

Many members. One body united in Christ.

Maundy Thursday
St. Luke 22:7-22
2 April, Anno Domini 2026

Beloved children who have gathered together this night around the Father's table of salvation,

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How we receive the good gifts of God is just as important as receiving them at all. Whatever good thing the Lord gives can be received either to our blessing or to our judgment whether our meals, our families, or the means of grace. Hear again St. Paul's urgent warning to the Corinthian Christians "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died." (1 Cor. 11:29-30) They ate the Lord's Supper, but they did not eat it in faith, recognizing that they were receiving, not simply bread and wine, but the true Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And because of that, God chastened them for their unbelief.

The Lord's Supper, like Holy Baptism, is not magic. If you do not believe the commands and promises which Christ gives in regard to these things, if you regard them as little more than nice but otherwise empty rituals, then you are condemning yourself because you are denying Christ's own words and making a trifle out of His gift.

The same is true in regard to all of God's gifts, whether they bestow the forgiveness of sins or not. If we receive them as gifts from our heavenly Father, acknowledging that they are from His hand to be used and enjoyed for His purposes, then they are a blessing to us. If the Giver remains the true good while His gifts are merely evidence of that fact then these things can be truly appreciated and enjoyed for what they are and bear to us God's blessing.

The problem is when the gift becomes the good after which our heart chases. Then, the gift from the hand of Him who is good, becomes both the good and the god in our heart and condemns us for our idolatry. In the case of gluttony, this happens when our hearts are disordered toward those things that appeal to our senses of taste and touch, most often food and drink. Food and drink are good. How can they not be if God delivers the forgiveness of sins through the particular food and drink

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of Holy Communion? The problem lies in our disordered, excessive, and unreasonable love of consuming things like food and drink. Gluttony is not simply overeating once a year at Thanksgiving. Rather it is a habitual disorientation that causes us to set aside reason, health, neighbor, and spiritual duty just so that we can consume more, be it just a bite or a whole meal, so that we can experience the pleasure of consuming even if we aren't hungry.

When we indulge gluttony we dull both our minds and our souls. Think about the sleepiness and sluggishness that follows overeating on a day like Thanksgiving. You can barely move or think. You may feel sick. You can't tend either to joyful fellowship or your duties. Or what about what happens when you have had too much alcohol to drink? Your vision and your thinking grow blurry. You can't walk straight or speak clearly. Your senses are confused. Even your conscience grows dulled and your inhibitions are lowered. A bloated stomach always disrupts your spiritual focus and your mental clarity, not to mention the destruction it causes to your short and long-term health. All because you kept having more after you were already full, after you knew that you should have stopped drinking, after you clicked "Buy now" on Amazon for the third time today. It stops being about how good the food tastes or about your daily bread and what you need. It's just about having more because it's there now and you want it. It is pleasing to the eye and promises to satisfy. So we dig in.

This is gluttony. Living to eat rather than eating to live. Being unsatisfied with daily bread and instead eating simply because you can and you want to consume. It doesn't matter if you're full. It doesn't matter if it doesn't even taste that good. It doesn't matter if it's harmful to your body. Your Old Adam just wants to feel the sensation of eating, drinking, and consuming. The consequences don't matter. Only the consuming. The consuming becomes the god.

And lest we think that eating too much is the only form of gluttony, the wisdom of our forefathers illuminates other forms of gluttony. Do you find yourself always grazing, unwilling to suffer even a moment of hunger or when you're anxious? Are you unwilling to wait until the appointed meal time when the food will be enjoyed with the fellowship of others? Do you obsess about having the highest quality or most expensive or most well-presented food, so much so that the fellowship and the good of the meal are lost? Does everything have to be the most flavorful or your personal favorite or exactly right before you'll receive it with joy and thanksgiving? Are you willing to sacrifice the health and well-being of your body just to satisfy your love of eating, whether the food is "healthy" or just garbage? Do you fill your grocery cart with whatever sounds good or even what might sound good,

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only to throw away rotting food that was never touched?

What's more, have you considered what your gluttony costs your neighbor? Think of all the food that is hoarded, the clothes sitting in closets with store tags still hanging from them, and countless other resources that sit in storage, long-forgotten, rotting, mildewing, being eaten by moths simply because we "had to have them". Meanwhile how many of our neighbors could use these very things? While Judas may not have actually been concerned about the welfare of the poor when he complained about Mary's use of the expensive ointment to anoint Jesus, we should actually be concerned about the poor and consider how we can better use the gifts of God to care for them, how we can turn from gluttony and towards almsgiving.

As the fasting of Lent gives way to the feasting of Easter, let us not confuse gluttony with feasting. They are not the same. Feasting is purposeful enjoyment of the good gifts of God as gifts from the God who has provided us the true food and drink of His Son's Body and Blood for the forgiveness of all our sins. Feasting is done with temperance, making sure that our merriment doesn't give way to gluttony or impiety or idolatry. Feasting is joy in the things of God used for their proper end - to help focus our attention on the things of salvation rather than distract us from them. Where gluttony is disorder, feasting is order and purposefulness. Feasting thanks and praises the Giver of all gifts. Gluttony falls down in worship before the gifts and is willing to sacrifice everything to have them.

You were created by God to feast, to enjoy all of His goodness to its fullest extent which is to enjoy everything according to its God-given purpose. The kingdom of God is repeatedly itself described as a feast of the richest food and the finest wine. But no one will be engorged with food or drunk on wine. Everyone will be filled with the Holy Spirit and the joy of God's presence. Who would want to dull their experience of such things? And if we won't do it there, why should we do it while here below?

Let us then repent of our gluttony and seek forgiveness from the pastor as from God Himself, confident that He gladly forgives the sins of all repentant sinners. And to all such sinners who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, He bids you come to the Lord's table to have the feast of all feasts, the feast that doesn't simply pass through the belly and then leave us hungry again, the feast that forgives sins, fills hungry consciences with peace, and joins us in blessed communion with our Savior and with one another. This, this Lord's Supper alone, is the feast of victory for our God. This is the feast which defines and orders all others because it has been prepared by our Great High Priest, our brother, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is

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this feast which enables us to enjoy all of God's good gifts properly, as gifts from His gracious hands, and as reminders of the eternal feast of salvation. God grant that our hunger be for the Lord's Supper and His righteousness, that we may receive it with thankfulness and joy and to our abundant blessing. And having thus been satisfied, let us consume all the other good gifts of God with temperance.

“May God bestow on us His grace and favor, that we follow Christ our Savior and live together here in love and union, nor despise this blest Communion! O Lord, have mercy! Let not Thy good Spirit forsake us; Grant that heavenly minded He make us. Give Thy Church, Lord, to see, days of peace and unity. O Lord, have mercy!”

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.