

Lord Jesus Christ, on the night of Your betrayal, You established the Supper of Your body and blood for us Christians to eat and to drink. Give us faith to trust in the words of Your testament and so rightly receive the fruits of Your suffering and death and through Your merit finally be brought to rejoice in the marriage feast of the Lamb where You live and reign with the Father and the Spirit forever. Amen. (Luther's Small Catechism: with Explanation, CPH 2017, p. 330)

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that 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.

In Christ Jesus, whose body given and blood shed are still offered to us to eat and drink as the wholesome meal of healing, dear fellow redeemed:

Most of us have heard, not just in the news, but even personally have known people who have contracted what are called super bugs. They get this name because they are resistant to the normal treatment for disease-causing bacteria, i.e., antibiotics. Often they are even contracted in the hospital where sick people go to get well!

Some of you know of my obsession of finding humor in incongruous signs. The first one that started this obsession was seen outside the old Good Samaritan hospital well before all the new reconstruction took place. On top there was the sign warning of a "Dead End" and underneath a sign indicating "Hospital Parking Only!" This predated the time of the superbug scare and so was rather humorous then.

Today it would not be so humorous. But there is another super bug, which should concern us more than this type, it is one that infects us all since our conception, namely the superbug of sin and death inherited by us ever since our first parents sinned. But as you know our Lord Jesus came to address this congenital problem. He, personally, is the cure. One way He is administered to us is through His Holy Supper. So let us consider how this is **Our Only Oral Antibiotic for the Super Bug Infecting Us All.**

# I

Luther made the observation that those who reject the real presence of Jesus' very body and blood make this error: they make the physical spiritual and what is spiritual physical. There are many American Christians today who think of the Lord's Supper as a mere

symbolical representation of what one needs to contemplate spiritually and then seek to find Jesus' presence in a prescribed manic emotional high and even in the goose bumps that can be triggered by such contemplations.

The Apostle asked these rhetorical questions, expecting his Corinthian readers knew the answers: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation (or *'communion'*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation (or again *'communion'*) in the body of Christ?" Paul would expect a resounding "Yes", since he was the one who originally taught them.

But he was troubled they perhaps could no longer answer in the affirmative. So in the very next chapter he takes them back to the words of institution and warns them: "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself."

Do you recognize the body and blood of our Lord in the sacrament, or do you spiritualize it? Is it offensive to you to think that the Lord's true body is actually placed in your mouth to eat and His true blood is actually poured into your mouth to drink? That is very physical is it not? Jesus' words speak of it in no other way. He wants you to take within yourself the very things, which secured your forgiveness, life and salvation.

If your doctor told you what the antibiotic is made of, for example a microorganism like a mold, would you let it pass through your lips? – after all you throw out food items you detect are moldy! However, if you wanted the treatment that would cure you, you would take it. But what if you instead refused the treatment being offered and said you are just going to pray your illness to go away? Now the Lord may grant your request, but it may be His will that you receive the help He is providing through your doctor. As a result of your noncompliance you are left to bear the consequences. But as foolish it is to refuse such a tried and proven treatment, it far worse than just foolishness to disregard your Lord's medicine – to eat His body and drink His blood, my fellow sinners.

## II

This treatment has the healing powers you seek as one who hungers and thirsts for righteousness. Jesus promised that that your hunger and thirst would all be satisfied in Him. But if like a two-year old, you stubbornly refuse to open your mouth, lips tightly sealed,

shaking your head in defiance, you will not benefit from this holy food and drink prepared by your Lord for you to receive for your eternal health and well being.

Now there may be an objection that we continually have the need to take this medicine throughout our lives. Does this mean the best we can hope for is that it puts the effects of this super bug only into remission? How powerful is Jesus' body and blood anyway? When Jesus healed the deaf mute in our Gospel lesson, it was not a partial or temporary healing, we are told his ears were opened and he spoke plainly. There was no speech therapist needed for this man. Those who witnessed the miracle were astonished beyond measure and said: "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

But then ask yourself: did the people in the 5,000+ and 4,000+ crowds having been filled to satisfaction by the bread and fish ever get hungry again? Of course they did. But the same Lord who provided them food in the wilderness far from home, still fulfilled His promise back in their homes with their daily bread. So it is that you and I, sinners though we still be, will by God's gracious working in us still hunger and thirst after righteousness, and he promises to fill us to the full.

The papists have a strange way of speaking of the benefit of the supper. It is tied to their actions of confession and penance. When they confess a sin and perform the act of penance for it, then in receiving the body and blood of our Lord in the supper they view it as a sacrifice for that particular sin confessed. They go through life treating their acts of sin by finding forgiveness in their periodic actions as well as the periodic action of Christ. Forgiveness is found in those segments of time, whether weekly, daily or more. Those sins left un-confessed are to be purged away in their imaginary purgatory.

But this is not how Scripture speaks of it. As repentant believers in Christ, we receive strengthening of our faith as we hear the Gospel in Word and receive it in the Sacrament. Through faith, our sins are all forgiven. It is common for you to hear the pastor declare right before you open your mouth: *"This is the true body of Christ."* *"This is the true blood of Christ."* The pastor is **not** required to say that. He is required to speak the words of institution however, so that Jesus speaking through him the words: *"This is My body... this is My blood."*, actually names that bread His body and that wine His blood. That is why you come forward because His body and blood await you on the altar for your reception.

So perhaps it would be good for the pastor on occasion as he offers you both the true body and the true blood of our Lord to say that word: "*Ephatha!*", i.e., "*be opened*". Then as you open your mouth to take this holy medicine within yourself, you could think how you are healed of the superbug that infects us all. You are forgiven and you are given life – truly this is the only oral antibiotic, which brings us everlasting healing. It is a real physical cure for our spiritual malady, received here in real time to last us for all eternity. Indeed, our Lord Jesus has done and continues to do all things well. Our Churches are often referred to as hospitals, not gymnasiums. By our church sign there is also a "*Dead End*" sign – but to the contrary we know it is a "*Through Street*" to life everlasting for Jesus' sake. Amen.