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 richly at his table

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Topic: [Lord's Supper](#)

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Order Of Worship (Liturgy)

Lord's Day 28

75. Q. How does the Lord's Supper signify and seal to you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all His gifts?
 A. In this way: Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup in remembrance of Him. With this command He gave these promises:[1] First, as surely as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup given to me, so surely was His body offered for me and His blood poured out for me on the cross. Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the minister and taste with my mouth the bread and the cup of the Lord as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely does He Himself nourish and refresh my soul to everlasting life with His crucified body and shed blood.

[1] Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-25.

76. Q. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink His shed blood?
 A. First, to accept with a believing heart all the suffering and the death of Christ, and so receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal.[1] Second, to be united more and more to His sacred body through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us.[2] Therefore, although Christ is in heaven[3] and we are on earth, yet we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones,[4] and we forever live and are governed by one Spirit, as the members of our body are by one soul.[5]

[1] John 6:35, 40, 50-54. [2] John 6:55, 56; I Cor. 12:13. [3] Acts 1:9-11; 3:21; I Cor. 11:26; Col. 3:1. [4] I Cor. 6:15, 17; Eph. 5:29, 30; I John 4:13. [5] John 6:56-58; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:15, 16; I John 3:24.

77. Q. Where has Christ promised that He will nourish and refresh believers with His body and blood as surely as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

A. In the institution of the Lord's supper: The Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also the cup, after supper, saying, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (I Corinthians 11:23-26). This promise is repeated by Paul where he says: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (I Corinthians 10:16, 17).

Scripture Reading:
Matthew 26:17-30
Exodus 12:1-14

Singing: (Psalms and Hymns are from the "Book of Praise" Anglo Genevan Psalter)
Psalm 63:2,3
Psalm 84:3
Psalm 136:12,13
Psalm 81:1,4,9,14
Hymn 44:1,2

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Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Eating is a necessary, and largely enjoyable, part of life. We realize we need to eat in order to survive. We develop a sense of hunger, and we answer that sense with eating something.

Our souls are hungry also. Our souls want answers to difficult questions, questions as: what is the purpose of life? Is God angry with me on account of my sins? Will He give me eternal life, or not? True: our sense of hunger in our souls is warped due to the fall into sin, to the point that we may not even notice the hunger. But that doesn't take from the fact that we have need of a feed.

In His care for us the Lord our God nourishes and refreshes our hungry and thirsty souls with the true food and drink of life eternal. To His disciples Jesus once said,

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (Jn 6:50f).

Well now, this living bread -His own flesh!- Jesus gives to us in a meal called the Lord's Supper. It is His supper because He as host gives Himself to His people to eat.

From biology classes we can learn how the body benefits from our lunch; one can study how the body breaks down the food we take in, how the body absorbs its nutrients, etc. How, though, does

the soul absorb the nutrition Christ gives us in the Lord's Supper? Just how does this supper benefit us? It is this element, brothers and sisters, that I want to draw out with you particularly today. As we listen to God's word on the point this afternoon, we bear in mind that the table of the Lord will be set before us in two weeks time, the Lord willing.

I summarize the sermon with this theme:

CHRIST NOURISHES OUR SOULS RICHLY AT HIS TABLE.

1. The message of this nourishment.
2. The manner of this nourishment.
3. The mandate in this nourishment.

1. The message of this nourishment.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of Lord's Supper "on the night in which He was betrayed" (I Cor 11:23). We read the account from Mt 26. The disciples had asked the Lord where He wanted them to prepare for Him to eat the Passover (vs 17). It was while they ate that Passover together that "Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples" (vs 26). To understand the message of the Lord's Supper, we need first to come to grips with what Passover was all about.

The term 'passover' refers to the activity of the angel of death who went through the land of Egypt on the night before Israel's exodus from their slavery. That angel of death entered every house to kill the first-born of that house, but passed over every house where he found blood on the doorposts and lintel. That had been God's decree; the Israelites were to slaughter a lamb for a household, and then put some of the blood of the lamb on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the house (Ex 12:1-7).

Now: why would the angel of death kill the first born of every Egyptian home, and pass over the homes of the Israelites? We need to be aware, brothers and sisters, that every Egyptian deserved death. That is due to original sin as well as actual sins. In Paradise God had decreed that if one would eat from the forbidden tree, he would die. Since every Egyptian was responsible for his own fall into sin, each deserved to die. More, the Egyptians also lived in godless unbelief, even persecuting the people of God's choice. That also provoked God's wrath so that they deserved to die. That the first born of every household died was then a symbol of the fact that every Egyptian deserved to die. The action of the angel of death that night represented judgment for the whole land.

