

It is no secret to anyone that the world and many in it have an identity crisis. Sometimes even Christians are drawn into the confusion. The devil likes spreading confusion on the sexes, gender, and other things. Without Christ and without God's Word, confusion would be all we have. In our modern age with our conflict management skills and all the world's knowledge at our fingertips one might think that we could avoid modern warfare, but wars rage on. Without Christ and without God's Word, trouble and hardship would be all we have. But Jesus came to give you certainty and peace in himself. The apostle Paul teaches us today.

Receive the Lord's Supper from Jesus.

1) Gobble the gracious gospel gift.

2) Guard this powerful gift.

3) Go with the certainty and go to the certainty of this gracious gift.

"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."

Sometimes I tell my confirmation class that I love them. Sometimes I say it before I'm going to impress something serious on them that I want them to remember. Sometimes I'm yelling at them for misbehaving or not paying attention, yet I want them to know I still love them. And I have told them I love them a lot this semester 😊. Just kidding, but I do love them. Jesus picked an interesting time to give them a great gift of his love. When the disciples were not at all prepared, and right before they would all desert him, even deny him, Jesus gives them a gift so gracious, a gift so full of good news, that we could never have imagined it. He gave them himself. In an impossible, miraculous way, he gives them himself, his own body and blood to eat and drink. He doesn't parcel out chunks of himself to each person. He gives his whole self to each of them as they take bread, real bread, and wine, real wine and with them he gives his own body and blood – not just in a metaphoric way, but in a very real and present way.

He gives them his body which he gave up on the cross for you as your substitute to stand in the way and take the punishment of a just and holy God over your sin, and all sinners who have been sinful from the time their mothers conceived them. He took all the punishment you deserved. He gives them his blood with which he signs a new covenant of forgiveness for wretched sinners in the atoning blood of his sacrifice spilt to cover over our sins and wash us clean he pours out for you to receive. He gives himself wholly to you in the Sacrament. A miracle. How exactly? I will leave that up to him how he does it, but **gobble up the gracious gospel gift** each time it is offered because there by Jesus' command and his gift you receive him – all of him, and his forgiveness and love. What greater love is there? What greater certainty can you find of your forgiveness! Jesus gives you himself to eat and to drink!

Is this redundant, is it all too much and over the top? Is it redundant when your mom or dad tell you they love you? Is it redundant for a husband to tell his wife he loves in the good moments and in the bad moments, or is saying it once on their wedding day enough? Of course, we receive God's full and free forgiveness in the absolution as the minister speaks it, or a Christian friend speaks those words to us (John 20:23). Of course, we were washed clean at our baptisms by the Holy Spirit working through water and the Word (Acts 2:38, Gal. 3). But God wants you to have certainty in this confusing world and in this confusing mix of sinful self and new child of God that we are. So he says "here, for you, you my child, here is my body and my blood with the bread and the wine so you know and you have me and the forgiveness I've won for you." **Gobble up the gracious gospel gift** of Jesus Christ's body and blood and the certainty and peace of your forgiveness it gives in this uncertain world.

Guard this Powerful Gift. *"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves."* How many of you think you know how to drive? How many of you have a driver's license? Is there a difference between the two questions? Yes, there is. How many of you would get in the car to go cross country with a child driving who does not have a driver's license? Not many. Why? They may have seen a car, driven a go cart, played

a video game or watched movies about driving, but they don't know what they are doing, and the car that could be a blessing to you all becomes a peril and a dangerous thing. It's not the car's fault, but the person who doesn't know how to drive it. So also, when it comes to this great gift, God's Word has a guard upon it so that it is used as the wonderful gift it is and not to someone's harm.

Paul says that you ought to examine yourself. It's not talking about a physical exam, but a spiritual one. The four questions we teach the confirmands is to ask yourself, 1) "Am I sorry for my sins? 2) Do I trust in Jesus as my only Savior from sin? 3) Do I recognize that Christ's body and blood are truly present for me in the Sacrament? 4) Do I intend with God's forgiveness and strength to live a more God-pleasing life?" The answer for the communicant is a resounding "YES!" to all these questions. If we are not sorry, we are denying our sin and sinfulness or embracing a sin which can only lead us away from Christ into unbelief and to eternal death. Do I trust in Jesus as my only Savior from sin? If we don't realize the temptation we always face that we try to be our own saviors and rely on our own power and worth to earn from God, we fall victim to it. Do I recognize that I receive Christ's real body and blood for my forgiveness? If we deny Christ's body and blood being truly present, we call God a liar, eat and drink to our harm, and what other promises of his will we doubt and deny? Do I intend to live a more God-pleasing life? What other option is there for redeemed and forgiven children of God. We rise from the foot of the cross to live for him. How can we not. We pick up our crosses – deny ourselves and our sinful desires, our pride, our wisdom, and we follow God's Word and his wisdom. If we fail to do this, we are not honoring God, but making a mockery of him, misrepresenting his Word, and leading others to do the same – spreading confusion and uncertainty.

We practice close communion or member communion – when we go to the Lord's supper, we go in a worthy manner – sinners desperate for a Savior trusting in God's forgiveness given in his body and blood which we receive as we take and eat the bread and take and drink the wine as Christ gives them to us. We train and instruct our communicants. We proclaim a common confession that gives certainty, not confusion - *For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* And Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 – *Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.* We are proclaiming Christ and standing in his certainty with you and you and you together. There is certainty, peace, and unity in our Savior and his Word as we receive the Lord's Supper. We commune with those who are in our confessional church fellowship who share our confession of God's Word. We want to give a clear confession of the truth of the great gifts we receive in our Savior. *We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* You make a great confession when you come to the Lord's Supper – Jesus Christ died for you, a sinner, and only by his body and blood given and shed on the cross do we have redemption, forgiveness, and life eternal. And the beautiful part is that not only do you confess that. You receive it.

Go with the certainty and Go to the certainty of this gift. *"That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not finally be condemned with the world."* I wish we could just say that confusion was out there in the world and not here in my heart. You and I struggle through differentiating between what is right and wrong in this world and sometimes we have it wrong. Our sinful nature has a way of making evil sound good and good sound evil. And sometimes we do wrong. We get lax in our time in God's house or his Word. We blind ourselves to the corruption of our own flesh and we listen to this world rather than to God's sure Word. And sometimes it catches up with us and shows. We suffer trouble and hardship, and sometimes we created our own mess, not to mention much of the suffering we have is because we are sinners living in a sinful world.

It would be nice to say war is out there, and not in our families, our workplaces, our relationships. And often it is a prideful word meant to demean others we think have wronged us. Often it is lovelessness and an unforgiving spirit that we harbor that does not help the situation but hurdles us further into difficulty.

We need a Savior. Jesus calls us to his table when we are having the best day in the world, and on the days we have made a mess of our world in our sin and shame. Jesus gives us a gift that grants us certainty in this life –He gives us his body and blood for our forgiveness. He says, "I love you." "You have me, all of me." Go with certainty from the Lord's Supper and run to the Lord's Supper for certainty in Jesus. **Receive the Lord's Supper from Jesus. 1) Gobble the gracious gospel gift. 2) Guard this powerful gift. 3) Go with the certainty and go to the certainty of this gift.** Amen.