O Lord Jesus, how deeply were You humbled since You condescended daily to walk with Your betrayer, though the malice of his heart was not hid from You. Surely You desire the salvation of sinners. Have compassion on my poor soul, wash it with Your blood, and grant me strength to resist sin, that I may overcome and inherit the blessing. Amen. (Reading the Psalms with Luther, CPH, Ps. 109, p. 266)

When it was evening, [Jesus] reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, He said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were very sorrowful and began to say to Him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with Me will betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas, who would betray Him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so." Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

In Christ Jesus, who appeared before the Father in our behalf upon the cross and said: *"It is I"* suffering our eternal forsakenness dear fellow redeemed:

As all twelve of the disciples were gathered around the table, Jesus announced: "I say to you, one of you will betray Me." Each of them were cut to the heart, obviously knowing their own propensity to sin and asked our Lord: "Is it I, Lord?" Not even Peter was confident in himself at this point, he did not say: *"Certainly not I, Lord."* But Judas, who knew that he was the betrayer had the audacity to ask: "Is it I, Rabbi?"

By God's gracious working in us, we rightly understand ourselves as sinners like the eleven who honestly thought the Betrayer could have been one of them personally. But what is more, unlike Judas, who in his unbelief feigned innocence, we readily admit when it comes to the charge of sin – *It is I, Lord*! And by God's grace we have come to know with all confidence that **It Is I - for Whom Jesus' Body Was Given and Blood Was Shed.**

Now again Peter joined the chorus of "Is it I, Lord?" but at one point we know he asked John to find out from Jesus exactly who it was. Jesus answered John: "'It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.' So when he had dipped the morsel, He gave it to Judas … Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him, Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.'" How terrifying it is to hear how Satan so easily entered Judas, one of the chosen twelve. Couple that with Jesus' words in our text: "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

Yes, you and I could hear ourselves asking, *"Is it I, Lord?"* and that certainly speaks to our vulnerability to the wiles of Satan. But consider how close we are to the likes of Judas, in whom Satan entered. You and I can have days on which we may join Job who cursed the day of his birth. He, in his great misery asked: "Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? … I would have slept; then I would have been at rest, … why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." While we do not know if that would have been true for Job, nor for Judas. Both were likely children of believing mothers and may have had an experience with the powerful Word of God *in utero* as did John the Baptizer. He by the Spirit of God leaped in Elizabeth's womb when Mary, the mother of our Lord, entered the room with Jesus in her womb.

But instead, the betrayer would have been better off had he never been born. Was he born again in the waters of baptism? We assume so. Even so, he fell so very far from his Lord, so that even when Jesus reached out to him in the Garden and called him "friend", he nevertheless despaired and even after giving back the 30 pieces of silver he, as the son of perdition, hanged himself. We shutter at the thought of being unable to say repenting: *"It is I"*

So as perhaps the twelve's mutual question: "Is it I, Lord?" were still reverberating in the upper room, "as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

Soon, you and I are going to receive this very same body and blood of our Lord and from our prayer of confession it is still reverberating from each one of us: *"It is I, Lord."* But to us He says, come, eat and drink for the forgiveness of your sins. Because Jesus became sin for you and in essence said *"It is I"* in your place that holy body given and that holy blood shed cleanses you from all guilt, shame and eternal condemnation. You are forgiven, even for your sins of betrayal!

This body and blood are for you my fellow sinners. As Luther teaches us: *"he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed **for you** for the remission of sins.' But he who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared; for the words **'for you'** require truly believing hearts."* Are you able to say from the heart: *It is I - for whom Jesus' body was given and blood was shed?* Since God has blessed you with such a faith, then come, eat – drink. As you receive this precious food admitting "It is I, Lord." hear Jesus say to you: "O my Righteous One, "It was I, instead. You are forgiven." To God be the glory that you have been born and reborn.

Lift up your hearts, with this holy food, you are forgiven and possess eternal life. Amen.