But why, then, were the Israelites spared?? Let it be clear to our minds, congregation: it was not because the Israelites were better! The Israelites were as guilty of original sin as the Egyptians were. On top of that, the Israelites themselves in Egypt committed daily sins, more, were guilty of gross sin that provoked God's anger (as the club discussions on Ezekiel 23 will bring out - see vs 3, 19). Yet the angel passed over Israel's firstborn. Why? Because the blood on the door pointed forward to the coming blood of Jesus Christ! That is: Christ would die instead of the Israelites, Christ would die in place of the Israelites. You see: here is the gospel, in all its glory! Christ in our place: it's the heart of Scripture, the good news of substitution - sinners are spared because Christ dies in our place! That's the gospel that spared the Israelites from the death they deserved.

The wealth of Passover, congregation, was more profound still. For the Lord also told His people what to do with the meat of the lamb whose blood was smeared around the door. Vs 8: "Then they shall eat the flesh on that night." Now, why would they have to eat it? And why eat it that night? That lamb, brothers and sisters, was a symbol of Christ; that's why the lamb's blood could prevent the angel of death from entering their doors. Here's now the point: the Lord wanted His people to

eat Christ, and so be nourished with His gospel, yes, to show that they were united with Christ, shared in His benefits. The eating demonstrated union; the Christ they ate (as represented by the meat of the lamb) became part of themselves.

The striking events of the night described in Ex 12 were to stay in Israel's memory from here on in. Each year the people were to "keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations" (vs 14). Year by year, then, the people were confronted with the gospel of substitution, confronted too with the good news of their union with the Redeemer God would send.

In keeping with that command, the disciples in Mt 26 asked the Lord where they were to prepare the Passover. More, in keeping with that command Jesus and His disciples actually sat down to eat that Passover. At that particular meal, Jesus and the twelve were recalling the events of Ex 12, remembering how the angel of death passed through the land to destroy sinners but for Jesus' sake spared the people of Israel. As they ate in Mt 26, Jesus and the twelve delighted in the gospel of substitution, were focused on their union with the coming Redeemer. Truly, a rich event!

So think it through, beloved: of what significance was it that the twelve ate the meat of the Passover lamb? The answer is easy enough: they were thereby confessing that they were united with the Lamb of God, the Substitute whom God was sending to die in their place. Though they did not adequately realize it, that Substitute was in their midst that evening; Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God whom God had sent into the world.

Further question then: of what significance was it that Jesus Himself ate the Passover lamb? That lamb pointed to Himself, signified that He had to die to pay for sin. That Jesus ate the lamb Himself drew out what Jesus' task was; He soon had to go to the cross. The disciples didn't realize it, but Jesus surely did: His eating that Passover lamb involved a mandate. And Jesus was prepared for the mandate implicit in the meat He was eating; He was ready to suffer the anguish of God's wrath against sin and then die for the salvation of all who in faith had eaten that lamb over the years.

That's also why the wording of vs 26 is so significant. We read: "as they were eating, Jesus took - bread." We read that, are so used to it that we find nothing surprising in it. But given that there's also meat on the table, and that meant points forward to His own coming work, why did Jesus not pick up meat and declare of it, "Take, eat; this is My body"? Why did He take up bread and declare that it signified His body? That, congregation, is because of the specific moment Mt 26 represents in the history of salvation. Jesus picks up this bread "on the night when He was betrayed," on the evening before He would be sacrificed on the altar of Calvary.

You cannot have meat without the shedding of blood. The Old Testament shedding of blood pointed forward to the death of the Lamb of God. At the moment of Mt 26, that Lamb will die tomorrow; Mt 26 takes place on the evening before Good Friday. By taking up bread instead of meat as symbol of His body, the Lord Jesus Christ declared on Thursday already that the events that would occur on Friday would most certainly be successful; His sacrifice on Good Friday would bring an end to the shedding of blood, an end because He would be successful in paying for sin. "The wages of sin is death," God had declared, and Jesus through His sacrifice would pay those wages on the disciples' behalf so that they could live, live forever. Here on this Thursday, with the institution of the Lord's Supper, was the gospel in all its depth and riches! Christ prophesied of His death, more, Christ prophesied of the success of His death, a death He would undergo in order to deliver sinners from the house of bondage - not Egypt, but bondage to sin and Satan!

