

FORM FOR CELEBRATING THE LORD'S SUPPER



Institution

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Listen to the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper as described by the Apostle Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians:

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, 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. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:23-29).

In order to partake, to our comfort, in the Lord's Supper we must first search our heart and then keep to the purpose for which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted it: the commemoration of His death.

Self-examination

True reflection

First: Let everyone consider his sins and accursedness that he may detest and humble himself before God, for the wrath of God against sin is so great that he could not let it go unpunished, but punished it in His beloved Son Jesus Christ by the bitter and shameful death on the cross.

Second: Everyone must search his heart whether he believes the sure promise of God that all his sins are forgiven solely because of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is given him, as if he himself paid for all his sin and fulfilled all righteousness.

Third: Each of us must examine his conscience whether it is his intention to show true thankfulness to God and follow His ways with his entire life, while laying aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, and live in all sincerity with his neighbour in true love and unity.

God will assuredly receive in grace all who are so inclined and deem them worthy to sit at the table of His Son, Jesus Christ. They who, however, do not find this testimony in their hearts, eat and drink judgement upon themselves. According to the command of Christ and of the Apostle Paul, we urge all who know themselves to be guilty of the following offensive sins to abstain from the table of the Lord, and we declare to them that they have no part in the kingdom of Christ: all idolators, all who call on the deceased, angels or any other created being, all sorcerers and fortune-tellers who swear to people, animals or things and all who believe in this; all who despise God and His Word and the holy sacraments; all blasphemers; all who seek to divide, conspire and stir up the church and state; all who lie and are disobedient to their parents and the authorities; all murderers and trouble-makers and all who live in hate and envy of their neighbour; all adulterers, drunkards,

thieves, usurers, robbers, gamblers, the greedy, slanderers and all who lead offensive lives. While they persist in these sins, they shall abstain from taking this food, which Christ has ordained solely for His believers that the judgement and condemnation upon them may not be even heavier.

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, this is not meant to discourage despairing hearts, as though only the sinless are worthy to come to the table of the Lord. For we do not come to the Lord's Supper to declare that we are perfect and righteous in ourselves. On the contrary, we seek our life outside of ourselves in Christ and thereby acknowledge that we are dead in ourselves. We know all our sins and shortcomings: We do not have perfect faith and we do not serve God with the devotion we must. We struggle each day against the weakness of our faith and with the evil desires of our flesh. When we, however, by the grace of Holy Spirit sincerely repent and strive to fight against our unbelief and live according to all God's commandments, we may rest assured that no sin or weakness inside us will keep God from receiving us in His grace and make us worthy of partaking in this heavenly food and drink.

Remembrance

Let us now further consider the purpose for which the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper, namely in remembrance of Him. We must commemorate Him as follows: First we must believe, according to the promises given to the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, with all our heart that the Father sent our Lord Jesus Christ to the world. We must believe that He became flesh and bore God's eternal wrath in our stead, every day of His life here on earth. We must believe that in complete obedience and righteousness He kept God's law, even when He sweat blood in the garden [of Gethsemane] under the burden of our sin and God's wrath that bound Him to free us of our sins. He then suffered immeasurable hate that we may not be put to shame. We believe that He was innocently sentenced to death that we may be held blameless before the judgement seat of God. We must believe that He allowed His blessed body to be nailed to the cross together with the guilt of our sins to thereby bear the burden of our accursedness. We must believe that He humbled Himself on the cross, suffering the deepest of shame and fear of hell, calling out: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" – that God may receive us and never forsake us. We must believe that with His death and the shedding of His blood He brought to fulfilment the new and eternal testament, the covenant of grace and reconciliation in saying: "It is finished."

