COMMUNION IS ALL A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ June 5, 2016

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¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." ²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God." ²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:17, 22-26)

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

I remember watching a commercial a long time ago which was promoting a new website where you could buy and sell just about any item that you wanted. The scene opens up with a young boy who has a sandwich leftover from his school lunch which he didn't want. Instead of throwing it away in the trash, he went on this website and put it up for sale. And lo and behold, someone actually bought his leftover lunch sandwich! What a concept. I'm pretty sure this was an early commercial for Ebay.

Now, what are the chances that an old school-lunch sandwich will actually be bought up on Ebay? Pretty low I'm guessing. But that hasn't stopped people from putting up the weirdest things for sale. Companies like Ebay stay in business because of the well-known phrase: "One man's trash, is another man's treasure." This is the same concept behind garage sales. When you no longer have need of an item, you give it or sell it to someone who does want it. It's all a matter of give and take – two people agree on the item or items to be exchanged. Sometimes there's an exchange of sorts, other times it simply is one person giving something away.

When we take a look at communion, the Lord's Supper which Jesus established for his disciples and believers after them, we can see a similar occurrence taking place. We see there is giving, we see there is taking. But we shouldn't think that by our communing at the Lord's Supper that we are bringing anything worthwhile to the table. In fact the Lord's Supper is anything but that. The Lord's Supper is not about what we do, but rather we receive. We see that when we remember that COMMUNION IS ALL A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE.

- 1. Our sins
- 2. His body
- 3. Our life

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For our confirmands, this will mark the first of hopefully many times that you will take the Lord's Supper. But did you know, that while the celebration of the Lord's Supper is about 2,000 years old, it was Core Christianity Series

Lord's Supper

actually established when Jesus was celebrating an even more ancient Jewish festival? It was the festival of the Passover, which we heard about in our first lesson for this morning.

The very first Passover took place in Egypt, when the Israelites were slaves. The Passover was God's way of freeing the Israelites from their slavery, and it all centered around a lamb. A one-year old male lamb, without blemish or defect. After taking in the lamb, each Israelite family was to slaughter it, and use its blood to paint the doorframes of their houses. In this way, the Angel of Death, God's judgment, would pass over their houses, while those homes which did not have the lamb's blood on their doorframes, the Angel of Death would take the life of that house's firstborn.

For around 1,500 years, Jews would remember the Passover by taking a lamb and slaughtering it. Each year they would be reminded of what God had done for their ancestors in Egypt, but there was more than that. The lamb they slaughtered was a symbol of the true Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. So Jesus, when he instituted the Lord's Supper was celebrating this ancient Jewish feast of the Passover. He could have just kept the meal the same and told his disciples to continue to remember the Passover and slaughter the lamb as a symbol or reminder of what Jesus was going to do. But he didn't, he changed it. He instituted a new Passover, the Lord's Supper. In doing this, Jesus was giving his followers an infinitely richer meal to nourish the soul. The Passover Lamb was a symbol, the Lord's Supper is reality. And it is ALL A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE.

During the Passover meal, "Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." It is in these simple words that Jesus used that he made something new, he does something special. What is special about the Lord's Supper? Martin Luther summarizes it in his small catechism.

You can turn to the bottom of page 17 to see what he said. "What blessings do we receive through this eating and drinking? That is shown us by these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." Through these words we receive the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation." Through this new Passover, we have the guarantee from God that he will pass over our sins and guilt.

This is the first MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE concerning <u>our sins</u>. The wrong impression to have with the Lord's Supper is that you need to reach a certain level of worthiness before you are qualified to take it. There are some who might stay away for a long time because they don't feel like their lives have been very Christian. This is no reason to stay away from the Lord's Supper, but rather an even more important reason to go, because it is the Lord's Supper which offers forgiveness of those sins. We give our sins to Jesus in the Lord's Supper and he takes them. This is far from an even trade, but it's a trade God promises to make, when we trust the simple words of Scripture.