Then as He held up the broken bread He handed it out to His disciples and told them to "take, eat." That is to say: they had to swallow this symbol of Christ's body broken on the cross, swallow it as symbol of their union with this Christ. Though they deserved to die on account of their original as well as their actual sins, they could live instead, live because God had made them His in Christ, united them to the Christ who was about to die in their place.

So, brothers and sisters, the supper Christ instituted on the eve of His death reached to the very heart of the gospel of salvation. What is the message of the nourishment Christ gives us time and again at the Lord's table? It's this: with the bread and the cup of Lord's supper the Savior impresses upon us the glorious gospel of substitution. That is: on account of your sins you deserve to die, but I died for you so that you may have life forever. Recall that passage I quoted earlier from Jn 6:

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh." (Jn 6:50f).

As the church echoes the matter in Question 75 of our Lord's Day: the Lord's Supper signifies and seals to us that we "share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all His gifts." Lord's Supper: here our hungry and thirsty souls are directed to the events of Calvary 2000 years ago, here were told to remember what God in Christ did for our salvation. That focus on Christ and His work on Calvary gets our concentration off ourselves and our failures, off our brokenness and transgressions, and onto the redemption God promised in Paradise, foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies, announced through the prophets, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That focus on Christ and His work for us (instead of focusing on ourselves and our brokenness) provides nourishment for our hungry souls. Christ: at this table we're reassured that the bread of life God gave in Christ is really ours - forever. How rich the message of the sacrament!

We come to our second point:

2. The manner of this nourishment.

Old Testament Israel had to eat the meat of the sacrificed Passover Lamb. With that eating the Lord impressed on His people that the Christ symbolized by the Lamb was really their Savior. In the New Testament replacement of this Old Testament sacrament, the Lord Jesus Christ has told us to eat the bread and drink the cup. As the bread and cup represent Christ's body and blood, our eating and drinking has the same significance as the Old Testament eating of the Lamb; by having us eat the bread of the Lord's Supper and drinking the cup, the Lord would impress on us that Christ is really ours. As potatoes become part of us when we eat them, so Christ's work on Calvary becomes part of us when we eat the broken bread and drink the cup.

But how? Those questions of my soul -am I really God's child, are my sins really forgiven, am I in fact an heir to life eternal- those pressings questions of my soul receive here an answer. Yet it's not the eating itself that answers those questions, nourishes my soul. After all, one can eat and drink damnation to oneself too. Instead, we are strengthened when we eat and drink in faith. That is: I believe the promises God gave me at baptism, believe that God adopted me for Jesus' sake to be His child, believe that God's Son paid for my sins, believe that Christ's Spirit renews my heart. I believe it., but that belief is repeatedly attacked in the struggles of this life, and therefore is bruised, hungry. That faith is there before we go to the table, but needs nourishment, strengthening, encouragement to carry us further in the struggles of life. Exactly how it is done is beyond our understanding, for we cannot comprehend the way the Holy Spirit works (cf Belgic Confession, Art 35). But this we know: the Lord strengthens us at His table by faith. Just as a body must be alive if that body is to benefit from a feed, so the soul must be alive to benefit from the heavenly bread granted us at the Lord's table. And that soul is alive when there is faith. That soul is strengthened when it reaches out in faith to embrace the bread and cup as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, shed for me. Through that bread and drink the Lord at His table tells me that indeed I deserve to perish on account of my sins but He had His body broken for my benefit - witness the bread being broken before my eyes and then given to me to eat. I deserve God's judgment, but at the table I am united with Christ instead - witness that I'm told to eat and drink the tokens of Christ's body and blood. My thoughts are driven back to Calvary, and it's by contemplation of the work of Christ on

Calvary that my hungry and thirsty soul is nourished and refreshed with the bread of life. So I'm assured, in all the doubts and struggles of life that Yes, I'm really delivered of my sins and Satan's bondage after all.

That in turn leads to our last point:

3. The mandate in this nourishment.

The mandate is caught in the opening words of Lord's Day 28: "Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup in remembrance of Him." The word 'commanded' catches the mandate. It's rooted in the form of the verbs Jesus uses in Mt 26. He picked up the bread, "blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat'." "Take, eat": those are imperatives, commands. The disciples had no option; Jesus' commands are heavenly commands, and they must be obeyed. When the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians of the holy supper, he repeats this commands of Christ for the benefit of the Corinthian Christians; though that congregation was internally divided the brethren in Corinth had no option in the matter, they had to "take and eat" - says I Cor 11. Skipping Lord's Supper was simply contrary to the will of the Lord.