In order that we may steadfastly believe that we share in this covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. After giving thanks, He broke the bread, gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat and believe that this is my body." After the meal He took the cup and after giving thanks, He offered it to them and said: "Drink from the cup as sign of my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." As often as you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you are reminded and assured of His heartfelt love and faithfulness. Take this as a sign that He gave His body on the cross and shed His blood, to save us from eternal death, to feed and refresh our hungry and thirsty souls unto eternal life. You are assured of this as certainly as you see the bread broken, you drink from the cup, eating and drinking in death. He nourishes and refreshes our hungry and thirsty souls with his crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life as certainly as this bread is broken before our eyes and this cup is given to us and we eat and drink in remembrance of Him.

From this institution of the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see that He sets our faith and trust on His perfect sacrifice, fulfilled on the cross, as the sole basis

for our salvation. Thereby He became the true food and drink of eternal life to our hungry and thirsty souls of life eternal. For by His death He removed the cause of our eternal hunger and misery, namely sin and obtained for us the life-giving Spirit – who dwells in Christ as the Head and in us as His members, - that we may have true fellowship with Him and share in all His riches, eternal life, righteousness, and glory.

By the same Spirit we are also united in true brotherly love as members of one body, as the apostle says: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor 10:17). As one bread is baked out of many grains and one wine is pressed and blended out of many grapes, so we are all by faith incorporated in Christ into one body. We who have been grafted into Christ must in brotherly love, for the sake of Christ, who loved us first, be one body not only in word, but also in deed to one another.

May the almighty and merciful God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ help us in this through His Holy Spirit. Amen.

To receive this, let us now humble ourselves before God and call on Him and His grace in true faith.

Prayer

Merciful God and Father,

Gathering together in this supper we commemorate the glorious sacrifice of the bitter death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We pray You will work in our hearts, by Your Holy Spirit, that we surrender ourselves all the more to Your Son in sincere faith. Grant that our despairing hearts be fed and nourished with His body and blood, with Him both God and man, the only heavenly bread by the power of the Holy Spirit. Grant that we may no longer live in our sin but He in us and us in Him that we may thereby truly share in the new and eternal testament and covenant of grace that we not doubt that You are forevermore our gracious Father who will never again impute to us our sins and generously provide us, as Your beloved children and heirs, with everything we need in body and soul.

Grant us Your grace that we may joyfully take up our cross, deny ourselves, confess our Saviour and with eager expectation and in all sorrow await our Lord Jesus Christ's return from heaven, when He will glorify our mortal bodies as His own and take us to Him into eternity. Hear our prayer, o God and merciful Father, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray as follows:

Our Father who is in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever.

Amen.

Upliftment of hearts

Then the minister of the Word says:

Now being fed with the true bread from heaven, Christ, we must not only see the outward signs of bread and wine, but lift our hearts to heaven, to Jesus Christ our Intercessor, sitting at the right hand of His heavenly Father, as described to us in the Articles of our Christian faith. Let us be assured that as certain as we receive the bread and wine in remembrance of Him, we are nourished and refreshed, through the working of the Holy Spirit, with His body and blood.

As the bread is broken and shared, the minister continues:

The bread that is broken is communion with Christ's body. Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was broken in full atonement of all our sins.

When he serves the cup:

This cup of thanksgiving is communion with the blood of Christ. Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out in full atonement of all our sins.

Then the minister says:

Beloved in the Lord, since the Lord has now fed our souls at His table, let us worship His Name, saying in our hearts:

"Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases; He redeems my life from the pit and crowns me with love and compassion. The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him..."

(Psalm 103:1-4; 8-13)

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things..." (Rom. 8.32)

"...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:8-10). Therefore, I will proclaim with mouth and heart the glory of the Lord, now and forever more. Amen.

Prayer

O merciful God and Father, we thank You with all our heart that in Your infinite mercy You gave us Your only-begotten Son as Mediator and Sacrifice for our sins and as food and drink of eternal life. Thank You also for granting us true faith to share in Your benefits. We thank You for instituting the Lord's Supper for strengthening our faith. We pray, faithful God and Father, that by the working of Your Holy Spirit, the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of His death we will increase in faith daily and in fellowship with Christ. This we pray through Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.