It is the simple words of Scripture that cause us to examine ourselves every time we come to the Lord's Table, whether it's your first time, or 500th time. That first question that I always ask myself before I come to the Lord's Table is simple: Am I a sinner? And the second is just as important: Am I sorry for those sins I have

committed? For how foolish I would be to think that I could just walk up to God's presence without grievous sorrow over my sins. Not only how foolish, but how dangerous also. The apostle Paul says, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup...in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning...they eat and drink judgment on themselves." We do not come to the Lord's Supper because we are worthy to come, but because Christ invites us to come. IT'S ALL A MATTER OF GIVING AND TAKING of our sins.

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It is those simple words we believe, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." Those who believe these words receive that wonderful promise. They receive that wonderful promise, because in the Lord's Supper they are not merely receiving bread and wine, they are receiving the very body and blood of the Lord.

Jesus said, "Take and eat, this is my body" and "take and drink, this is my blood of the new covenant." IT'S ALL A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE. In the Lord's Supper, Christ gives to us his body, and we take and receive it. Unfortunately, not all Christians believe this is possible. Because they cannot believe the almighty God would limit himself to forgiving sins in this simple manner. And yet it is because of this simple manner that gives us the greatest assurance. Instead of just reading in the Bible "God so loved the world that he gave his Son," Jesus gets real personal – "You! Take and eat! Take and drink." We do not merely remember what Jesus did, we receive what Jesus did. It is the almighty, all powerful God who makes this possible, who for our benefit, promises forgiveness in something so simple.

And so when I come up to the Lord's Supper, I also ask myself this: What am I receiving? This reminds me that I am receiving more than just a symbol of Christ's body and blood, but in addition to the bread and the wine, I am also receiving his very body and blood which he shed on the cross for me. I may not be able to understand how this is so, but I am not asked to. I am only asked to "take and eat, take and drink, for the forgiveness of sins. This is why Jesus is emphatic in saying do this often. For if we are not drawing closer to God, we are falling further away.

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In the Lord's Supper, IT'S ALL A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE. But like we've seen, it hasn't been the usual giving and taking. It hasn't been anything close to even. The only giving we are doing is giving over our sins and the guilt it carries compared to God giving forgiveness and eternal life. Yet in the Lord's Supper, there's one more matter of GIVE AND TAKE, something that may not get as much attention, but is just as important. It's the GIVING AND TAKING of <u>our life</u>.

Let me explain what I mean by that. It is the final question I ask before going up to communion: Do I intend to lead a God pleasing life in the future? There's a story in the Bible about a woman who was caught in the act of adultery – caught sleeping with a man who was not her husband – a crime punishable by stoning. The religious leaders wanted to see what Jesus would do. Surely he would condemn her for her sins. But he didn't. All he said was, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." And one by one they all left, because they too had sins they were guilty of. But the message of the story isn't that we should not point out sin, but in what Jesus said next to the woman. "Has no one condemned you? Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."

It's only when we come to grips with this that we can fully appreciate what God offers in the Lord's Supper. When we come to grips with the fact that every sin – whether it be of adultery, or anger – not only displeases God, but harms us, we not only want to give to Jesus our sins for forgiveness, but we want to give him <u>our life</u> as well. It's easier said than done for sure. Because how often have we made the excuses that our sins weren't really sins, or they really weren't that bad, or that God forgives them so it doesn't matter. We're against stealing, but illegally downloading that song or movie really doesn't count. We're against anger, except when the kids are being stubborn or we're stuck behind a slow driver. We're all for speaking the truth, except when it's inconvenient for us. I don't know about you, but that happens to me a lot. Which is even more reason why I need Christ and the forgiveness he offers.

When I realize the wonderful gift that Christ has given to me and continues to give to me, how can I not help but give my life to him? How can I not help but give my life to others so that they might take and receive some of God's blessings through me? How can I not help but share this wonderful blessing of the gospel with others. But not just the blessing of the Lord's Supper, but the blessing that all of God's Word provides.

Today is a very special day. It's certainly a special day for Spencer Hildreth and Colton Watson as they prepare to be confirmed. It's certainly a special day for the friends and family of Spencer and Colton. But even more than that, it's a special day, because today is the day we receive the Lord's Supper and the blessings that go along with it. May we remember how special it is every time we receive it. Amen.