Why, though, has God commanded participation in the sacrament? That, brothers and sisters, is because He knows that our souls need nourishment. I refer here to Article 33 of the Belgic Confession (pg 465):

"We believe that our gracious God, mindful of our insensitivity and infirmity, has ordained sacraments to seal His promises to us and to be pledges of His good will and grace towards us. He did so to nourish and sustain our faith."

You see: because of our fall into sin, we've become so depraved that we do not rightly feel the hunger of our souls. God is "mindful of our insensitivity and infirmity", and therefore has not only made the sacrament available to us but has also commanded us to make use of it. The sacrament is His care, His grace; more, the command to eat and drink is His care, His grace. It's grace that He sets spiritual food in front of us; it's equally grace that He instructs us to eat it. As a child may need to be told to eat, for his own good, so we are told to eat, for our own good. If we should wish to be wiser than God on the matter, and decline to attend because . (and we can have whatever reason our sinful minds can imagine), we simply live in transgression of God's command and therefore provoke His anger and deprive ourselves of His blessing. With Lord's Day 30 I hope to go into more detail here, for there we make confession of the need to be repentant of sin. Lord's Day 28 simply says that "Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat . and drink," and that's the point I need to draw out now: attendance is a command, we have no option. And it's a command because of Christ's awareness that we are weak, we need the nourishment He would provide at His table.

A couple of implications follow. One notices that congregation members are away for holidays and then be in a place where they cannot reasonably get to church on Sunday. The wrong of that is addressed by the apostle when he says to the Hebrews that Christians are not to neglect to meet together (as is the habit of some, the apostle adds), and all the more as you see the Day of Christ's return approaching (Heb 10:25). In other words: we're meant to be faithfully in church, and not only when we're home or when it's convenient. But the item that needs addressing this afternoon is specifically the Lord's Supper. "Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup in remembrance of Him" - and He's done so because He is mindful of our insensitivity to the hunger of our own souls. May we then be in Ningaloo when Lord's Supper is celebrated here? Or anywhere, absent from here? Does absence, brothers and sisters, not reflect an insensitivity to the hunger of our souls? More, does absence not reflect insensitivity to God's sensitivity? If God in His grace is mindful of our weaknesses, and so sets the table before us and

tells us to eat, must be not respect His mercy and make it our business to be present when He wants to nourish and refresh us?? Let us, beloved, not be wiser than God. Instead, let us readily confess our radical depravity, confess that God knows our needs better than we, and so heed His command to eat and drink. And so make it our business to be there when the Lord's Supper is celebrated.

But that's not the only implication that follows. For if the Lord would nourish our souls at His table - how?- by directing our attention to the Savior's work on Calvary, then this is a focus I need to cherish in all of life. In other words: Lord' Supper may not be a moment, and then forgotten. Rather, I leave the table and take the message of the table with me as I return to the cares of this life. That message is Christ, that message is Calvary, that message is how for Jesus' sake I'm reconciled to God and therefore the Lord God is not angry with me - even though things in my life do not go as I'd like them to go. True, taking the message of the table with me to work on Monday requires effort on our part, but it be so; it's in real life that we need answers to our real questions. Well now, in this real life God would direct our attention to Christ, and so we need to keep focusing our attention on the Christ, no matter what Monday or Tuesday may bring.

That Monday or Tuesday: that may also be the day of Christ's return. At the marriage feast of the Lamb on the Last Day, we sit with Christ at one table. Of that table the Lord's Supper is a foretaste. If together, beloved, we will sit at one table with the Lamb of God in the New Jerusalem, it is necessary that we sit together at one table today already. That is why disagreements between brothers, the disagreements that prevent sitting together at one table today, need to be cleared up. Our focus needs to be where God directs us at the table, and that's not on each other and each other's weaknesses, but that needs to be on Christ and His saving work on Calvary. That's where the focus will be on the last Day, and that's where the focus needs to be today. To get that focus there, and so nourish and refresh our hungry and thirsty souls, He wants us all at His table now already.

The Supper of our Lord is so wonderfully rich, rich because it draws our attention to the most important moment in world history - the sufferings and death of the Savior on our behalf. It's rich, and that's why we want to attend, must attend. To sit with Christ, to eat and drink the tokens of the forgiveness of ours sins, to be united with Him and so be assured of life eternal: in the storms of life, there's no event in the world more nourishing than that! Amen.

* As a matter of courtesy please advise [Rev. C. Bouwman](#), if you plan to use this sermon in a worship service. Thank-you.

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