

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that 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 he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. 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."

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

Facebook. Snapchat. Instagram. Twitter. Before 2004, these words were unknown, but in the years since, they have become ingrained in our popular culture. In fact, the majority of people can't imagine their lives without social media apps like Facebook or Snapchat. Surveys indicate that 68% of adults use Facebook, with 74% of these accessing it daily, and 51% accessing it multiple times each day. With youth 18-24 years of age, Snapchat is the social media of choice, and 71% of them visit this platform multiple times a day. For some of these people, they just can't check their Facebook page too often.

Most people defend their Facebook or Snapchat time, saying it gives them the opportunity to stay in touch with their friends and to feel a part of their lives. The internet keeps them aware of the things that are happening in the lives of the people around them. It helps them feel closer to their friends.

If people have a need to "feel in touch" with others through social media, shouldn't we have an even stronger desire to keep in touch with our God through the means He provides in His grace? When it comes to the Lord's Supper, in particular, Christ is reaching out to us. So, how often should we commune? How often should the church offer Holy Communion?

Pastor Eric did a fine job of reminding us of the blessings and benefits of the Lord's Supper. When you read the things that St. Paul has to say about this precious gift that Christ gave to His church, there is no denying he understood this to be a very special gift of God's grace. From the very beginning, the church saw this not just as something to do, but as the high point—the central point—of all their worship. The early church recognized the benefits and blessings that Christ gives through this meal in which He unites Himself with us. We are told that *"day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,"* (Acts 2:46, ESV). The breaking of bread refers to both the daily food which they shared, and to their celebration of the Lord's Supper. The church took seriously the command of the Lord: *Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*

What does it mean to do this often? Here at Foothills, we recognize the importance of celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar. We seek to offer Holy Communion every week—if not on Sunday, then at our Wednesday service. We want to be sure that you have the opportunity to receive the blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation which Christ gives us, as He feeds us with His very body and blood, given for us on the cross. But still, how often should we (or do we need to) partake of the Sacrament?

There are many who would welcome, yes, even long to receive the sacrament each and every Sunday. I find it interesting that not only have our LCC and LCMS churches been returning to the ancient practice of weekly Communion; there are movements for this among the Presbyterians, Methodists, and even some Baptists! If others, who only see it only as a reminder of what Jesus did for us think it important, why don't we, who see it as the very means by which Jesus gives us forgiveness and life, celebrate the Sacrament every Sunday?

While we cannot find a verse in Scripture that explicitly says that Jesus had a specific number in mind when He said,

"do this often", I do believe that a greater understanding of both the nature and the blessings of the life-giving meal that Jesus has given us will make us crave this special blessing from our God more and more. In our text, Paul reminds us that we have this sacrament to remember Christ—not the way we see a picture from our vacation and remember that wonderful Kodak moment. In the biblical understanding of remembering, we actually participate again in that event. In the celebration of the Passover, the participants are reminded that, "In every generation each one ought to regard himself as though he had personally come out of Egypt, as it is written: "And you shall tell your son in that day, 'This is what the Lord did to me when I came out of Egypt.'" Therefore it is our duty to thank, praise, exalt and adore Him who did all of these miracles for our fathers and for us. He has brought us forth from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity, from darkness to a great light, and from subjection to redemption."

To remember in this way is not just to recall, but to be part of it. When Jesus asks us to remember His death and resurrection, He wants us to be part of His death for us and that life we share through His resurrection. It isn't just a long ago, far away event. Right here, right now, we share in the blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation that come to us through the Lord, whose death, resurrection and victory over sin, death and the devil we both proclaim and participate in until He comes to give us our perfect victory in heaven.

Think of the Lord's Supper as God's Facebook. I know that may sound a bit heretical, but Holy Communion does all that people say they do on Facebook—and so much more! Here, at the table, the crucified, risen and ascended Lord comes to keep in touch with us. He lets us know what He is doing for us. He is sharing His love and thoughts with us. The difference, of course, is that He isn't sending us a picture; He is truly here, in His body and blood as He promised, to be in touch with His people. He comes to be involved in all that is happening to us. He also gives us what we can never get through mere social media. He gives us His body and blood to forgive our sins. He gives us Himself, to strengthen us for the struggles of each day. He is present with us, to say, "This is what I did for you, when I died for you. This is what I do for you because I rose and ascended into heaven. I care about you. I come to help you, to save you, to bless you. Come to My table as often as possible, because every time you do, I bestow every blessing I have upon you."

The truth is, we don't commune enough, and we can never commune too often. Some people believe that Holy Communion is a mere tradition of the Church, something that you can take or leave, with little loss or gain either way. Not only is such thinking wrong, it is close to blasphemy. Holy Communion is not just something to do; it is not just something the church has always done. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is God's special way of bestowing Christ's life, forgiveness, peace and power to each and every one of us individually and personally. He gave the word of the Gospel so that all people may be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. But He gave His church His very presence in the blessed sacrament, so that it truly is a holy *communion*.

Statistically, the average member of this church communes 8 times a year, out of a possible 60 opportunities. There are those who never miss the chance to be at the altar, and there are far too many who don't even commune once in the year. There are two questions we should ask ourselves: "Am I a sinner?", and, "Do I need to be strengthened in my faith?" Those are rhetorical questions. Yes, we sin daily—moment by moment, in fact. And yes, we are weak and imperfect in our faith. We always need the spiritual help, strength and nourishment that God provides, and which comes to us in such a special way in the Lord's Supper. That is why Paul speaks of our communing often—not occasionally, not just at festival times, but often, regularly and whenever possible.

In our text, Paul repeats Christ's command: "Do this. Eat. Drink. Remember Me, the Lord, who is your life and salvation. In our Gospel lesson, Jesus spoke of Himself as the Living Bread which came from heaven. He said: **"my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."** (John 6:32–33, ESV) In response to this, the people said: **"Sir, give us this bread always."** (John 6:34, ESV) That should be our prayer, too: Lord, give us this bread always! Come to us, week after week, for the devil works so hard in our lives. Come to us as often as possible, because we need Your help and strength. Come to us because we truly do need you and your forgiveness every hour.

I know that people worry that our partaking of the Sacrament may mean we take it for granted. I cannot deny that such

a danger exists. After all, anything we do often can become so commonplace that we don't give it the attention it deserves. That is why true reception of the Lord's Supper involves preparation and examination. Ask yourself if you are a sinner, in need of forgiveness. Ask yourself whether or not you believe that Jesus is present in the bread and wine with His true body and blood to forgive you your sins and strengthen you in your faith. Ask yourself if you will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, go forth to live as the redeemed child of God you are by His grace.

We all are sinners. We all fall short of God's glory. But God comes to us in His Word, through our Baptism and in the Sacrament of Holy Communion to bring us forgiveness and life. We need it all the time. And it always does what God has promised. So, how often is often? We can never offer Holy Communion too often. The more the better, when we know our Saviour is with us to bless us so richly. Amen.