

The Power of the Sacrament of the Altar

Wednesday, March 14 at 11 & 7

Fifth Wednesday of Lent – 2018

Holy Week: TH at 11 & 7; FR at 11 & 7 | Easter Sunday at 7 & 10:45

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Power is necessary in countless ways:

- ▶ A hand needs power to write!
- ▶ Legs need power to walk!
- ▶ A car needs power to move!

Going to [page 335](#) of the 2017 edition of Luther's Small Catechism, we are focusing on [The Power of the Sacrament of the Altar](#)! Admittedly the power in the sacraments *is unseen*, so many believe that power *does not exist*. However, through this sermon, may the Holy Spirit convince us that the words of Jesus have GREAT POWER; therefore, *they do what they say, even when that seems impossible!*

The Central Thought

“Jesus’ words make eating a morsel of bread and taking a sip of wine a great and gracious feast rather than an empty ceremony.”

How can we be sure that Jesus’ words have such power? Consider this true story in [Mark 4:35-41 \(ESV\)](#): Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee; the Bible says that “...a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking

into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.... [Then His disciples] said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” As the Son of God ✞made the world and ✞has control over the wind and waves, *so He has the power to give us His very body and His very blood for the forgiveness of our sins!*

Today’s section includes ONLY 3 questions: **364-366**

A Closer Reading of the Small Catechism

364. **How can bodily eating and drinking give us such great spiritual benefits as forgiveness, life, and salvation?**
- a. **Dr. Luther gave this answer:** Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: “forgiveness of sins.”
 - b. **Dr. Luther also wrote the following in the Large Catechism** (V 29): “...the only way this treasure [*that is, forgiveness*] is passed along and made our very own is in the words ‘Given . . . and shed for you.’ For in [those] words you have both truths, **that** it is Christ’s body and blood, and **that** it is yours as a treasure and gift.”

- c. The phrase, “**Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins**” is used by Dr. Luther in his second, third, and fourth Sacrament of the Altar answers, so what does the phrase mean?
- i. **Given and shed** – *Jesus gave His body and shed His blood!*
 - ii. **...for you** – *Jesus gave His Body and shed His blood for me and every single person!*
 - iii. **...for the forgiveness of sins** – *Jesus’ work has a specific purpose: *To forgive my sins; along with that gift of forgiveness, I also have spiritual life and eternal salvation!**

Connections and Applications

365. **Does everyone who eats and drinks the Sacrament also receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation?**
- a. No. Everyone receives bread, wine, body, and blood, *but FAITH IS NECESSARY to receive the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation!*
 - b. Think about the NECESSITY OF FAITH in this true story in [Matthew 9:20-22 \(ESV\)](#): “And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind [Jesus] and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹ for she said to herself, ‘If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.’ ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, ‘Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And instantly the woman was made well.” Now, think about the Supper: We approach the altar being **ill with sin**; then, as we

receive with faith – *believing in Jesus and His very words, we are **made spiritually well** – having received the precious gift of forgiveness!*

366. **How, then, should we eat and drink the Lord's Supper?** The catechism has a long answer; let's look at it in two parts:

- a. **Part 1:** “We should eat Christ’s body and drink His blood confidently believing that He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification.” Why should we believe such things? Because the Bible clearly says that Jesus “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). So we know who He is – *the Promised Messiah*, what He did – *took away the sin of the world*, and how we can be sure – *because God raised Him from the dead!*
- b. **Part 2:** “Trusting in His saving work, we receive His body and blood, given to us under the bread and wine, as the guarantee of our forgiveness.” When a death occurs, some may be wondering about an inheritance; but then, *when the last will and testament is read*, all wondering is done – *the inheritance is sure!* Therefore, *knowing of Jesus’ last will and testament* – that He gave His body and blood for our forgiveness, *let us be sure we have the forgiveness of our sins!*

Let Us Pray: “Lord Jesus Christ...” (Catechism Explanation, 337).

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