the supper”** – Jesus took some of the LEFTOVER unleavened bread (bread made without yeast). We’re not told what words Jesus spoke to **“bless the bread”** – but after then breaking the bread INTO PIECES to **give to each** of them – Jesus SPOKE CLEARLY and SIMPLY, **“Take and eat; this is My body, which is given for you.”** Then Jesus took a cup of grape wine. We’re not told the words Jesus used to **“give thanks”** – but then giving the cup of **blessed wine** to them Jesus SPOKE CLEARLY and SIMPLY, **“Drink from it all of you; for this is My blood of the new testament which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”** Those three words – **“take eat; drink”** – are an invitation to a MIRACLE!

Jesus declares the fact of this **miracle** but He doesn’t explain the how. HOW this can be is the simple, basic truth that **“nothing is impossible with God.”** The bread we eat in Holy Communion **“IS (Jesus’) body.”** With the bread Jesus REALLY and TRULY gives us His body – the very same body He gave into death on the cross. The wine we drink **“IS (Jesus’) blood.”** With the wine Jesus REALLY and TRULY gives us His blood – the very same blood He **“poured out”** on the cross for our forgiveness. DON’T TRY to figure out the **miracle** of Holy Communion – JUST TAKE Jesus at His Word and TAKE JESUS UP on His invitation! COME – **“take eat”** the bread – **“drink”** the wine – and CLING to Jesus’ PLAIN WORDS, **“This IS My body – this IS My blood.”**

II. An invitation to a feast.

WHAT A FEAST Jesus invites us to in Holy Communion! **In the catechism** Luther asked the question, “WHAT BLESSINGS do we **receive through** this eating and drinking?” Do you remember the answer he **then gave** in the catechism? “THAT IS SHOWN us by these words, ‘Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.’”

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is the forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation.”

“**Take eat; drink**” is an invitation to a FEAST OF FORGIVENESS – to receive and enjoy the forgiveness JESUS WON for us when He gave His body and **shed** His blood on the cross that first Good Friday. Forgiveness FULL AND FREE is the “**new covenant**” or “**new testament**” God established with **us sinners**.

A “**covenant**” is an agreement between two parties – two **sides**. But this “**new covenant**” is NOT an agreement hammered out at a NEGOTIATING TABLE – **God** and **us each agreeing to do HIS/OUR PART**. This is a ONE-SIDED “**covenant**” – God coming to us and promising TO DO for us. The **TERMS** of this “**new covenant**” were mentioned in both the OT and epistle readings. “**This is the covenant I will make with them after that time declares the LORD. I will be their God and they will be My people. For I will forgive their guilt and I will remember their sins no more.**” This “**new covenant**” is PURE GOSPEL – God doing for us – God forgiving us NOT BECAUSE of what WE **have done** or **will do** but SOLELY BECAUSE of what Jesus has all done for us – His perfect obedience to the commandments – His innocent death to pay for all our sins.

A “**testament**” – think of a person’s “LAST WILL and testament.” A “**testament**” is what someone gives you AFTER THAT PERSON dies. What did JESUS LEAVE us in His “last will and testament”? NOT lots of money – **not** a cottage up north – but FORGIVENESS full and free. AND WITH THAT forgiveness also comes peace with God and eternal life in heaven when we die. OR as Luther put it in the catechism, “WHERE there is the forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation.”

The devil wants to convince us that EITHER we’re not so bad – we’re basically good, decent people – we DON’T NEED God’s forgiveness – God would never send us to hell. The devil’s convinced A LOT of people of that – but IF HE CAN’T **then** he wants to convince us that there’s NO WAY God could ever forgive us for whatever the sin might be. The devil will tell us God CAN FORGIVE a lot of stuff but we’ve pushed God TOO FAR – God would never forgive us – **never take us back** – **never let us go** to heaven – NOT AFTER **whatever** we’ve done. God has GIVEN UP on us so we might as well GIVE UP on God.

That’s the DEVIL talking. JESUS invites us, “**Take eat, drink – My body – My blood – given – shed FOR YOU for the FORGIVENESS of sins.**” The TRUTH IS we are guilty sinners. We have IGNORED – defied – disobeyed our **almighty Creator** – and NOT JUST NOW and then but over and over – day after day – year after year – and often the SAME SIN again and again. God SHOULD – God has every right to DAMN us to hell’s eternal punishment. But IN PURE GRACE – totally undeserved love – **God gave us** His own eternal Son to be our perfect Savior. Jesus lived for us that life of PERFECT LOVE – **trust** – **obedience** that we owed God but never could live. **On the cross** Jesus was punished for the sins of the whole world – Jesus sacrificed His life to “**take away the sin of the world**” – Jesus shed His blood to “**cleanse us from all sin.**”

God wants us SO SURE and CONVINCED of this that He not only tells us this **again** and again in the Bible – Jesus also invites us TO THIS FEAST of forgiveness. At this feast we **could say** Jesus PROVES us to His love – **proves** we’re forgiven and that we really are going straight to heaven when we die – **proves** we can trust all His promises. THE PROOF? His body and blood “**given and shed**” BECAUSE He loves us and had so promised us – “**given and shed**” FOR our forgiveness so that we could go to heaven when we die. **How** could we ever turn down an invitation to SUCH A FEAST?!

“**Take eat; drink.**” Jesus wants us to TAKE HIM UP on His invitation. He literally does a miracle to provide SUCH A FEAST for us. “**Take eat, drink**” is thus also...

III. An invitation that calls for preparation.

Holy Communion is SUCH A FEAST for us yet the Bible warns that a person can come to Communion in a WRONG WAY and then actually be sinning by coming to Communion. Jesus invites us to His Supper TO BLESS us but we can abuse His Supper and **instead** BRING JUDGMENT on ourselves. That was actually happening in the **congregation in Corinth**, Greece. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11, “**Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be GUILTY OF SINNING against the Lord’s body and blood. Instead, let a person examine himself and after doing so, let him eat of the bread and drink**

from the cup. For if anyone eats and drinks in an unworthy way because he does not recognize the Lord's body, he eats and drinks JUDGMENT on himself.

BEFORE coming to Communion we are to **“examine”** – CHECK OUT - ourselves. Communion is NOT FOR perfect people who have turned around their lives. Communion is FOR SINNERS who have messed up and NEED to be cleaned up. We don't come to Communion **because we've been** SUCH GOOD Christians but because we desperately need God's FORGIVENESS and HELP.

Communion is for PENITENT sinners who recognize and are sorry for their sins – **sinner**s who want God's forgiveness AND God's help in changing their lives around. If a person's attitude is “YES, I'm a **sinner** and God will JUST HAVE TO **live with** that” – “Yes, I SHOULDN'T be **doing whatever** but I'm going to keep on doing it” – if a person is DEFYING God and expecting God to **accept** that – that person HAS NOT BUSINESS coming to Communion. The church has no right to GIVE THAT PERSON Communion. That's making a mockery of Jesus and His Supper. That's not the CHURCH DECIDING who gets invited to the Lord's feast. That's the church following the LORD'S GUEST LIST for His Supper.

Proper preparation for Holy Communion is HONESTLY facing up to **our sin** and **the hell** we deserve and humbly crying, **“God, have mercy on me, the sinner.”** Proper preparation is dropping all the EXCUSES and clinging by faith to Jesus and all He's **done for us promised to us**. Proper preparation is taking Jesus AT HIS WORD when He says, **“This is My body – My blood – given/shed – FOR YOU – for the FORGIVENESS of sins.”**

Oh, what a PRICELESS INVITATION - **“Take eat, drink!”** Amen.

NICENE CREED